



PEER CARE

Defenders taking responsibility for each other's well-being, in solidarity

Prepared by:

Aset Gagiyeva Elina

Slavinskaya Laura

Ismailova Larisa

Misserbiyeva

Madina Lalayeva

Elina Masayeva

This Manual has been developed by the Resource Center "Development" and the Young Women Development Groups in the North Caucasus with the support and funding from the Civil Rights Defenders

Dear friends!

Though we live in different corners of the world, we do not know each other, and we will probably never meet, we are always happy about the successes and achievements of our fellow human rights defenders. We are constantly inspired by your victories and we feel we are a part of a global movement for human rights.

Every day of our life is an effort to gain what we call respect towards human rights and personal dignity. We take a step and we know we are embarking on a complex journey full of not only victories, but also misunderstandings and threats. The fight for injustice has its own price – troubles, fears, tears, anxiety, insomnia, uncertainty...

In their searches for truth and fighting for independence, the activists often forget about themselves, their families and health. They forget that they also need some rest and attention towards their personal needs. They require help and support too.

We designed this manual to support activists and human rights defenders around the world, to assist in prevention from professional and emotional burnout and improve their psychological and physical health. We offer simple exercises and techniques which the activists could use for themselves or with their colleagues and friends.

This manual is a part of an international project on improving the emotional health of the Northern Caucasus activists. Within the project, we have developed a simple, accessible and effective model for improving emotional health and prevent burnout among activists and human rights defenders. Our model is quite straightforward – we carry out one-day events that we called “Days of solidarity”. We tested this model on activists from the Northern Caucasus of Russia, and Kyrgyzstan and achieved great results, proving its effectiveness and relevance.

“Days of solidarity” – it is a safe space (it could be somewhere outside, in a restaurant or any other place, where people feel comfortable), where people can informally come

together with their colleagues, friend and allies and get support from each other, find new friends and get to know their colleagues better.

During the 'Day of solidarity" the activists carry out different group exercises and other recreational activities.

Therapeutic modules are supposed to help to get rid of fears, worries, to reduce the level of anxiety, to prevent emotional burnout, to help managing stresses and preserving psychological and emotional health within the norm.

This manual offers the most effective exercises and methods to work through some of the issues and conditions raised by the activists and human rights defenders working in the Northern Caucasus and Kyrgyzstan, when we conducted research aimed at identifying the emotional health issues.

We are hopeful that the manual will be helpful to many. It will allow activists and human rights defenders to avoid critical states and take on actions in time to preserve and strengthen their psychological health.

If you have any questions or comments on the content of this manual, do not hesitate to contact us at the following email: info@rc-dev.org

Contents

1. Why “Peer Care” and why “Solidarity Days”	8
2. Our way of doing “Peer Care” - and yours.....	11
2.1. What our solidarity days look like in practice:.....	12
3. What we learned about the needs of defenders in our community:.....	16
4. Theoretical approaches to trauma and guidelines for practical recommendations	18
4.1. Guidelines for work:.....	23
4.1.1. Recognizing our feelings.....	23
4.1.2. Meeting the suppressed feelings (rage, pain, anger, wrath, hatred) and starting to BURST THEM OUT PHYSICALLY.	23
4.1.3. Starting working with our inner child and connecting with it.....	24
5. Therapeutic modules (exercises and techniques, by the issue they are addressing).....	24
<i>Baby picture:</i>	24
<i>Talking to our inner child:</i>	25
5.2. Exercises for positive self-perception, understanding peculiarities of self-perception and perception by others; resource techniques	28
<i>Colorful little people:</i>	28
<i>Movie audition (developing a feeling of personal importance):</i>	29
<i>Strengths and weaknesses:</i>	30
<i>Even if...:</i>	30
<i>My best qualities:</i>	30
<i>I am myself:</i>	31
<i>When I become myself:</i>	31
<i>I am my own friend:</i>	32
<i>Under the rain:</i>	32
<i>Fireflies:</i>	34
<i>My strengths:</i>	35
<i>I want to change in me...:</i>	35
<i>Mirror-signal:</i>	36
<i>My goals:</i>	36
<i>A right to life:</i>	37
<i>I am home, I am at work:</i>	40

