



# Intelligent Euregional Emotional Exchanges IE<sup>3</sup>

## Train-the-trainer event

9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021

in Slovenia – Ljubljana



This study trip was made possible by funding from the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union

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In this final report you can read an overview of the study trip program:

**Day 2 contains the report of:**

- first day of the training program

**Day 3 contains the report of:**

- second day of the training program
- tourist trips to Lake Bled and Ljubljana old town and castle

**Day 4 contains the report of:**

- third day of the training program

**Day 5 contains the report of:**

- short evaluation of the study trip

## Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2021

Authors: Dunja Radermacher, René Esser

### Introduction, expectations & icebreaker

Our official program started in the morning of Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> of November.

The trainer Andre Juricko greeted the group and gave a brief overview of the program of the upcoming days.

At the start, an introduction round of the participants combined with a method to “break the ice” took place. First of all, each participant selected a picture card with a personal reference from the game "Dixit".



Subsequently, the participants introduced each other by describing their tasks within the school, the expectations for the training, as well as their reference to the selected picture card. This method is also suitable in dealing with students. Either as icebreaker for introducing each other or to get an easier access to the emotions via the pictures within personal conversations.

### World of emotions

Emotions prepare our body for action, help us to make the right decision and they are a key component in relationships with others. Even unpleasant emotions have important functions, they are not bad overall. For example, anxiety can remind you to be cautious in dangerous situations. However, if it is pathological it can also be a burden.

Especially for adolescents and young adults, dealing with their own emotions means a special challenge. They often have strong emotional fluctuations, impulsive reactions or they get overwhelmed by their feelings. It is difficult for them to name the feelings exactly or to find right ways to deal with it.

## Self-awareness

In EQ-theory self-awareness is an important basis for the ability to deal with your emotions. In the training, the participants collected and discussed different strategies to support students' self-awareness.



Another important problem faced by many students is the ability to perceive and name emotions accurately. They often have a small vocabulary of emotions. It is an essential requirement to recognize and name emotions, in order to finally find the right way to deal with them.

In the next step, this gives the students the opportunity to better listen to their own emotions. What does this feeling tell me? How can I respond to this emotion? This brings the entire process into consciousness and it becomes easier to react in a well-considered manner.

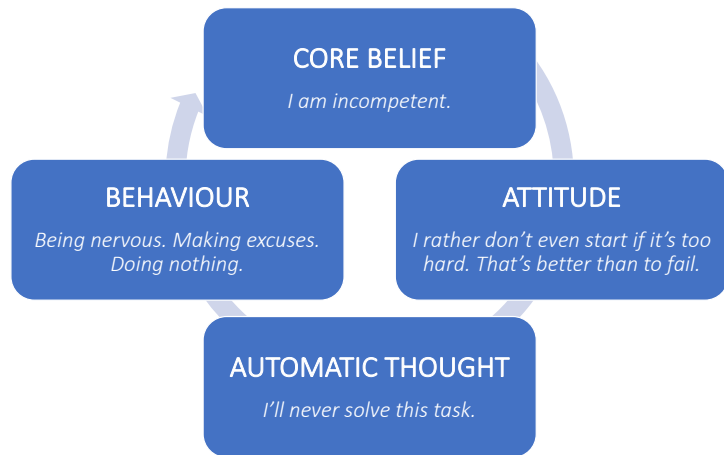


### Mind burdens

Our thoughts have tremendous power over our emotions and behaviour.

The way we interpret the situation is often far away from rational thinking.

Dysfunctional thoughts are learnt, repeated and wired into our brain.



Many students deal with and become constrained by mind burdens. To overcome this, they have to reduce their negative core beliefs. This takes a lot of time and requires the support of teachers and school counsellors. Even small successes must be recognized as such, so that self-confidence is gradually strengthened and mind burdens are reduced.

## Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> of November

Authors: Dunja Radermacher, René Esser

### Power of mind

On Wednesday morning we started with an exercise that the group should keep in mind for longer. In the “Morhan Code” game three groups of five played against each other. In each group there were two “architects” and three “builders”. The architects had to pass on a given pattern of building blocks in different colors and shapes to the builders. The difficulty was that it was not allowed to speak or to have eye contact to the other part of the group. A Morse alphabet and a selection of Chinese letters formed the basis for communication between the two halves of the group. With the help of the Morse alphabet, the groups could communicate through sounds or whistles or write messages on paper using the Chinese letters. Before the game started, the groups had a few minutes only to develop an idea for a game strategy.

