

WOMEN RISE





IT-Bridge offers integrated training and customised support to foster the employability and professional development of young people with a migrant background in the IT sector.

Young people with a migrant background constitute a particularly vulnerable group: they are overrepresented in the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) category, more likely to leave school early and find employment in the informal labour market. The IT sector offers good opportunities, but these young people often lack the necessary skills and find it difficult to access training due to poor language skills and a lack of resources and support for long-term commitment.

IT-Bridge takes an innovative social approach, complementing training with a series of interventions aimed at overcoming existing barriers. Through personalised and comprehensive support, it intervenes on the language gaps, lack of local knowledge and fragile social networks of young people with a migration background, with the aim of enhancing their employability and facilitating the achievement of meaningful career and educational goals.

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Disclaimer

Co-funded by the European Union. The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Social Fund. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them.

Acknowledgements

Women Rise is an intervention that aims to support women in expanding their sources of support, building coping mechanisms to address chronic stress, and strengthening their intrinsic resilience and empowerment through strong connections with other women. Since 2021, it has been implemented in more than 10 countries worldwide, in Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and now also in Europe.

This document would not have been possible without the financial support of the European Union through the European Social Innovation Fund and its unwavering support for the prevention and response to gender-based violence in Europe. The long journey towards gender equality will not be possible or realistic without the political and financial commitment of regional, national, and supranational institutions. Gender-transforming approaches, through the engagement of men and the empowerment of women, have proven to be effective tools for preventing gender-based violence. This will only be possible through sustained, long-term efforts. The work on this Guide also recognizes the experience and efforts of other stakeholders addressing gender-based violence who work hard every day to build more survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and empowering services for survivors.

This resource is the result of the direct implementation of Women Rise groups by IRC and its partners in Italy and Greece between June 2023 and June 2024. Therefore, special recognition goes to the facilitators and co-facilitators/cultural mediators who implemented, adapted, and provided feedback on the intervention. This specific guide is the result of a further adaptation designed for use with a younger audience, women aged 18 to 29, but can be adapted to a wider audience.

Sincere thanks go to all the women for participating in this project, for sharing their stories and experiences, allowing us to acknowledge their suffering and the hardships of their past and present lives, and for bringing joy and laughter into the room. Without their energy, good humor, and the trust they placed in the work and the IRC team, this work would not have been possible.

Introduction to the guide

This guide is a re-adapted and streamlined version of the Women Rise: [A Gender-Based Violence Psychosocial Support Framework and Toolkit](#), developed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Building on the original resource, this new version was developed under the IT-Bridge project, with a specific focus on supporting women's **economic empowerment** through psychosocial support interventions.

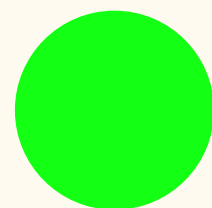
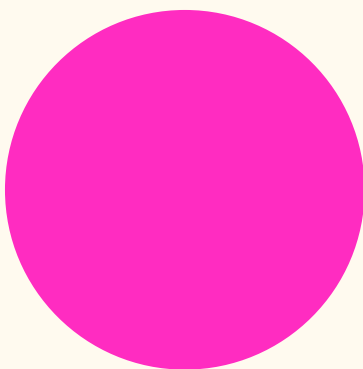
The original Women Rise Toolkit provides a comprehensive Gender-Based Violence (GBV)-centered Psychosocial Support (PSS) Framework, including structured group curriculum, training materials, capacity strengthening tools, and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) resources. While the complete Toolkit remains accessible online, this guide offers a more concise version of the Women Rise Group Intervention Core Curriculum—now adapted with practical insights from field implementation in Athens and Palermo; and revised to align with the IT-Bridge project's emphasis on empowering women in displacement through economic and social support.

The IT-Bridge project supports young people with a migrant background, a group often overrepresented among NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and at higher risk of early school leaving and informal employment. Recognizing that the IT sector offers valuable opportunities but that these youth often lack the necessary skills and resources to access training, IT-Bridge adopts an innovative social approach that integrates technical training with tailored empowerment and support measures. Through personalized guidance, language assistance, and strengthened social connections, the project helps participants overcome linguistic, cultural, and contextual barriers, improving their employability and confidence in pursuing educational and professional goals. Implemented in Italy and Spain, IT-Bridge aims to promote skills development and labor market access for young people with a migratory background, while aiming to create a model that can be replicated across other training programs, vulnerable groups, and countries.

Contextualization

The adaptation and streamlining of the Women Rise Toolkit within the IT-Bridge project stem from the recognition that women's economic empowerment is closely linked to their psychosocial wellbeing. Many women with a migrant background face intersecting barriers — including displacement, social isolation, and experiences of gender-based violence — which can affect their confidence, motivation, and ability to participate fully in training and employment initiatives. While IT-Bridge focuses on employability and technical skills development, integrating an adapted version of the Women Rise framework enables the project to adopt a more holistic, trauma-informed approach.

To ensure the content was relevant and accessible, each session of the original curriculum was reviewed with the project's target group — migrant young women aged 18 to 29 — clearly in mind. Activities were edited and, where appropriate, replaced with alternatives that better reflected the participants' needs, learning styles, and lived experiences. This process ensured that the psychosocial support component complemented the project's broader goal of strengthening women's confidence, resilience, and readiness to engage in meaningful educational and professional pathways.



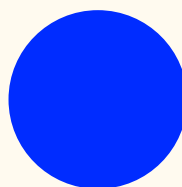
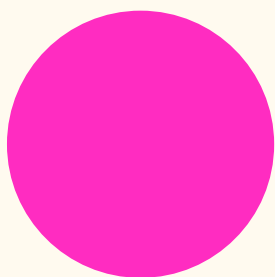
Who is this for?

This guide is intended for a wide range of practitioners, organizations, and programs working with women—particularly those with migration or displacement backgrounds—who are interested in integrating psychosocial support and economic empowerment into their work.

Whether you are involved in GBV response, women's rights advocacy, livelihood programming, or broader community development, this guide provides practical tools to establish and facilitate safe, supportive group spaces for women. It is designed for both specialized and non-specialized professionals who aim to support women's well-being, confidence, and self-reliance through group-based interventions.

While the approach does not target GBV survivors exclusively, it acknowledges that some participants may have experienced various forms of trauma, including violence. The guide offers structured facilitation support, adaptable content, and tools to ensure sessions are responsive to the needs and strengths of participants.

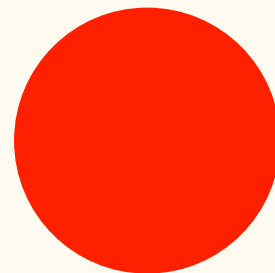
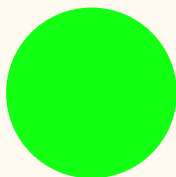
Training and supervision of facilitators are strongly recommended prior to and throughout implementation. While training materials are not included in this guide, relevant resources are linked for reference.



General objectives of the Toolkit and this re-adaptation

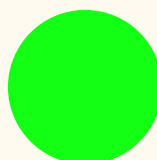
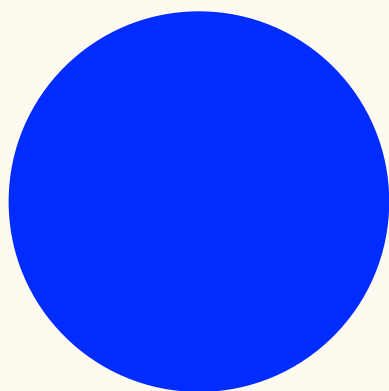
The adapted toolkit aims to:

- Provide a flexible, practical framework for implementing group-based psychosocial support with a focus on women's economic empowerment.
- Support practitioners in creating safe, inclusive spaces that promote healing, peer connection, and confidence-building.
- Equip facilitators with tools and guidance to integrate psychosocial well-being into women's empowerment, livelihood, or skills-building programs.
- Encourage culturally sensitive and context-specific approaches that respond to the diverse needs of women in migration or displacement contexts.



How to use this guide

The Women Rise curriculum works from an empowerment approach and is meant to be modified and expanded as needed to fit the unique needs of each specific group of women across countries and programs. Contextualization needs will have to be determined in each setting by the facilitators and their supervisor. Engagement and discussion with the community will likely be helpful in contextualizing terms, concepts, and activities. Experiential learning is an important aspect of facilitating groups. Each session should be primarily experiential, focused and driven by the needs and wants of the women in the group, and focused on building and strengthening relationships with each other. Therefore, this curriculum is not meant to be read or taught line-by-line in a traditional sense, only to serve as a guideline and reminder of the natural progression of the course over the sessions.



Session 1: Introduction

Objectives

- To get to know each other (participants and facilitators)
- To understand the objectives and activities of the group
- To develop a basic set of goals/outcomes for each participant
- To understand all rules and set norms for each session
- To build trust and comfort within the group

Topics covered

- Introductions - getting to know the group
 - Hopes
 - Fears
- Explaining purpose and structure of the group
- Setting rules and expectations
- Defining goals following the SMART methodology

Materials needed

- Flipcharts and markers
- Sellotape
- Sticky notes
- Markers
- Notebooks for each participant to keep

Preparation

- Draw or print a mood thermometer or meme (see Annex I) on a flipchart, or on the wall. Spread sheets and chairs around the room, so that participants can sit where they prefer
- Choose appropriate music for each activity
- Arrange small refreshments for the participants
- Print copies of confidentiality forms for the participants
- Draw up the outline of the session on the flipchart

Activity one: Introductions, hopes and fears

Time: 30 minutes

Steps:

1. Welcome the women to the session and thank them for taking their time to attend it.
2. Introduce yourself and your role – both facilitators should introduce themselves.
3. Acknowledge that they are all busy and have taken time out of their day to come and participate. Explain that this is very important, especially for this group who is trying to find work in a male dominated field. Carving time out for these sessions will allow them to participate fully and take advantage of these safe women-only spaces. Data shows that women who support other women are more likely to overcome gender biases and barriers that impede advancement in education and career.
4. Let participants know that we will go over rules for the group and give an in-depth explanation of the group objectives today but first we are going to start with a game to introduce ourselves.

5. Tell them that we are going to play a game to get to know each other.
 - a. Ask the participants to stand in a circle and pick a picture from a meme (See Annex I).
 - b. Tell them that today the question is “Which llama do you feel like today?”
 - c. The facilitator gives an example by choosing an option and sharing her feelings. Share with the group that the feeling they choose to represent them and the picture they choose to associate with is entirely up to each participant.
 - d. Each participant takes her turn, entering the circle, saying her name and then naming the chosen picture and the characteristics that correspond to her own feelings.
 - e. Pay attention to each person and the feelings they share with the group.
 - f. Go around the circle. Once everyone has finished, thank them for participating and for their creativity.
6. Tell them that you would like to move onto the next activity – setting ground rules.