<i>I do, whether I want it or not...:</i>	41
<i>Eyes to eyes:</i>	42
<i>Emotions diary:</i>	43
5.3. Exercises to reduce emotional tension and stress related to the lack of time	42
<i>Life circle:</i>	42
<i>Learn to feel the time:</i>	43
<i>What am I doing:</i>	44
<i>Day timing:</i>	44
<i>An effective time management tool – The Eisenhower matrix:</i>	45
5.4. First aid – techniques for emotional self-regulation after the stressful situations	47
5.5. Body-oriented therapy exercises	49
<i>These exercises allow relaxing physically, get rid of irritation and frustration. For these exercises you will need to be dressed comfortably, mats. The participants should be informed well ahead.</i>	49
<i>Grounding:</i>	49
<i>Exercise for hands:</i>	49
<i>Unbending:</i>	50
<i>Exercise for fingers:</i>	50
<i>Fists:</i>	50
<i>Breathing exercises:</i>	50
<i>Bubble:</i>	51
<i>Squeezebox:</i>	51
5.6. Self-support exercises	52
5.7. Yoga exercises	56
<i>Deep breathing:</i>	56
<i>Hanging on the wall:</i>	57
<i>Child's pose:</i>	57
<i>Sleeping pigeon:</i>	58
<i>Twists during the “sleeping pigeon”:</i>	58
<i>Legs up the wall:</i>	58
<i>Sleeping pose:</i>	59
6. Conclusion	60

1. Why “Peer Care” and why “Solidarity Days”

(You can skip this section, if you want to go straight to the exercises.)

“Peer Care” was born out of years of struggling to do our work as defenders in a difficult and dangerous place, and trying to stay safe, sane and healthy doing it. In the North Caucasus region of Russia, many civil society activists have experienced threats and assaults or have witnessed their colleagues get imprisoned, beaten, tortured or even killed. We have been through war, displacement and a lot of pain, and our day-to-day work can be nerve-wracking and frustrating. As women human rights defenders in a deeply patriarchal, traditional society, we also bear the additional burdens of violence against women, harsh limitations on our personal freedom and never-ending “second shifts” of housework and childcare.

Over the years, we have had a lot of help from our international partners and with this help we were able to survive the worst threats. Our international partners would evacuate defenders, send us funds to protect ourselves, share knowledge and offer training.

But eventually, it became clear that despite the genuine concern of our far-away partners, a defender facing urgent threats, right here and now, could only get to safety if she was surrounded by fellow activists, who would spring into action, hiding her, healing her bruises, driving her out of harm’s way. This kind of mutual trust and solidarity in our community of activists is indispensable for our security. The best international mechanisms cannot keep us safe if we cannot trust and rely on our peers, who know best how we live and work right here at home.

Some years ago, as more and more attention was being paid to defender well-being and not just their physical security, some of our international partners started inviting activists to well-being retreats, far away from home in beautiful, safe places, with psychological care, exercise and rest. But these retreats were few and far in between, and by far not all of us ever got a chance to go. Eventually they stopped, for reasons that had nothing to do with what we needed or that we were even told about.

We realized that to be well and happy, to cope with stress and fear, we couldn't sit around and wait for an invitation to a beautiful place far away that might never come. We had to bring defender security and defender well-being home, and we had to take charge of it. We have beautiful places right here where we live - as all of us, anywhere in the world, do. We can and must take care of our mental health ourselves, right here at home and on a regular basis. We have learned a lot about our well-being and the challenges to it, especially that close, supportive and understanding relationships are key to sound mental health.

As women defenders, we also know that the call to practice "self-care", while well-meant, does not always work for us. Sometimes, it feels like another chore we are supposed to do, in addition to our all-consuming activism and the care labor we perform in our families and communities. For many of us, living in deeply patriarchal settings, the very idea of a woman doing something just for herself would trigger so much hostility or ridicule that we choose not to fight that battle, exhausted as we are.