After the end, the feelings during the game and the way to deal with them were exchanged and discussed. The game was deliberately designed in such a way that it challenges and sometimes overwhelms the participants. This created a feeling similar to what students feel when they are faced with seemingly unsolvable tasks.



### Fixed and growth mindset

For successful learning the inner attitude is important. Many students have a fixed mindset and negative emotions towards learning. Failure is often blamed on others or ascribed to one's own inability. Even successes are recognized as coincidence or luck not as own merit. Teachers should help their students to recognize even small achievements and to perceive them as results of their own efforts. Closely related to this is the ability to perceive and regulate one's own emotions.

### Regulating emotions

Students often get overwhelmed by their emotions. They think they cannot influence or control them. They need to learn strategies to deal with their emotions rather than blocking them. There are various options from which everyone has to learn individually to choose the right one. For this, the students must first be able to perceive their emotions and to name them appropriately.

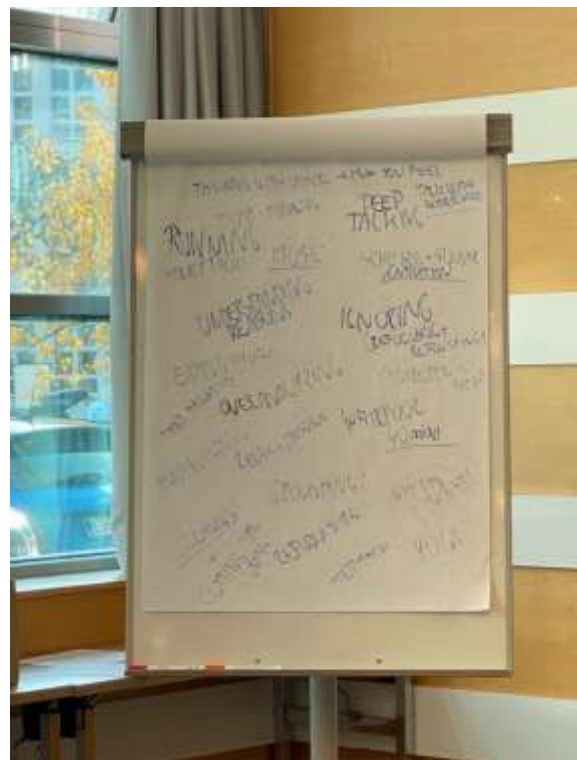
At this point, various exercises for perceiving one's own emotions as well as exercises for naming and getting to know different emotions can expand the students' abilities.



In an exercise from the training called the “Game of feelings”, we worked in groups of four or five. Each group got allocated a different emotion. The groups had to find a description for that emotion, which even a ten-year-old child could understand. Furthermore the groups had to find a movie-scene, in which this emotion is shown and share personal experiences about this emotion. This exercise can also help students to expand their vocabulary of emotions.

Emotions cannot be suppressed for a long time, they keep catching up with us. Therefore, it does not make sense to prevent emotions. Instead, one should accept it and decide how to respond to it. This is how you take responsibility for your emotions.

In the training we collected various strategies for regulating emotions, just as one could do with the students.





## Wednesday afternoon – touristical trip to Lake Bled and Ljubljana Castle



On Wednesday afternoon, the participants had free time, which they used to explore some of the most famous tourist attractions in Slovenia. One part of the group went to Lake Bled and spent the rest of the day in the beautiful nature. The other part of the group remained in Ljubljana to explore the old town and Ljubljana Castle.



## Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> of November

Authors: Dunja Radermacher, René Esser

### Regulating Emotions

We can react to emotions in one of four different ways.

1. Magnifying emotion (usually with thinking). We become overwhelmed by it and lose control.
2. Taking emotion as it is and going with the flow.
3. Distancing from emotion (changing attention, suppression, defence mechanisms, alcohol...).
4. Managing emotion through self-awareness.

In the training we discussed an example scenario from students' lives in groups. The task was to run through the given scenario and the different ways to react and regulate the emotions. This could also be a method to discuss the different ways of regulating emotions with students.

Extreme emotions are like driving fast on the motorway: they are difficult to control, it is difficult to perceive the surroundings clearly and if there are warnings or obstacles it is difficult to stop in time.