Memes may not always be appropriate for all participants. Consider using alternative prompts, such as weather conditions, emoticons, or other types of images.

Activity two:

Group agreements

Time: 15 minutes

Steps:

1. Now that everyone has gotten more comfortable with each other, explain that we will go through some important rules and set the agreements we will follow for our group.
2. Tape a piece of flip chart paper to the wall and write the words “Group Agreements” on it.
3. Ask the participants if they have any agreements, they would like to suggest the group members should follow during our time together:
 - a. Suggestions can include things like – respect, listen to others when they are talking, do not talk over others, do not answer phones in the group room, etc.
 - b. You can help them think of agreements if they have trouble answering or coming up with their own agreements. In particular, you should suggest the following principles:
 - Confidentiality: If the group does not come up with “Confidentiality” or “Privacy/Keep Secret” you will need to introduce it yourself. If they do come up with it, make sure to come back to it and further explain. Highlight the following:
 - a. To trust each other and speak openly, all members must promise to keep what is said in the group private between the group members.
 - b. Other members may choose to tell private things to us, but these are not our stories to tell others outside of the group.
 - c. Remind participants that they are free to share their own personal experiences with anyone they trust. They can also share coping strategies and activities with friends and family members. They cannot share anything that is shared by other members. These are not their experiences or stories to tell.

- **Accepting Differences:** Much like confidentiality, if accepting differences is not mentioned by the group, the facilitator will need to introduce this idea. Discuss the following:
 - a. It is important to acknowledge the differences in the room. Depending on how the group is organized, there may be very visible differences between groups and there will always be unseen differences like differences in opinions and beliefs. This is valued and an important way that group members learn from each other.
 - b. We want group members to be able to share their feelings and experiences and be respectful of differences. Accepting differences is key to creating a space that feels safe and comfortable.

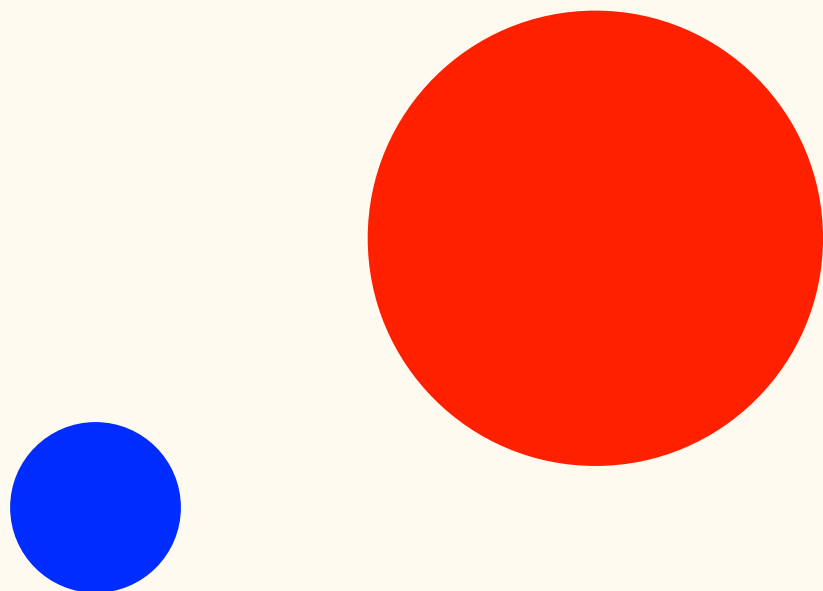


Despite differences, there is always more that unites than divides the group. It is important that all participants have an equal opportunity to contribute to the group. Equal opportunity to share unites the group and helps us discover more common ground. Set ground rules for giving each equal opportunity to share and what to do if someone takes up more than their share of the session.

- **Sharing Feelings:** Again, if sharing feelings is not brought up, as the facilitator, we need to introduce this idea. When discussing sharing feelings, highlight:
 - a. One of our goals is to create a space that feels comfortable for expressing emotions and feelings. We expect that when sharing feelings and emotions, group members will have physical expressions of emotions. There will be tears and difficult emotions like anger throughout the group. There will also be laughter and fun. All of these are expected.
 - b. In the group, recognizing and expressing emotions is a sign of bravery and courage in trusting the group enough to express these difficult emotions.

4. For each agreement, make sure everyone agrees before adopting it as an official group agreement. If there are agreements you feel are important that not everyone has agreed to, spend time discussing as a group its importance before moving on.

5. Once the group agrees on a set of “rules”, get the girls to write their names or draw a symbol on the paper, so that it becomes official and somewhat ceremonial that they will follow such rules throughout all sessions.

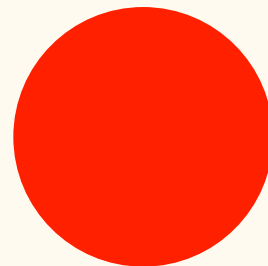
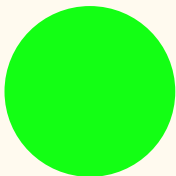


Activity three: Getting to know each other

Time: 20 minutes

Steps:

1. Hand out sheets of paper and pens.
2. Ask participants to describe themselves in a few words and write down 3 things that represent them (anonymously). Give some examples: “I am from X country”, “I have lived here for X years”, “I like cats”, “I like to take walks in the park”, etc.
3. Fold the sheets of paper and place them in a box.
4. In a circle, each participant picks up a sheet of paper and tries to guess who wrote it down. In this way the participants can get to know each other better and understand how the others see them.
5. It is not necessary to let the participants know whether they guessed right or not.



Activity four

Goal setting

Time: 30 minutes

Steps:

1. Explain to the participants that they will now have the opportunity to reflect on their hopes and goals for the future, identifying their strengths.
2. Hand out a piece of paper that we will use for the activity.
3. Ask the participants to divide their sheet of paper into two sections, however they wish. In these sections ask them to draw and/or write:
 - a. FUTURE (short-term) Consider their hopes for the future – a SMART goal or change they would like to achieve by the end of this path. Draw the skills, qualities, support and resources they will need to achieve this goal. Make sure participants know how to choose a goal they want to work on during the sessions by providing them with clear explanation of what a SMART goal is and how to write one (Annex II). Use [SMARTIE Goals Worksheet - The Management Center](#).
 - b. FUTURE (long-term) Consider their hopes for the future - a goal or change they would like to achieve by the end of the course. Draw out the skills, qualities, support and resources they will need to achieve this goal. Make sure participants know how to choose a goal they want to work on during the sessions.
4. Ask participants to put it in a folder that they will open again in 2/3 months (at the end of the course).

Activity five

Introduce toolbox and grounding exercises

Time: 15 minutes

Steps:

1. Tell the group that over the coming sessions, they'll be introduced to a set of tools and practices to help manage emotions, reduce stress, and feel more grounded. These tools will be part of their "Toolbox" — something they can use anytime they need support, both in and outside of the group.

2. Show the Toolbox. This can be a physical box or bag you bring to each session, or something the group creates together over time. Explain that each session, they'll learn or practice a new technique (like breathing exercises, mindfulness, body scans, or creative activities) and add it to their personal toolbox.

3. Introduce one simple grounding exercise. For example, guide the group through a 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique:

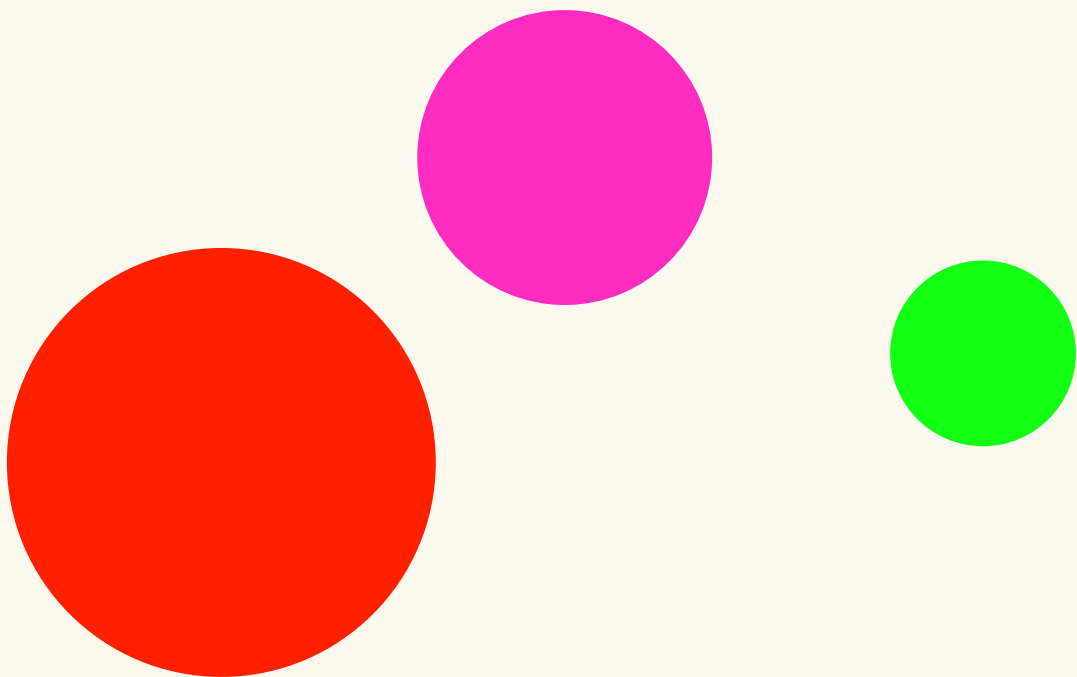
- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Ask them to sit quietly, focus on their senses, and go through each step slowly.

4. Invite the group to share how they felt during the grounding exercise. There's no right or wrong answer — this is about noticing and starting to build awareness of what helps them feel calm and present.

5. Let them know that in future sessions they'll explore more grounding tools and will even get to decide which ones they want to keep using and add to their own version of the Tool-box.

6. Close by asking: "How might a tool like this help you in everyday life?" Give space for a few short responses, then thank them for being open and for trying something new.