But we knew we could take care of others and let others take care of us, and this is why we called this initiative "Peer Care". Somehow, inviting our friends for a hike in the mountains feels easier and more rewarding than making time to exercise on our own. And being invited to a picnic by the river, realizing that our peers care enough to watch out for us and give us a good time, is a true boost.

We also knew that by surviving threats for many years, we had become experts at surviving and have important knowledge to share.

For the last few years, we experimented with turning this knowledge into action, right at home, with our own resources and our own power. We started holding what we came to call “solidarity days” – regular day-long retreats, either to a beautiful spot in nature or a cozy cabin during the winter, to which we invite activists from our communities. We eat, relax, talk and get to know each other in an informal and inspiring setting. Guided by the skillful experts in our own rows, we work on the mental health challenges we have identified among ourselves.

In 2018, with the support of an Innovation Challenge Award by Civil Rights Defenders, we reviewed what we had learned, tested more and new activities and formats for our solidarity days, and put it on a more systematic footing. We produced this manual, so we can share Peer Care with all of you.

Our message is not “Read this manual and implement solidarity days exactly as we do them” Our message is that you already have everything you need to get well and stay well. You have your community, your friends and colleagues. You know the problems you face and the pain you feel, and you know how to survive them. You know what makes you feel happy, safe and healthy. You have beautiful nature and places that inspire and calm you. You have music, dance, art, games, exercise. You have delicious food you can share. You know how to take care of your peers, and they will take care of you.

2. Our way of doing “Peer Care” - and yours

(You can skip this, if you want to go straight to the exercises)

In the North Caucasus region of Russia, our goal was to “bring defender security home”. Just a few years ago, all training on defender security and defender well-being retreats were held far away from us, by international organizations. After all, our region has long been considered “dangerous” - years of war, terrorism, high levels of repression by the security forces. So for us, building our own defender well-being practices at home was an important, symbolic step of ownership and resistance to violence.

We experimented with different formats. Overnight retreats at resorts in our region were not only expensive and dependent on outside grant funding but they also attracted unwelcome attention and thus made us feel less safe.

We settled on the format of “solidarity days” - day-long retreats. These can be held indoors or outdoors or a combination of both. Beautiful natural settings, fresh air, waterfronts and such have a powerfully positive effect on our participants, and we strongly recommend this component, where it is safe and convenient. Some solidarity days have been held indoors, in trusted, secure spaces that make participants feel safe, like a much-loved youth club. These retreats were low-key enough not to attract any unwelcome attention, even though they brought together large groups of local defenders. Their combined cost of transport, food, activities for materials and paying psychologists and other experts are so low that the region’s civil society organizations can manage to raise them on their own, without designated grant support. In fact, we tested whether costs made a difference, offering some solidarity days where all or some expenses were paid by us and some where participants had to chip in. We found that it made no difference to how much our colleagues benefitted.

2.1. What our solidarity days look like in practice:

· **Extending invitations, showing solidarity.** The central feature of our model is inviting other activists to attend solidarity days, and attending solidarity days arranged by other activists. One organization or an informal group of activists does the planning and invites other activists from their community. The next month, another group of activists takes the lead. No one activist or organization is exclusively responsible for organizing these retreats. Ideally, activists should have the opportunity to attend such an event once every other month or every few months (more, if they choose).

· **Group size.** Groups can be as small or as large as you choose, depending on your goals. To make new friends and get to know colleagues closer, around 15-30 is a good size. We have hosted women-only solidarity days, solidarity days for youth activists and for mixed-gender groups – all of which are useful and necessary in their own way. Participants do not need to all know each other (well), but should be comfortable in each other's company, so that trust can be possible. Solidarity is different from just being with friends. Our goal is to show and receive support from our peer activists. Solidarity also means not excluding anyone. We made a conscious effort to invite a broad range of defenders, to make everyone feel welcome and included, not just our old friends. Solidarity days are an opportunity to overcome cliquishness and competition that sometimes grow in civil society.

· **Families.** Consider making room for defenders' families, especially for young children of women defenders, so the latter's care duties do not prevent them from attending. If children under 14 come along, bring along a childminder as well, so their mothers can relax and don't have to run after them all day long.