A proven strategy to deal with this is the "STOP" strategy:



## STOPP!

**Stop:** pause for 5 seconds.

**Take** a breath: one slow calm breath in and one very slow breath out.

**Observe:** What am I thinking? What am I telling myself I should do? What am I feeling in my body?

**Pull Back:** Put in some perspective. Look situation from the outside. What advice would I give my friend?

**Practice/proceed:** What's the best thing to do for me, for others, for the situation?



The basis for various strategies for emotional regulation is to first interrupt the action in order to be able to think clearly.

There are different ways and strategies to regulate emotions. In class, we can talk about them and try some of them, for example a meditation, like we did in our group. This can be a starting point for the students to find their individual way and to handle their emotions more competently.

## Strategies for regulation

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
Focus on mind	Challenging your thoughts or letting them go
Focus in body	Meditation, yoga, vitzualization, breathing, exercises, grounding
Withdrawal	Moving away from person, situation or activity
Adding pleasure	Humour, hobbies, socialising
Emotional dialogue	Venting, talking with others
Indirect relaxation	TV, chocolate, coffee, movies
Direct relaxation	Medication

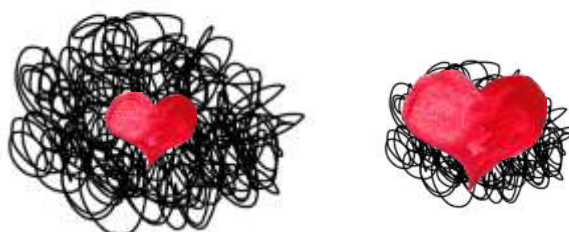
### Mindfulness

Mindfulness techniques are an effective way to deal with mental stress and emotions. These include activities that help you out of everyday stress and circular thoughts, e.g. walking, jogging, dancing or painting. In the training, we tried out a meditation as an effective instrument for mindfulness: Focusing the thoughts on breathing, the relaxation of certain muscles, as well as the focus on positive thoughts, beautiful memories and beloved people helped to relax. Further elements for relaxation can be certain odors or music.

### Regular mindfulness: Pain and suffering

Regular practice of mindfulness techniques doesn't remove tough emotions. But it removes garbage that makes tough emotions unbearable.

Pain will always be there. It is part of a life. But you will be able to accept it. There will be much less suffering in your life.



## Growing through emotions

### Resilience

There are five different types of resilience. In the group everyone considered which of these ways is personally most common and effective. Based on this point, we formed smaller groups according to the five types in which the participants exchanged their personal experiences.



### 5 pillars of resilience

**Energy:** Taking care for physical health and mental energy.

**Future focus:** Having a sense of purpose and direction, being optimistic about the future.

**Inner drive:** Positive mental energy and engagement. Believing in yourself.

**Flexible thinking:** Thinking outside the box, finding new solutions.

**Strong relationships:** Having intimately close relationships, being able to get support.



### Gratitude and Savoring

In the training, we tested an exercise for the school, which is also known as "warm shower". The participants walked through the room and stopped, when they met someone. Then they thanked each other for something in the last days or paid a compliment. It is important for emotional well-being to consciously perceive and enjoy certain situations and moments.

### Intelligent Communication

#### I-Messages

Misunderstandings in communication are often cause for conflicts. In conflicts we are greatly led by our feelings. This complicates a solution or makes it impossible. By blaming and generalizations we give the responsibility to our opponent. A better way to deal with conflicts are I-Messages. They let us listen to our own feelings and needs that we observe and perceive in the situation. A request instead of a command or an accusation increases the likelihood of an empathic and understanding reaction of the opposite.

## „I messages“

We are responsible for our own emotions. But often those emotions occur as a response to someone's actions.

**I messages** deal with the way we express those unpleasant emotions to another person.

With I messages we express our feelings and what we would like to change – in a non-threatening way.

*I feel angry when you don't pass the ball, because I am in a very good position to score. Can you please pass when you are covered and I yell your name?*



### Active listening skills

Active listening is a helpful technique when working with students and parents in order to understand problems and states of mind. At the same time, it can help to find ideas for solutions.

In the training we also did an exercise on active listening. It was noticed that this technique has to be practiced. Checklists with behaviors for the listener as well as lists with questions to ask the other person are helpful for active listening.



## Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> of November

Authors: Dunja Radermacher, René Esser

In the morning of the last day, the group met for an evaluation. For this, the participants completed two Microsoft Forms surveys.