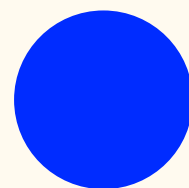
Activity six

Choosing a ritual opening and closing

Time: 10 minutes

Steps:

1. Tell the group that each session we will begin in the same way. As a group, they should discuss how they want to open each session for the next weeks.
2. Give the women a few minutes to discuss different ideas they have for the opening. If they get stuck, you can give them a few examples. For example, you could always play a song they like at the beginning of the activity (each week each girl can pick the song); take a polaroid picture to start the session; create a positivity box where each girl adds a positive note to their fellow group-members, and at the end of the program, each of them will have their own positivity box to take home.
3. Everyone should agree with the ritual opening activity before making a final decision.
4. We also decide on a closing ritual. Options might include a mood checking activity (the same as what was done at the beginning of this session); taking take a polaroid picture to end the session; create a positivity box where each girl adds a positive note to their fellow group-members, and at the end of the program, each of them will have their own positivity box to take home.
5. Once you have decided, thank them for participating and for their creativity and for their time and dedication to this first session.



Session 2: Being a Woman, Being a Working Woman

Objectives

- To explore on our own roles and contributions as individuals and as women.
- To reflect on the challenges they face in their daily lives, and they might face in the future.
- To identify the protective factors and resources they have to overcome challenges.

Topics covered

- Recapping week 1
- Identifying Strengths and Risks through socio-ecological model
 - Individual experiences: Who am I?
 - Roles and responsibilities (now and in the future)
- Identifying own and others' resources

Materials needed

- Flipcharts
- Tape
- Markers
- Paper
- Sticky notes
- Drawing materials

Preparation

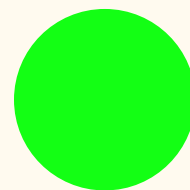
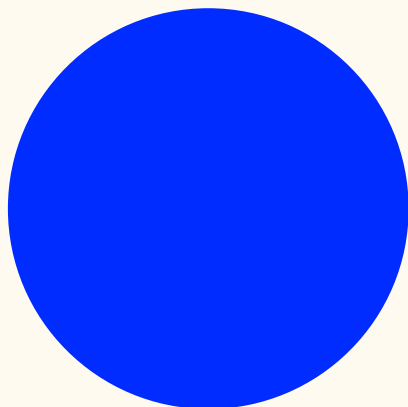
- Make a flipchart with the socio-ecological map drawn out for activity two.
- Prepare your own socio-ecological model.
- Spread sheets on the floors and place chairs around them, so that participants can sit as they please.
- Choose the appropriate music for each activity.
- Prepare small refreshments for the participants in a corner of the room.

Activity one: Opening ritual and re- capping Week 1

Time: 10 minutes

Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session. Remind the group about the opening ritual they agreed on the previous week. Ask one of the women to lead the opening ritual.
2. After the opening is finished, ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 1.
3. Spend 5 minutes answering questions.
4. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two.



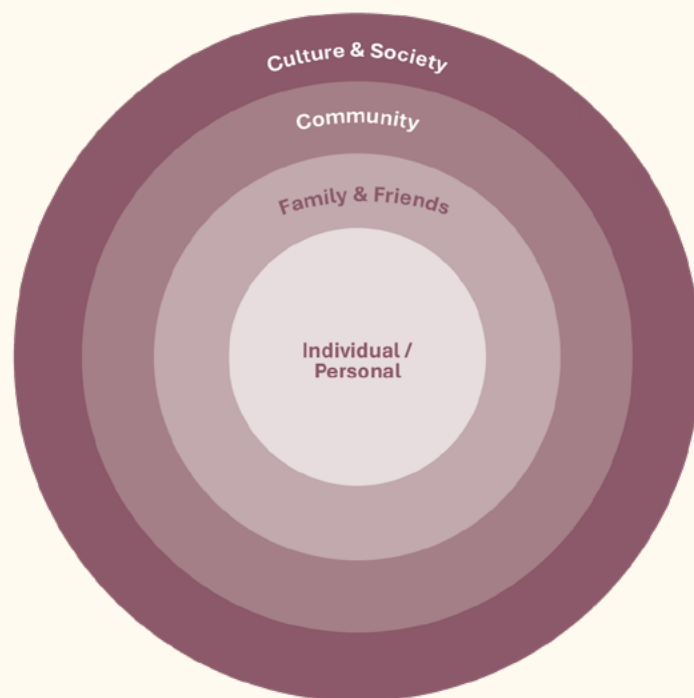
Activity two: Who am I?

Time: 50 minutes

Steps:

1. Tell the women that we will now be doing an exercise where they get the chance to think about themselves and the things that effect their well-being and roles as women. You will then distribute post-it notes and pens to participants.
2. Ask the women to take 5 minutes to think to themselves about how they would answer the question “Who am I?” in 5-10 words. They can think about personality traits, roles they play as women, responsibilities, etc. They should focus on personal strengths/things they like about themselves but can also think about weak spots and things they would like to improve. To provide the women with an example, it is suggested that facilitators prepare their own 5-10 words to share with the group.
3. In a circle, ask the women to share some of the things they came up with. Give the women time to share at least one thing.
4. After the group has had time to share their reflections, say “now we are going to move into another part of the exercise, while continuing to reflect on what we have shared around our current roles”. Provide each woman with a blank sheet of paper.
5. Take out the first pre-prepared social-ecological map flip chart. Make sure that there is space on either side of the map to label one side “Challenges/Risk factors” and one side “Strengths/Protective factors”.
6. Tell the group that we are now going to explore our roles in relation to our different relationships and structures in our lives. We have the ability to change some of our roles easily; whereas other roles are dependent on others and we cannot shift easily without support. Some roles may depend on family members’ support and others might depend on community or cultural support to change. We can think about these roles in four main “levels”. These levels represent influences, interactions and relationships that can influence our role. In plenary, review the socio-ecological map with the participants, and add, as you progress within each circle, the roles they share (see example below).

- a. We can think about the first level as focusing on ourselves, and our own individual/personal roles. How would you describe yourself and who you are? (pointing to the center of the circle)
- b. Closest to us, on the second level, we find our family and friends. What are the roles we have in relation to our friends and family members? (Point to the first circle outside of the center)
- c. Next, think about our role in our community and (point to the second circle) the roles we take on here. Think also of your roles in the job market and in the work-force ecosystem.
- d. Then, finally culture and society; what roles do we take on when it comes to our society at large? (the third circle)



7. Discuss the roles women hold at each level. Clarify the different levels and determine whether the levels suggested for the roles mentioned by participants are correct.

8. Now ask them to reflect on the challenges and risks they might face at each level of the socio-ecological model. Would these be different if they were a man? How would they be different or similar? How do these differences make the women feel? Remind the women that the impacts can be both positive and negative.

9. Ask participants to reflect on whether there is anything they would like to change, or if there is anything they would like to spend more or less time doing. Then, ask them to fill the socio-ecological model for their future selves. Ask them to reflect on the following questions: What are the main changes? Do they imagine having a job? What roles do they envision for themselves in training and work? Is it easy or hard to envision themselves in the job market or certain roles in the workforce ecosystem? How do cultural expectations impact their vision? How do caring responsibilities (children or otherwise) impact their vision of their role in the community?

10. Ask participants to share, if they are comfortable, the new roles they envisage for themselves and add them to the socio-ecological model. Are there any roles they would like to change or remove in their future self and if there is consent from the group, alter or remove these roles.

11. Now ask them to reflect on the resources and protective factors that they already have that can help them overcome challenges they face in their roles. As you focus on overcoming some of the challenges expressed by participants, remind the women that sometimes our roles in society make us more vulnerable or can create additional problems for us. Which means that we might also need some extra support. While driving this conversation, it is important to focus on work and their potential roles as women working in a male-dominated world. Help them reflect on, share, and focus also on their assets and what resources they already have (within them and externally) to face any challenges they might mention.

12. Make sure that the women understand that roles do change over time due to personal, internal and external, family or community changes. If we take time to identify our personal feelings and needs within our roles as well as our challenges, strengths, and resources, we can work with our community to change and adjust both men and women's roles to better meet the needs of all community members.

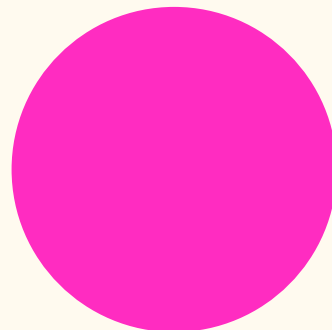
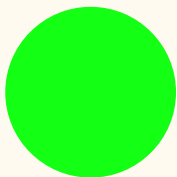
Activity three

Resources

Time: 15 minutes

Steps:

1. Explain to the women that we will now be doing an exercise to reflect on the resources we have to overcome these challenges.
2. Give each woman a piece of paper per member of the group. Each woman writes a word or sentence to describe a strength or resource they have seen in the other women throughout interactions at the sessions thus far. These written notes will then be placed into a pre-prepared basket designated for each individual.
3. Each girl receives her own small basket with resources and words of kindness.
4. Explain women they can read through the basket every time they feel they do not have resources or strengths. Ask women if they agree to put this exercise in the Toolbox.



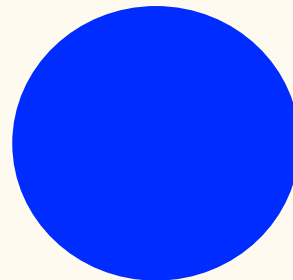
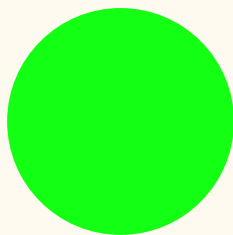
Activity four

Closing the session

Time: 5-10 minutes

Steps:

1. Remind the women that today we focused on our own unique experiences and our shared experiences as women.
2. Ask the women if they have any questions about what we discussed today. Answer any questions that come up.
3. Explain that, from now on, at the end of each session they will be asked to add a resource/word of kindness to the others' baskets. This way, at the end of this curriculum, each of them will be able to take home a basket full of resources and words of kindness they can turn to in time of need.
4. Close the session with the closing ritual they have chosen at the end of Session 1.



Session 3: Understanding Emotions

Objectives

- To acknowledge that women often experience difficult emotions.
- To explore the difference between feelings and emotions.
- To understand how different people show and display emotions in different ways.
- To discuss what is psycho-social well-being and what it can look like.

Topics covered

- Recapping Week 2
- Identifying different emotions and feelings
- Identifying common strategies to deal with difficult emotions
- Understanding psychosocial well-being and emotional support
- Understanding bodily reactions for emotions and feelings

Materials needed

- A4 Papers
- Tape
- Markers
- Flip chart
- Feeling cards

Preparation

- Write on the flipcharts the statements about feelings
- Prepare all feelings cards before. Ensure there are enough pairs for the group.

Activity one: Recapping Week 2

Time: 10 minutes

Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session. Ask if one of the women can volunteer to lead them through the opening.
2. After the opening is finished, ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 4.
3. Spend 5 minutes answering questions.
4. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two.