· **The perfect spot.** The chosen location should be secure, safe, comfortable, accessible to those with disabilities, quiet and undisturbed, offering confidentiality. It should offer protection from heat or cold. It should offer sufficient space for sitting, resting, drawing, exercise etc. If it is also beautiful and inspiring, even better.

· **Know your needs.** The program should be based on the participants' needs. This manual contains a large number of exercises and components, listed by the needs they address, and which we tested during our solidarity days. These exercises can be led by anyone. They were developed with the help of psychologists, but anyone can facilitate them for their friends and colleagues. Importantly, they are just a suggestion, although we think that they are relevant to many defenders around the world. If your community prefers other techniques, or if you want to adjust our exercises, go for it. Facilitators should be chosen in advance, so they can prepare.

· **Just talk and relax.** While the exercises are important and appreciated by participants, there should be plenty of time for just talking and getting to know each other and for relaxing.

· **Move.** Physical exercise should be integrated based on participants' wishes. This could be swimming, hiking, climbing, yoga, dancing, ball games, whatever participants enjoy. If they prefer just to relax, that's perfectly okay, too. Participants with disabilities or who are elderly or otherwise in less than perfect shape should at all times feel comfortable. Keep this in mind when, for example, a short hike is needed to arrive at a destination. The manual includes yoga exercises meant to work on specific mental health needs.

· **Duration.** A solidarity day usually takes an entire day, to make it truly relaxing and a real get-away. But part of a day also works, if this better suits participants' needs. Groups either leave together in rented vehicles or arrange their own transportation and meet on location, at a convenient time in the morning.

· **Food and drink.** Organizers should ensure that there is sufficient and delicious food, drinks, plenty of water. Eating together creates bonds. Preparing food together – grilling over an open fire etc. – is also a very positive experience. Decide whether you want to emphasize healthy eating or offer foods that signal comfort and indulgence, depending on the needs of your peers. In mixed-gender groups, make sure the women don't do all the cooking, so that harmful gender roles are not perpetuated in this space. For women-only groups, make sure that food preparation is not too much like a chore, of which women have more than enough at home (as one middle-aged female activist says “the best food is that which someone else cooked for me”). Depending on your budgets and objectives, organizers can either provide all the food, or they can ask participants to bring food to share, potluck-style.

· **You know best.** You know your community, your peers, their needs and the social and political context best, and should choose a format that works well in your context. Maybe overnight retreats are safer and simpler for you to organize than they have been for us. Maybe outdoor gatherings are unfortunately never safe, for example if your region is experiencing armed conflict. You should not read our manual as a prescription to be followed exactly. We hope you will read it as encouragement to look around you and create safe spaces, positive experiences and supportive communities in the ways that you know will work best in your context.

3. What we learned about the needs of defenders in our community:

For 3 years of experimenting with collective, local self-care by grass-roots activists for grass-roots activists, we had been following our intuition and empirical observation when it came to deciding which mental health problems defenders might typically experience due to their work. In 2018, when we launched Peer Care, we wanted to put our work on a stronger analytical footing, to make sure we provide the best and most needed support to each other.

For this purpose, three psychologists from the republics of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, who work primarily in the civil society sector, designed a research model to find out what really hurts defenders and what they need help with. They then interviewed 127 activists from these three republics, among them 109 women and 18 men. These activists work in their communities on a wide range of issues, including human rights defense, psychological support, raising awareness about women's rights, legal representation, extracurricular education for girls and boys, youth mobilization, disability rights and socio-economic support for vulnerable families. Some of them are volunteers, some receive their main income from full-time work in the civil society sector.

Our research showed that:

1. 46.5% of defenders are affected by constant procrastination, putting off cases until they become urgent;
2. 38.6% of defenders are affected by lack of emotional support and inspiration.
3. 37.0% of defenders are affected perfectionism, an urgent need to do everything in the best way;

4. 36.2% of defenders showed the desire to please people, even if this is not asked, when it is even at the expense of their interests;
5. 32.3% have problems with motivation and planning, they often do not have enough patience to achieve the final results;
6. 27.6% reported fatigue, depression, loss of self-confidence, increased wisdom and concern, lack of interest and desires, sleeping disorders, attention disorders, decreased performance, changes in daily routine, physical discomfort, tension, anxiety, irritability.