The first survey was about the trip to Ljubljana and the training, the second survey was an interim evaluation of the “Emotional Intelligence”-Project, which would later be compared to the initial evaluation to show the effects of the project.

The first survey on the stay in Ljubljana, the content of the training and the cooperation between the participants in the group showed an overall high level of satisfaction. Both, the stay in Ljubljana and the cooperation within the group were rated very positively despite the different languages. The content-related aspects and effects of the training were also rated positively.

The interim evaluation of the project clearly showed positive effects compared to the initial survey. The participants expanded their knowledge about “Emotional intelligence” and its importance to prevent school drop-outs. They were also more convinced about the importance of the topic for their organization and believed that they could convince and train their colleagues better.

More detailed information on the results of the evaluation can be found in the slides in Google Drive.



## Conclusion

A wide variety of representatives from schools from three different countries took part in this study trip, including teachers, school principals, school social workers and special education teachers.

What they all had in common was that they view school-dropouts as a major challenge and are motivated to learn more about “Emotional Intelligence” as a promising way to face that phenomenon. Due to the different professions and roles represented in the school system, the problem could be viewed from different perspectives within the training.

The training required all participants to explore their own emotions and the ways they deal with them, both in everyday school life and in their private lives, and to share them with the group. At the beginning, there were still a few inhibitions and uncertainties, but it soon resulted in a very trusting and positive atmosphere in which everyone was ready to share personal information. This was also shown by the monitoring of the seminar with the tool “Mentimeter”. The surveys showed a steady increase in trust within the group and interest in the topic.

In the training, the theoretical basics of emotional intelligence were conveyed and worked out in various ways.

All participants shared their personal experiences from everyday school life, so that students’ problems could be illuminated in detail. Numerous ideas to support the students were discussed and developed.

In addition to the ways to support and encourage the students, there were also numerous impulses for the participants to reflect on their own work. This applies to both, how we deal with the students and how we deal with professional demands and stress personally.

After the training, everyone involved showed great enthusiasm and high motivation to put the acquired knowledge into practice and implement it in everyday school life. The personal contacts made and the exchange between the participants are of great value for this future task. This trip was an important component and a successful impetus for the preparation and implementation of “Emotional intelligence”-programs to prevent school-dropouts at the participating schools and beyond. Thus, the main goal of the journey was achieved.

Special thanks go to the people involved from the STEP Institute Slovenia and the organizers of this trip from the EB Stichting.

## Enclosures

### Schedule of the week-program

#### Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Time	Content
9.00 – 10.45	Introduction, expectations & icebreaker My mysterious emotional world: what I know, what I think I know and what I'd like to know about emotions. Basic role of emotions in high school students: providing messages and preparing for actions. Why unpleasant emotions are not negative emotions?
break	
11.00 – 12.45	World without self-awareness. Feelings: role of head and body. Cracking the language of emotions: accurate self – awareness and why it matters.
lunch	
14.00 – 15.45	Simple and complex emotions: lessons learned from the Inside Out movie. Who or what makes our emotions? Emotional square: thought, feelings, body, behaviour. How can I better understand myself?

#### Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Time	Content
8.30 – 10.00	Role of mindset in emotional intelligence and school performance. Experiencing our mindset: practical simulation and its role in leading our everyday and school – related decisions. Designing simple mindset exercises for high school students.
break	
10.15 – 11.45	How self-awareness helps to regulate emotions? What works for me in the emotional regulation? Ancient wisdom in modern outfit: mindfulness. Understanding and practicing mindfulness when you are a teenager.
Catering lunch	
12.15 – 13.30	Fighting or accepting stress: why difference matters? How our body relaxes and how can we learn techniques of relaxations? Visualization, breathing and other techniques in emotional regulation. My mind is a mess: dealing with thoughts overflow.

## Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Time	Content
9.00 – 10.45	The other side of the coin: savoring pleasant emotions. Using internal strengths when dealing with a challenging situations. Creating a safe and accepting space: people can make the whole difference.
break	
11.00 – 12.45	Emotions and (in)adequate social behaviour: what is beneath? ABC of social skills. Social skills in demanding situations: practical examples. Incorporating the assertive communications: I message and other techniques.
lunch	
14.00 – 15.45	How can active listening help me to live and thrive? Practicing EQ communication in demanding situations. Transferring emotional intelligence to the school environment. Evaluation of the workshop. Farewell.