Normalizing:

It is important to acknowledge that women often experience difficult emotions like sadness, distress, anger, etc. Some of this may be culturally acceptable to show and some may not. Some emotions may be considered "more negative" than others in our own culture. No matter how our culture views these emotions, they are all normal and will continue to come up in our lives. What changes is how we think about them and our ability to manage these emotions.

Activity two: Identifying emotions/feelings

Time: 30 minutes

Steps:

1. Start the activity by talking about the idea of trust. Tell the group that one of the things we want to accomplish in this group is a greater sense of trust.
2. Explain that when we're talking about trust, we're talking about establishing trust with each other but we're also talking about trust in ourselves. It can be hard to trust ourselves and our emotions after difficult experiences.
3. Today we want to begin to understand and explore emotions and the feelings they create in our bodies. We will also start exploring how we deal with the emotions we experience
4. Ask the group if they can name some emotions. Write everything they say on a flip chart paper, even if they name feelings rather than emotions.
5. Tell the participants that we have a limited number of emotions and emotions are most often unconscious – we don't have to think about them, they originate in the part of our brain that assesses danger and motivation. The most common list of main emotions is sadness, anger, surprise, joy, disgust, and fear. Circle these or add them if they are not on the list.
6. Now ask the participants how emotions are different from feelings? Explain that feelings require conscious thought and can last much longer than emotions. Feelings are reactions to those emotions.

Contextualization:

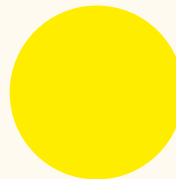
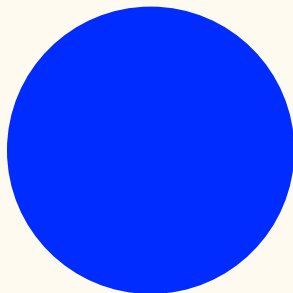
Culture can often dictate how one expresses their feelings (including due to age, gender, etc.). Reflect on what this means in terms of experiencing these feelings and if and how it can influence participants and group dynamics. Take time to discuss how feelings and culture are linked and try to address any question or divergence of opinion.

7. Explain that there are many more feelings than emotions and feelings may not be the same from culture to culture. We learn and experience feelings based on our experiences, our culture, our individual personalities. Underline any feelings they have already mentioned, that is written down on the flip chart. Ask the group to think of as many different feelings as possible. Tell them just to call out different feelings – write them down on a flip chart as they call them out.
8. Once a wide range of feelings have been identified, ask them if they think all these feelings are normal.
9. Ask the group if they think it is important to talk about feelings? Why or why not?
10. Tell the participants that today we are going to begin exploring different emotions more in depth as part of this trust building process. If we are more aware of and can recognize emotions more easily, it helps us trust what we are feeling and know what tools to use to manage these emotions.
11. Emphasize that all feelings are normal and completely natural. There are no bad feelings. We will all experience these different feelings at different times. What is important is learning how to express them or deal with them in ways that are healthy, rather than damaging.

12. Tell them that you will read a series of statements about feelings. After each one you will ask them if it is true or false.

- a. Feelings involve a total body reaction (T)
- b. Feelings are not influenced by your thoughts and perceptions (F)
- c. Feelings can be simple or complex (T)
- d. Feelings can give you energy (T)
- e. Feelings are never mixed. You only feel one at a time (F)
- f. Feelings are often contagious (T)
- g. Feelings are not right or wrong (T)
- h. People often suppress feelings (T)

13. Make sure to discuss each one, especially if the group does not agree on each and ensure you explain why each statement is true or false if needed.



Activity three:

Bodily reactions to emotions and feelings

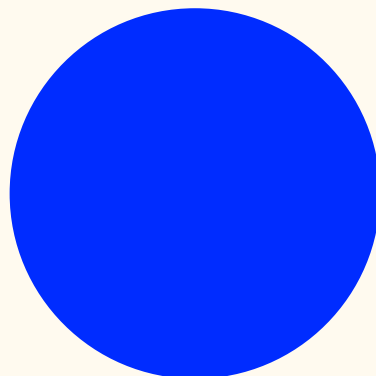
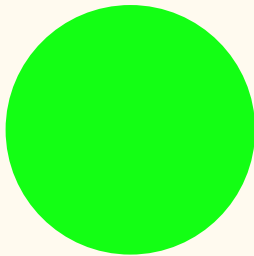
Time: 20 minutes

Steps:

1. Tell the group that we will now do an activity to help us start to identify different emotions/feelings.
2. Give each participant one of the feeling cards with an emotion (Annex III). There should be at least 2 copies of each feelings card. Everyone should have an emotion/feeling that matches someone else. Choose the number of emotions/feelings according to the number of participants.
3. Tell the group that they cannot share their emotion card with others. They must keep it secret. Make sure that everyone knows their emotion. If there are non-literate participants, make sure that they have a card and that you have told them what their emotion is in another room or away from the others.
4. Explain to the participants that they should stand up and walk around the room physically demonstrating their emotion, without showing their card. While they do this, they must try and find another person who has the same emotion. Make sure that participants know that they are not allowed to ask others their emotion word. They must watch the others and find their match. They are only allowed to ask if they are very sure that the other person is their match.
5. Once they find their pair, ask the participants to sit together and tell each other about a time that they experienced that emotion.
6. After everyone has had a chance to talk to their partners, ask the pairs to share which emotion they had to represent.

7. When the group has come back together, go through some of these debriefing questions:

- a. How did you find your emotion pair? What did you focus on?
- b. Which emotions were difficult to recognize? Do we all show emotion in the same way? Do we all experience emotion in the same way?
- c. When you shared your experiences, what did you learn from each other?
 - What was it like to tell someone else about a negative experience?
 - Did your partner help you feel supported when you spoke about a difficult experience? What about when you shared a positive experience? What did it look like when your partner supported you? How did it feel to have someone support you?



Activity four: Understanding psychosocial well-being and emotional support

Time: 15 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask them to think about different ways they deal or work through feelings when they do not talk about them? Make the point that when we allow ourselves to explore and acknowledge our feelings in a healthy way, we are better prepared to cope with difficult feelings.
2. Explain that finding ways to manage difficult emotions is an important part of regaining trust in ourselves if we have lost it. Tell the group that the activities at the beginning and end of each session are meant to build our skills and our “toolbox” for managing difficult emotions.
3. Ask the group for some techniques that they use to manage difficult emotions. You can also give examples of the exercises that we’ve used in the group and what emotions they are good for if the participants are having trouble. (Ex: deep breathing for anxiety, relaxation techniques for stress, hitting a pillow for anger/rage, etc).
4. Tell the group that when we speak about “psychosocial well-being” we mean to generally feel good about oneself and one’s life. It also means to feel confident in our ability to cope with challenges and to be able to address issues. It means that we feel like we can carry out day to day functions.

5. Tell the group that this does not mean that we do not experience difficult emotions, but that we feel equipped and can move through difficult emotions without it causing disruption in our day-to-day lives. Part of being able to do this means being able to name and identify both positive and difficult emotions.

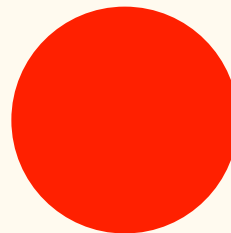
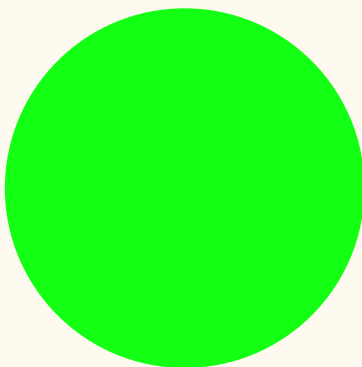
6. What emotions do you think we feel when we have good psychosocial well-being? What are the characteristics of someone with good psychosocial well-being? Help them to bring out characteristics such as confidence, open, self-aware, socially active, aware of our own emotions, active in the community.

7. Close the session by reinforcing the following points:

a. Psychosocial well-being means that we are able to experience a wide array of emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them. It also means that we are able to function and carry out our daily activities while feeling largely happy and supported. We are also able to positively address challenges and difficulties.

b. Sometimes, we need support to do this, particularly from others. In this activity we started experiencing emotional support with our emotion partners.

c. We also started identifying different emotions that may not be expressed or experienced by everyone in the same way.



Activity five:

Closing activity

Time: 15 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask someone to remind the group what the meaning of “psychosocial” is and then ask someone else why it’s important to focus on our well-being.
2. This exercise helps someone who is feeling anxious to calm herself. It can also be used to focus on the here-and-now.
3. Cross your arms in front of you and draw them towards your chest. With your right hand, hold your left upper arm. With your left hand, hold your right upper arm. Squeeze gently and pull your arms inwards. Hold the squeeze for a little while. Find the right amount of squeeze for you right now.
4. Hold the tension and release. Then squeeze for a little while again and release. Stay like that for a moment. Allow participants to repeat this a few times.
5. Close by discussing:
 - a. Ask participants if they have noticed any difference in how they feel, their breathing, their heart rate, their thoughts or their body following the exercise.
 - b. Discuss if you want to add this exercise to the Toolbox.
6. Ask the women if they have any questions about what we discussed today. Answer any questions that come up.
7. Close the session with the closing ritual they have chosen at the end of Session 1.
8. Before leaving, add a resource/word of kindness to the others’ baskets of kindness.

Session 4: Challenges In the Workplace and Stress Reactions

Objectives

- To understand that all emotions are normal as long as they do not disrupt our ability to function day to day.
- To understand the impact of stress and stress reactions.
- To understand coping skills, both negative and positive.
- To understand the importance of expressing and managing emotions positively rather than negatively, especially in the workplace.

Topics covered

- Identifying causes of stress
- Feelings and coping mechanisms: defense mechanisms and their effects
- Identifying individual coping mechanisms

Materials needed

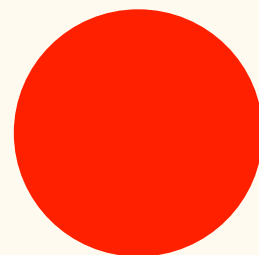
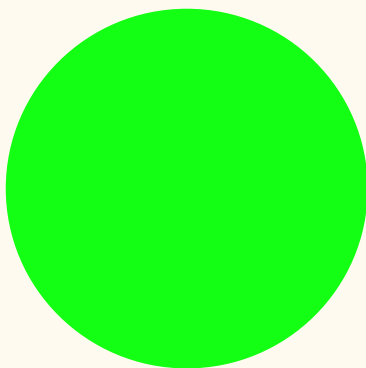
- Flip chart
- Tape
- Markers
- A4 papers

Activity one: Opening ritual and re- capping Week 3

Time: 10 minutes

Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session. Ask if one of the women can volunteer to lead them through the opening.
2. After the opening is finished, ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from Week 3.
3. Spend 5 minutes answering questions.
4. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into Activity 2.



Activity two: What stress is and stress reactions

Time: 25 minutes

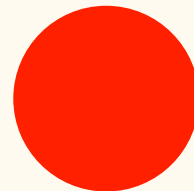
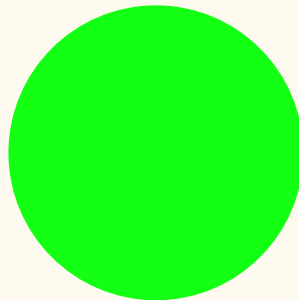
Steps:

1. Say: Completing trainings and looking for work can be very stressful. Stress is a feeling in both the mind and the body because of nervousness, frustration, anger, feeling overwhelmed, worry, and so much more! We will now do an exercise to better identify what stress is and how we react to it.
2. Bring out a flip chart and draw an outline of a body. Explain that we are going to draw the ways that stress feel in our bodies.
3. Ask the participants to think about an “everyday stress” – having enough time to cook dinner, someone being sick in the house, getting into an argument with your friend, or being excited to see a friend after a long time, starting a new job, taking on a new work duty or project etc. What does that feel like in your body? Where in your body do you feel it?
 - a. As participants give you suggestions – ask each to come and draw a symbol for her suggestion on the place she feels it in her body. For example, a headache might be jagged lines across the forehead.
 - b. Then ask the women how stress impacts the ways they interact with others. If they are stressed, how do they treat others? What happens outside of their body, in their environments? They should again come and draw a symbol for this but it can be outside of the body, or originating in the body but going outward.

4. Ask what is the word for stress in everyone's culture? Does it mean the same thing as in Italy/Spain?

5. Say: When we feel stressed our body reacts. Our breathing becomes shallower, our muscles tighten, and our heart beats faster. This is called the stress response. Stress is normal. It is a natural reaction to a perceived threat, challenge, or problem. Our body reacts by increasing heart rate, blood pressure and energy supplies, effectively increasing our awareness and enabling us to react and respond more quickly. Once the threat is passed or has been dealt with, our elevated awareness and reactions can return to normal. However, high levels of stress or stress over a long time can cause things like headaches/migraines, muscle aches/chronic pain, exhaustion, sadness/depression, and even lead to anxiety and burnout, making it hard to do the things we need to do or want to do.

6. Return to the flip chart of the body. Note that we are so much more than our stress. Note that by naming our stressors and identifying steps to reduce stress a little at a time, we reduce its power over us. We can feel safe and grounded in our bodies through proactively managing stressors and surrounding ourselves with supportive systems, people, and engaging in healthy outlets.



Activity three: Managing stress and coping mechanisms

Time: 20 minutes

Steps:

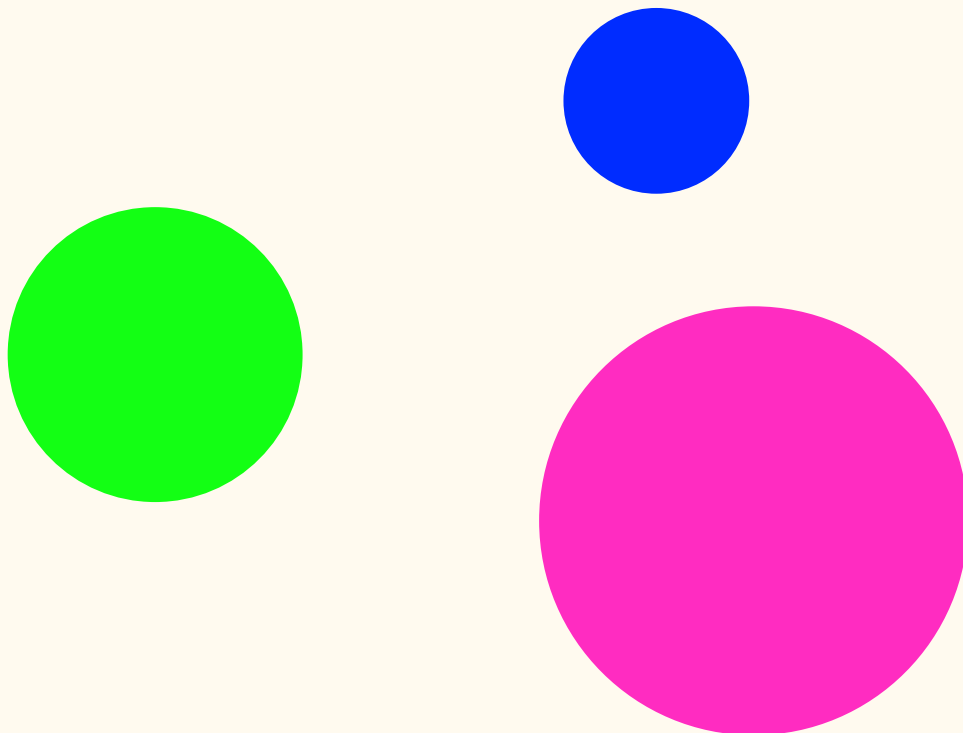
1. Tell the group that we will now do an activity to help us start to identify different coping mechanisms to deal with stress.
2. Explain that we use what we call coping mechanisms to deal with our emotions, including stress. Some coping mechanisms are positive and can help us process these emotions, while others are more negative and help us avoid the emotions we are uncomfortable with, rather than work through them. We often call these negative coping mechanisms “defenses” because we use them to avoid feelings that might be too difficult, too threatening or that we may not know how to express.
3. Defenses can become harmful when we use them all the time to avoid uncomfortable feelings. Defenses can allow us to avoid feelings or problems causing feelings that are uncomfortable and this can create distance between us and the people we love if we are avoiding an area or action that is making us unhappy.
4. Ask the group to think of times when they have used defenses. What did they use? Were they used constructively (like in a time of crisis) or are we using them repeatedly without addressing our emotions? How do you know when defenses are becoming negative?
5. Now ask the group to think of coping mechanisms they use that aren’t defenses but help process and move through difficult emotions in a constructive way. You may need to give an example or two from your own life. Common suggestions include exercise, visiting with friends, humming/singing, music, church or religious services/prayer, meditation, playing with our children, etc.

6. Ask them to write down what works for them and place it on the body shape from activity 2. Ask them to share with the large group the activities that help them the most to calm down, cope, or feel a sense of peace?

7. As participants place different coping mechanisms on the body shape, ask if that mechanism worked for other women. If not, highlight that not everything will work for every person. People are different and will find different mechanisms more or less helpful. What is important is that we experience and practice a wide variety of exercises to find the ones that work best for us.

8. We will practice one simple coping mechanism that help us reduce stress through grounding ourselves in our body. Facilitator demonstrates the fog horn breath technique by inhaling normally and then making the “voo” sound from deep in their gut as they exhale, allowing for as much vibration as possible. As the facilitator inhales, show how to let your breath fill your stomach and chest, even holding a hand on your stomach and chest. Lead the group in doing the breath exercise at least 10 times. If the activity is interrupted by laughter, that is okay. Laughter and humor are one of the best ways to break up stress’s hold on themselves.

9. Remind the group that we are working on developing more coping mechanisms for our Toolbox to ensure that we have plenty of tools to use to process difficult emotions rather than to defend against difficult emotions.



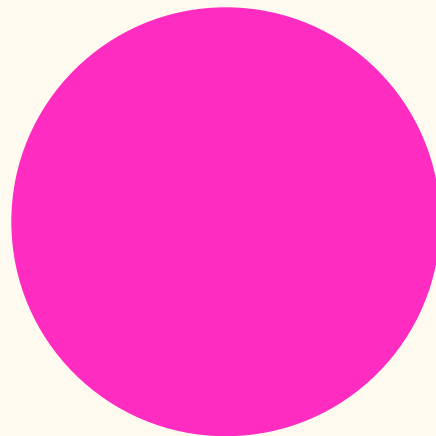
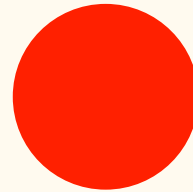
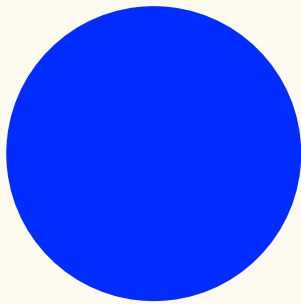
Activity four: Impact of gender stereotypes on perceptions of workplace activities

Time: 25 minutes

Steps:

1. Explain that in many workplaces, people have ideas about how men and women ‘should’ behave. These are called gender stereotypes. They can influence how stress reactions are judged. For example, sometimes men are seen as ‘strong’ when they are firm, but women may be called ‘emotional’ for the same behavior.”
2. Ask participants to think of a time when a woman’s reaction at school, at work, or in your personal life was judged more harshly than a man’s reaction might have been. Or think of a time you felt you couldn’t react the way you wanted because of being a woman.
3. On the same flip chart as before, write two columns: “Appropriate Reactions” vs. “Inappropriate Reactions.”
 - a. Ask: In your culture or workplace experience, what behaviors are seen as appropriate for women when they are stressed? Which are seen as inappropriate? (examples: raising voice, crying, asking for help, staying silent, standing up for oneself).
 - b. After listing, ask: Would these same behaviors be judged differently if done by a man? Why?

4. Highlight that stereotypes can pressure women to suppress or hide emotions, even when expressing them would be healthy. Say that we can't always control stereotypes, but we can learn to respond in ways that protect ourselves and challenge unfair judgments. Expressing stress calmly and assertively helps break stereotypes and shows leadership.



Activity five: Work-related stress and expressing emotions in healthy and positive ways

Time: 25 minutes

Steps:

1. Most people looking for work do not have a job or enough income. This means they are likely worried about money and paying bills. They may have to apply to multiple jobs over and over again, which can cause people to feel rejected or like they are not good enough. If someone does not speak English well, they may feel frustrated or scared to talk in another language – something that is usually required to get a job in Italy/Spain. Sometimes people had a good job before coming to Italy/Spain – a job they felt successful in - and now they are having to do something new and unfamiliar. For some of us it may be the first time approaching the job market, which may feel scary and daunting at times. Sometimes we may have a job that demands a lot of us physically, mentally, or emotionally.

2. Ask women to share out loud what are some of the causes of stress in their current life related to work.

3. Say: All of these things are very stressful! Now that we have discussed why looking for work or managing demands of work can be stressful, let's look at why it is important to try and manage this stress. We do this for a couple of reasons:

- a. It is important to just recognize that searching for a job and work challenges are hard and may take a long time to be resolved!
- b. When we are stressed, it is harder to be motivated, feel confident, and feel well enough to look for or manage work or do other things we need to do.
- c. Because searching for work and managing work challenges are so hard, we may need to do extra things to cope so that we can stay healthy for ourselves and the people we love.

4. Say: Stress and emotions are normal, but the way we express them can have very different outcomes. If we express emotions in harmful ways, it can hurt our relationships and our chances at work. If we express emotions in healthy ways, people see us as strong, capable, and trustworthy.

5. Say that we will now do an exercise to reflect on negative and positive ways of expressing stress in the job place.

6. Divide participants into pairs or trios. Give each group a workplace stress scenario (e.g., a customer is rude, a co-worker takes credit for their idea, a boss gives a last-minute task).

- a. Ask them to act out two versions:
 - i. Negative response (defensive, angry, or withdrawn).
 - ii. Positive response (calm, clear, assertive).
- b. After each role-play, ask the large group: Which reaction would you prefer if you were the co-worker or manager? Why?

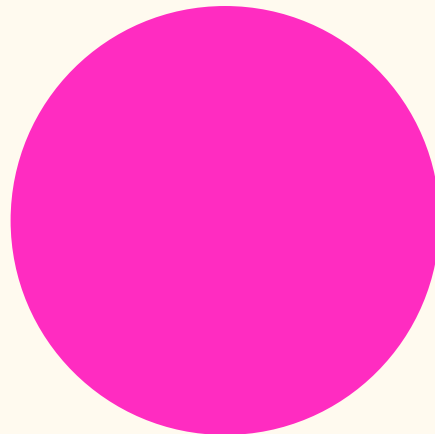
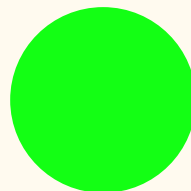
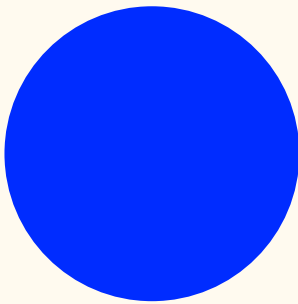
7. Emphasize that positive expression doesn't mean hiding feelings — it means communicating them in ways that protect our dignity, relationships, and health. State that the more we practice healthy expression, the more people see us as confident and professional.

Activity six: Closing the session

Time: 5-10 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask the women if they have any questions about what we discussed today. Answer any questions that come up.
2. Close the session with the closing ritual they have chosen at the end of Session 1.
3. Before leaving, add a resource/word of kindness to the others' baskets of kindness.



Session 5:

Shame, Self-blame and

Reclaiming Confidence

Objectives

- To name and understand shame and self-blame
- To understand the difference between shame and guilt
- To identify positive ways to address shame
- To explore strategies to demonstrate compassion.

Topics covered

- Understanding the difference between shame and guilt
- Worthiness vs. Shame
- Identifying positive strategies for addressing shame

Materials needed

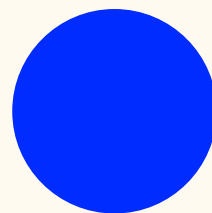
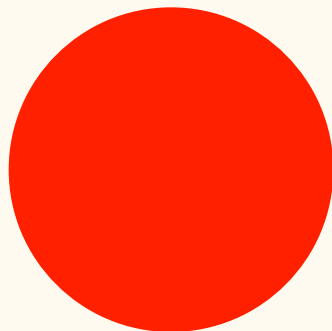
- Flip chart
- Tape
- Markers
- A4 papers

Activity one: Opening ritual and re- capping Week 4

Time: 10 minutes

Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session. Ask one of the women to lead the opening ritual.
2. After the opening is finished, ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 4.
3. Spend 5 minutes answering questions.
4. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two.



Activity two:

Guilt and shame

Time: 20 minutes

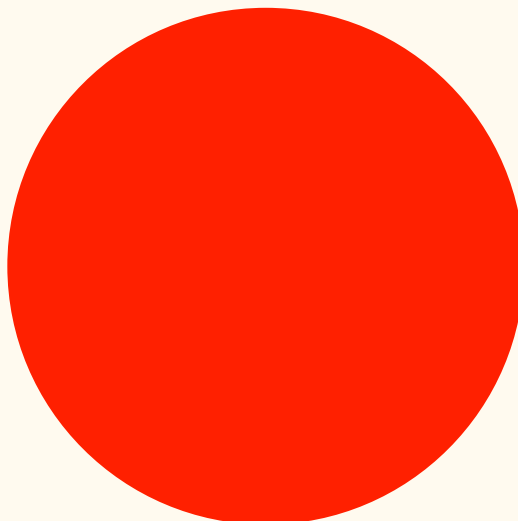
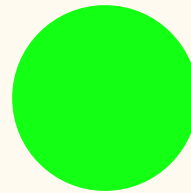
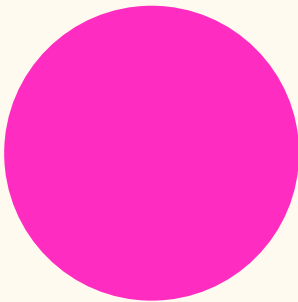
Steps:

1. In week 3 we started talking about feelings and emotions. Remind participants about the difference between feelings and emotions.
2. Ask participants to reflect on emotions they have felt in the past week. Probe with examples, if needed. As we see, some emotions are more positive, others negative. Today we will explore guilt and shame and how these may affect us.
3. Ask the group to split into four small groups and discuss what they think the difference is between feeling shame and feeling guilt.
4. Tell them to focus on how these two similar emotions feel differently when we experience them. Give them 5 minutes to discuss.
5. After 5 minutes have passed, give them 2 more minutes to come up with a definition of shame and a definition of guilt.
6. Ask each group to present their definitions for each. Once they have all finished, tell them that guilt and shame, while similar, are different. The easiest way to explain the difference is this:

- a. Guilt is – “I made a mistake. I messed up. But I am still a good employee”
- b. Shame is – “I only mess up; I am not able to do this job. I am not a good person”

7. Tell them that there is a powerful difference in experiencing feeling bad doing something vs. feeling like you are a bad person who is not worthy or deserving of love. Remind them that we are all deserving of love and tell them that next week we will focus on practices to remind ourselves of that.

8. Tell them that when we are able to recognize that we feel bad or that we made a mistake but still remember and believe that we are worthy and deserve love and care, then we are feeling worthiness.



Activity three: Compassion and worthiness

Time: 25 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask the participants to take a moment to identify a time they experienced shame. Tell them to make sure that it is a memory that they feel comfortable sharing with the group.
2. Ask the participants to also identify a time when they experienced worthiness or belonging. Again, it must be a memory that they feel comfortable sharing.
3. When we think about shame, it is often self-reinforcing – meaning that we feel ashamed for feeling shame. One of the ways we start to break this cycle is by recognizing our own worthiness and having compassion for ourselves.
4. Ask the group what it looks like to have compassion for others? What does it look like to have compassion for us?
 - a. Who is it easier to have compassion for, us or others? Why is it hard to have compassion for us? Why is it hard to recognize our own worthiness?
 - b. What do we tell ourselves when we are feeling shame? Are these words kind or cruel to us? Think about this as we do this exercise.

5. Discuss self-compassion:

- a. It's often easier to feel compassion for others than for us
- b. If we wouldn't say something to our mother or our child in this situation, we should not say it to ourselves either
- c. Compassion is not about being perfect
- d. Compassion is about giving ourselves space and permission to accept that we are not perfect

6. Discuss shame and self-blame:

- a. We often feel shame because we are blaming ourselves for something
- b. We might blame ourselves for a traumatic event - but a traumatic event is not our fault
- c. We might blame ourselves for something like burning dinner – but things like that is something that happens to all of us
- d. None of us are perfect
- e. All of us mess up sometimes
- f. The key is to respond to those moments with kindness to us.

6. Please take a few minutes to reflect on what you can do to show yourself more compassion in the future. What strategies do you already use? What strategies could you adopt?

7. If comfortable, ask participants to share with others the strategies that they have reflected on with the group.

Activity four: Closing the session

Time: 5-10 minutes

Steps:

1. Explain that we will close with an exercise to deepen and anchor positive feelings and messages. We will be doing an exercise that uses tapping on our bodies combined with positive spoken messages.
2. Choose a sentence about yourself that includes one of your strengths. For example, “I am a good and dedicated person”, “I am skilled”, “I am strong”, “I am smart”. You will either say the sentence softly to yourself or repeat it in your head.
3. Put your right-hand palm down on your left shoulder. Put your left-hand palm down on your right shoulder.
4. Say the sentence first then pat your right hand on your left shoulder, then your left hand on your right shoulder. Do ten pats altogether, five on each side, each time repeating your sentences.
5. Close by discussing:
 - a. Ask participants if they have noticed any difference in how they feel, their breathing, their heart rate, their thoughts or their body following the exercise.
 - b. Discuss if you want to add this exercise to the Toolbox.
6. Close the session with the closing ritual they have chosen at the end of Session 1.
7. Before leaving, add a resource/word of kindness to the others’ baskets of kindness.

Session 6: Communication: Strengths, Skills, and Speaking Up

Objectives

- To understand the importance of interpersonal and professional communication skills and identify strengths and skills and growth areas
- To understand how to speak up and advocate for oneself and others, including how to establish/clarify communication preferences, and give and receive feedback
- Identify best practices for setting personal and professional boundaries
- Practice transferring the learnt communication skills to training, work and personal life situations

Topics covered

- Interpersonal skills and professional communication best practices
- Self-advocacy and establishing expectations for communication and boundaries
- Strong communication and workplace expectations
- Giving and receiving feedback

Materials needed

- Flip charts
- A4 paper sheets
- Markers
- Printed poster – Interpersonal communication skills

Preparation

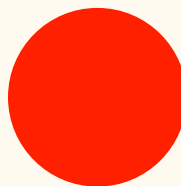
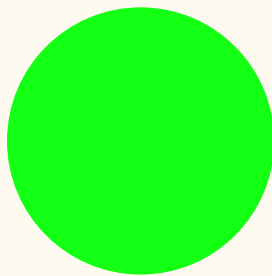
- Have two posters ready with two lists of communication skills for activities two and three

Activity one: Opening ritual and re- capping Week 5

Time: 5 minutes

Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session. Ask if one of the women can volunteer to lead them through the opening.
2. After the opening is finished, ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 5.
3. Spend a few minutes answering questions.

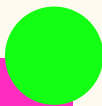


Activity two: Importance of inter- personal and profes- sional communication skills

Time: 15 minutes

Steps:

1. Give participants a blank sheet of paper. Ask them to follow your directions in silence.
2. Read out the following without regard to the progress of participants.



This activity will highlight poor communication skills to set the participants up for a discussion of effective communication skills.

Directions

- a. Close your eyes
- b. Fold your sheet in half
- c. Tear off the upper right-hand corner of the sheet
- d. Fold the sheet in half again
- e. Tear off the upper left-hand corner
- f. Fold the sheet in half again
- g. Tear off the lower right-hand corner
- h. Fold the sheet in half again
- i. Tear off the lower left-hand corner
- j. Open your eyes now and unfold your paper
- k. Compare with others

3. Lead discussion about whether the facilitator's communication was effective by first asking participants to observe the differences in snowflakes and reflect on why they vary so much. Discuss possible reasons as a group:

- a. instructions lacked detail/could be interpreted different ways
- b. listener missed instructions
- c. no way to clarify or ask questions or communicate with others in the group
- d. no non-verbal cues as couldn't see facilitator's body language

4. Ask the participants what difference it would make to their snowflakes if the facilitator had been more complete, clear, concrete, and concise in her instructions.

5. Explain that to get the best and most consistent results in this and any task, good communication is required. Introduce the 5 c's of effective communication.

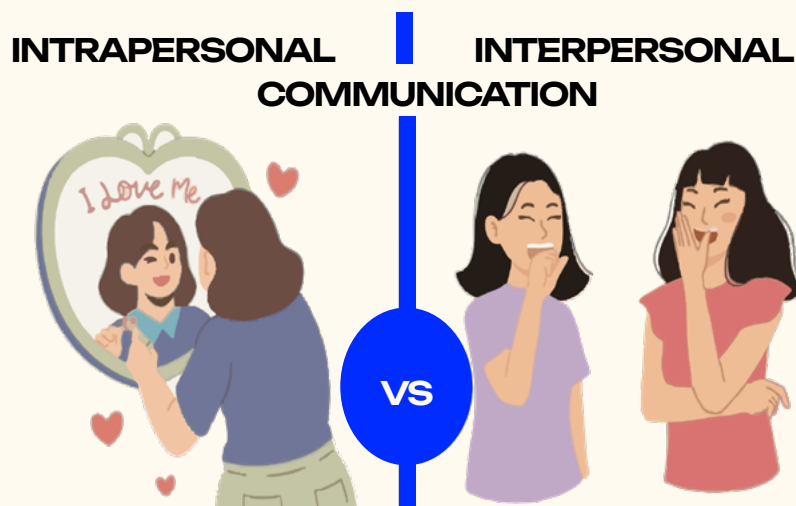
5'cs of Effective Communication	Definition
Complete	Providing all necessary information
Clear/Coherent	Ensuring message is easily understood and ordered in a logical way
Concrete	Being specific and detailed
Concise	Keeping your message brief or an appropriate length for the topic
Courteous/Considerate	Being respectful

6. Ask the participants what type of questions or clarifications they wanted to ask the facilitator but could not. What difference would it have made to be able to ask those questions? Explain that asking and answering questions also known as giving and receiving feedback is a vital part of effective communication.

7. Further explore how it would affect their ability to listen and complete the task if the facilitator communicated the instructions in a patronizing or aggressive manner? Would they have been able to listen and follow instructions?

8. Highlight that truly effective communication requires both the speaker and the listener to mutually engage with one another using their emotional regulation and relational skills aka intrapersonal (within their person) skills or interpersonal skills (between people). Consider using the following image to introduce the two different types of skill sets:

9. Explain that the rest of the session will focus on practical ways to cultivate communication skills that will help them improve their personal as well as professional interactions.



Activity three: Identifying strengths and skill growth areas

Time: 20 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask participants to think of examples of great communicators from their life (personal, studies, and work).
 - a. How do these individuals make others feel when they communicate?
 - b. What other skills do good communicators have?
2. Write participant's initial answers on the board.
3. Display the following poster to further explore what interpersonal (between people) skills or intrapersonal skills (within their person) a good communicator possesses.

Personal skills foundational to effective communication	
Intrapersonal Skills	Interpersonal Skills
Emotional Intelligence Managing emotions wisely	Communication Clear sharing of ideas
Self-reflection Learning from experience	Active Listening Paying full attention
Resilience Bouncing back from challenges	Empathy Understanding feelings
Stress Management Staying calm under pressure	Teamwork and Dependability Able to be relied upon and working well with others
Goal Setting Planning for the future and achieve goals	Problem-solving/Conflict Resolution Solving conflicts or problems

4. Explain that speaking up, giving and receiving feedback, and managing conversations effectively can be scary or seem beyond our current capacities, especially when speaking to authority figures, such as supervisors or teachers, or about something important to us; however, communication skills are crucial to personal and professional success. Developing skills for effective communication is like developing muscles. It can be uncomfortable to exercise the new skills at first, but we become stronger with repetition.

a. Emphasize that communication about needs and performance will benefit them and help them improve skills and knowledge through accessing additional support and resources, increase quality of work and team dynamics, and increase career prospects.

5. Ask the participants to identify and write down 2 interpersonal/intrapersonal or communication skills they already have and add it to their resource baskets.

6. Ask them to write 1 skill they would like to improve their communications. Have them form groups of 3 and practice the following three listening skills in discussing something they have learned from the course.

7. Discuss as a group different ways to practice active-listening, problem-solving, and the 5 c's daily.

a. Active listening: With children, friends, spouses, practice pausing before rushing to respond to check your understanding. Can also practice open-ended questions and giving and receiving well thought out feedback.

b. Emotional intelligence/regulation: practice identifying emotions that arise in your conversations and self-regulating before responding (taking a deep breath, taking a step away, getting a glass of water).

c. Confidence and Clarity: Practice speaking with confidence in the mirror, in a self-recorded video, or to a friend about something you have learned through a training or work project or a question that you would like to ask to increase your understanding.

Activity four: Listening and speaking up: self-advocacy and boundaries

Time: 15 minutes

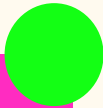
Steps:

1. Ask participants to reflect on crucial conversations they have been involved in that have resolved issues or changed the course of relationships or events. Conversations could be with parents, children, spouses, extended family, friends, employers, teachers, community members, social workers, etc. Facilitators can share an example and then guide participants through the following reflection questions.

- a. Would the result have been the same if they or another person had not listened actively, spoken up at the right time, or managed the conversation well?
- b. What about the approach, questions asked, or response helped foster exchange and bring about change or resolution?
- c. Facilitator can supplement participant's answers with the following: empathy, open-mindedness, directness or confidence, approach/tone, or presentation of a well thought out solution.

2. Introduce the term self-advocacy. Definition: taking initiative to communicate your needs and wants. Explain that speaking up is a form of self-advocacy and is vital to achieving personal growth and career goals. Highlighting that in work cultures, speaking up at the right time in the right way is highly valued. In fact, job candidates and employees who advocate for themselves appropriately are more likely to receive job offers and promotions. When speaking up about something job-related, it is not considered disrespectful to make suggestions and work-related requests and disclose personal challenges and needs that affect or improve your ability to perform your work. Self-advocacy should always follow the 5 principles of effective communication.

3. Note that it is normal to feel uncomfortable about raising personal needs and challenges, shortcomings, problems, or other's problematic behavior in any situation but especially in the workplace. Ask participants to discuss in small groups of 2-3 how communication norms and taboos in their family, culture, or religion might make certain conversations especially uncomfortable for them.



Contextualization: Many cultures with great respect for teachers, religious leaders, or other authority figures may find it difficult to have two-way or open exchange with instructors or supervisors as cultural customs may be simply to receive instruction or advice from those in positions of authority.

4. Bring the group back together and allow sharing for 3-5 minutes.

5. To support real-life applications, share and solve problems around the following scenario:

a. Sadiqa began a new role in an IT department in a hospital. For the first two months she has accepted the advice of her colleague, Ahmed, to not unduly burden very busy medical staff with more than one follow-up email to complete necessary laptop program updates or security training; however, Sadiqa is worried about the security risks as the number of incomplete training and missed updates grows. She feels the need to raise the issue with the network supervisor, Giovanni.

i. What fears or personal/cultural barriers might she have to overcome to address the issue?

ii. What would be an appropriate way to approach her supervisor?

iii. What different communication skills would be important for her to sharpen in preparing for a conversation?

iv. What solutions could she bring to the conversation?

6. Break into groups of two and have one from each group practice raising the issue and a solution as if they were Sadiqa and the other respond and ask questions as if they were the supervisor. Come back together as a large group. Have them discuss what went well in the communication and what was hard for them about the activity as well as how they could build their confidence by practicing these skills. Was there constructive sharing of feedback about any solutions offered by the person playing Sadiq or were any limits, timeframes, or boundaries set around how to engage with staff not accomplishing required IT trainings or laptop updates?

7. Ask the participants to think about what personal or professional boundaries or limits they have had to establish in the past. Discuss as a large group how personal boundaries support healthy communication and personal or workplace dynamics.

a. Boundaries and intercultural competency enable everyone to be comfortable, especially in the workplace where our different and intersecting identities play out in interactions.

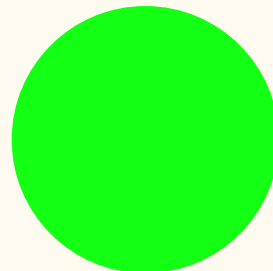
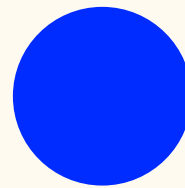
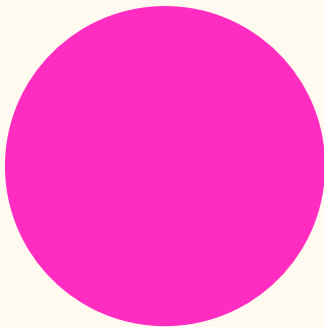
b. Emphasize that raising such issues and getting support in the workplace through human resources staff and protections and support offered are a right they have in the workplace.

Activity five: Closing the session

Time: 5 minutes

Steps:

1. 1. Share that next week will be the final session and will focus on goals moving forward.
2. Ask the women if they have any questions about what we discussed today. Answer any questions that come up.
3. Before leaving, add a resource/word of kindness to the others' baskets of kindness.



Session 7: Looking forward

Objectives

- To review the main topics and issues covered in previous weeks
- To celebrate the completion of the group and terminate the sessions in a positive way
- To reflect on our goals and the support systems we have created

Topics covered

- Reviewing previous sessions
- Celebrating our communities
- Goal reviews
- Saying goodbye

Materials needed

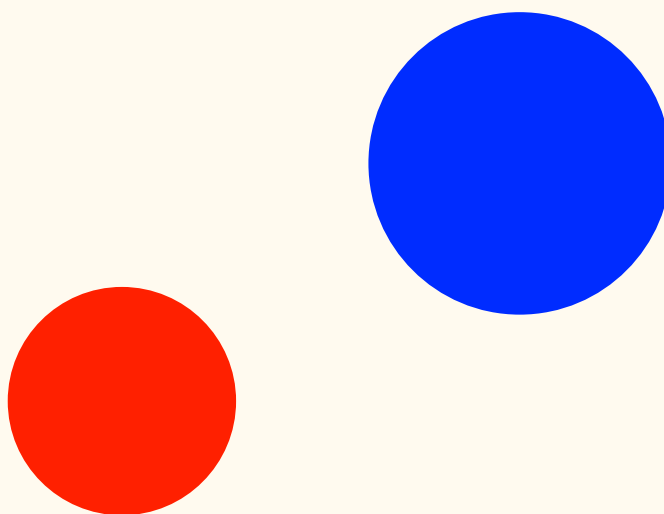
- Flip charts
- Tape, glue
- Markers
- Goal sheets

Activity one: Recapping previous weeks

Time: 10 minutes

Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session.
2. Ask a participant to lead the ritual.
3. Spend 5 minutes answering any questions about the previous session.
4. Introduce today's topics. Explain that as we move into our last sessions we want to wrap up and look toward the future.



Activity two:

Tree of life

Time: 60 minutes

Steps:

1. Tell the group that as we come to a close, we want to take time to reflect on what we've experienced and how we can use this as we move forward into a new stage.
2. Hand out paper and drawing materials. Tell the women that we will each draw a tree. The tree should include the roots, the ground around the tree, branches, leaves, and fruit of some kind. Every tree will be unique to the woman who draws it.
3. Give the women 5-10 minutes to draw their tree. Once everyone has finished drawing the tree, explain that each part of the tree represents a different part of their lives. As we go through the different parts of the tree, women can write words/sentences that represent each different part, or they can draw symbols. The different parts of the tree are:
 - a. Roots –What makes you the person you are today
 - b. Ground – Their daily life now
 - c. Trunk – Their unique skills and strengths
 - d. Branches – Hopes, wishes, goals for the future
 - e. Leaves – people who are important to them/sources of support

4. Give a few prompts and things to think about as they add to the drawing of the tree.

For the roots, ask them to reflect on:

- a. Where they come from (i.e. village, town, country);
- b. Their family (origins, family name, ancestry, extended family);
- c. Education and work experiences they had in the past;
- d. Other experiences that defined them

For the ground, ask them to reflect on:

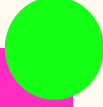
- a. Where the participant lives now
- b. What activities or routines the participant engages in everyday
- c. Common chores and activities
- d. Courses/training they are doing. Jobs they are doing

For the trunk, ask them to reflect on:

- a. Skills they have learned through this group, including
- b. Talents
- c. Things that they do well or things that they are proud of about themselves
- d. Things that other's in this group have said they do well
- e. Special skills, like being kind to others, taking care of others, (these may be things that they do every day without thinking much about)f. their strengths.

For the branches, ask them to reflect on:

- a. New goals short and medium term for the future
- b. New hopes long term for the future



Goals and hopes can be small and personal or bigger – like wishing for an end to war or being able to return home to country of origin or hopes to find a job, hope to organize a dinner with someone they haven't seen in a while.

For the leaves, ask them to reflect on:

- a. Support systems and individual sources of support. (This can include other members of the group, family members, etc.)
- b. People that are important to them – it does not matter if some of the important people in their lives have died. If the person is/was important to them, they should put them on the leaves. Make sure that everyone knows that it is ok to label the names of those who have died or disappeared. These people are still important to us, even if they're no longer in our day-to-day life.

5. Ask the women to review all the different parts of their tree. If they want to add anything to the different parts, they can. Now we will take a closer look at the branches (hopes for the future) and their original past, present, and future drawing.

Activity three: Looking to the future

Time: 20 Minutes (of the 60 minutes in tree of life)

Steps:

1. Once everyone has their drawings, ask them to review the goal they set at the start. Did they accomplish their goal? Or do they still need to work on their goal? Either way, we are going to continue looking to the future.
2. If they have not accomplished their goal yet, they should think about what skills and support they identified in their trunk and leaves that will/can help them accomplish their goal.
3. If they feel like they have accomplished their goal, then ask them to take a few minutes to review the goals and hopes in the other branches. They should choose one to focus on so that they feel like they can work towards currently. What skills and support would help them with this new goal?
4. Tell them that they should reflect on the steps they need to take to accomplish their goals (either new goals or the goal they are working on from the beginning of the group). You can give them homework to fill out the SMART Goal Sheet at home as they strive to achieve present or newly set goals. Use SMART Goals Worksheet - The Management Center.

Activity four: Closing the session and saying goodbye

Time: 20 Minutes

Steps:

1. Tell the participants that we have now reached the end of our session. We will take the rest of our time together to say goodbye.
2. Ask the women to rejoin the circle for the last time.
3. Ask the participants if there is anything that they would like to share with the group. A positive experience? Something they have learned? A technique they will take with them when they go?
4. Let the group take turns sharing as long as they want/have things to say to each other.
5. As they finish speaking and sharing, thank them again for spending these 7 weeks together with us.
6. Remind them that you will be in touch with some final paperwork to do next week but they will do this individually.
7. Before leaving, write one final resource/word of kindness to fill each other's baskets of kindness. They are now ready to be taken home and opened in times of need.

Annexes

Annex 1

Mood thermometer



How do you feel today?



Happy



Frustrated



Calm



Worried



Sad



Sleepy



Angry

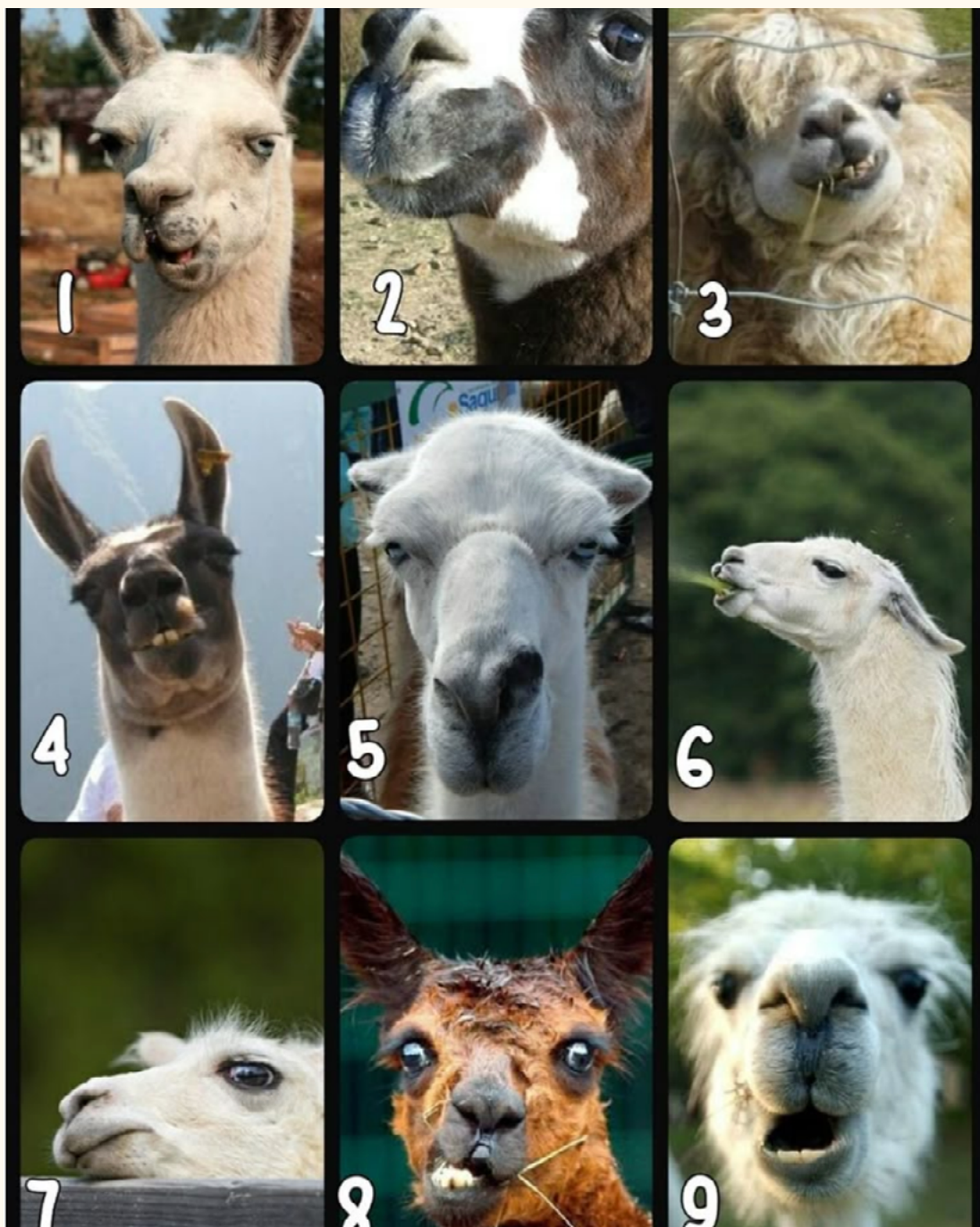


Hopeful



Overwhelmed

Which llama do you feel like today?



On a scale of Cat, how are you doing today?



Annex 2

Mood SMART Goals and How to Write One

Initial	Write the goal you have in mind
GOAL	

S	What do you want to accomplish? Who needs to be included? When do you want to do this? Why is this a goal?
SPECIFIC	

M	How can you measure progress and know if you've successfully met your goal?
MEASURABLE	

A	Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, can you obtain them? What is the motivation for this goal? Is the amount of effort required on par with what the goal will achieve?
ACHIEVABLE	

R	Why am I setting this goal now? Is it aligned with overall objectives?
RELEVANT	

T	What's the deadline? And is it realistic?
TIME-BOUND	

SMART	Review what you have written, and craft a new goal statement based on what the answers to the questions above have revealed
GOAL	

Example

Goals	Strengths	Barriers	Actions to be taken	Person Responsible	Target date	Status
Write a CV in the English format	Professional certification Transferable Skills Existing CV	Limited job search skills	Job Coach to send client some CV templates	Job coach	Today	
			Client to review and start to fill a CV template	Client	Over the next week	
			1:1 session to review and finish CV	Both	In 2 weeks (XX.XX-.XXXX)	
			Attend CV workshop / JRT to build understanding	Both	Next cohort in 3 weeks	

Annex 3 - Feelings Card

Happiness	Excitement	Calm	Pride
Hope	Curiosity	Tiredness	Nervousness
Sadness	Frustration	Loneliness	Anger
Confusion	Anxiety	Gratefulness	Grief