With our research outcomes in hand, six authors, also all local psychologists and activists, drew up the following chapters of exercises, each chapter designed to address one of the challenges we identified as most relevant among our peers.

4. Theoretical approaches to trauma and guidelines for practical recommendations

“I AM PROTESTING”

A joyful little girl was running around a field.

“Mommy, I love this flower so much. And I do not like this bug at all!” she said and stomped her little foot. She was so cute doing so that the bug flew away immediately, because he did not want to annoy the little girl.

“Mommy, why isn’t everything in this world the way I want it to be? Why are there so many tears and bad things? Why cannot we just get rid of them?”

And the girl started putting away everything she did not like. She hid everything inside.

She put away all the people she hated, and hid them into her chest, and locked them into her closets.

The same thing she did to all the events that hurt her.

The same thing happened to the days without her mom, when she missed her and felt sad, and the days without her dad, when he disappeared from her life.

She was so carried away by this process, that she did not even notice how she hid herself into the closet. And she hid her protest, because she did not like it too.

She wanted this world to be beautiful, she wanted to leave only flowers and rainbows, but somehow she became gloomy, she did not like herself, and she hid the true self into the closet too.

She stayed there for a very long time, waiting for someone to clean the world from everything she did not like and let her out.

“If you do not like some, you can protest. Even if you do not like protesting, you can protest against the fact that you do not like protesting. You can stomp your feet if you do not like something. Let everything out of your closet. You do not have to keep everything there even if you do not like some things. Let them be a part of their world and you will have yours the way you create it.”

“Can I really do that?” asked the little girl, and she did not even wait for an answer but ran to the field with flowers

There are around seven hundred different directions and types of psychotherapeutic schools and approaches. All of the existing psychological techniques are aimed at helping people. Each of them solves a certain issue, helps to solve behavioral issues, improve communication, lifestyle. However, it is rather challenging to find one’s own way among these many offers, select the most appropriate methods and techniques, get one’s head around a vast pool of special terms and sophisticated words, and start applying anything in in practice. This is quite a task! Not many people can afford systematically attending a psychologist for long-term therapy.

This part of the manual aims to give the reader an opportunity to track the process of how their personal issues and difficulties came to their lives (where they originate from, how they are formed and how they become a part of their lives). We will also have a look at some practical recommendations and techniques, which have proven to be effective, that will help overcome some of those issues.

You will be introduced to the concept of being 'stuck' on a traumatic experience and you will be able to individually navigate the process of your own healing at a speed that is suitable for you. Different events that happen to us in the childhood, traumas, both physical and psychological, leave their marks. They imprint on us, we accumulate them inside and imprint on our body. That is the reason why body-oriented therapy is so popular and effective. And that is also the reason why different methods used in meditation and affirmation are so ineffective.

It does work, but for a short amount of time. Until we work through all of our hurt feelings and traumas on a body level, they will remain inside of us, in our bodies, but will take different forms. In this disguised format, everything will be even less accessible for work through.

For instance, a child has been punished (it does not matter if it was well-deserved or not; in case it is not the trauma gets deeper). He/she is standing in a corner or is locked in a closet as a punishment for his/her behavior. His/her reaction - rage - is quite natural for any living creature. He/she is mad at his/her parents. When he/she grows-up, they are explained that parents are 'saints' and one cannot be mad at them. This is where something will take place that will have an effect on their lives. the oppressed impulse of rage will not disappear. The energy will just be referred elsewhere (onto oneself - auto-aggression, hurting oneself willingly or unwillingly; aggression towards others - destroying relations).

Otherwise - these feelings will be hidden inside, they will be accumulated for many years. They will appear in adult life through excessive emotional outbursts, panic attacks, diseases, addictions. Or they will get released against some other object of objects, and relations with other people will be built correspondingly - they will be constantly ruined because of fights.

Socially unacceptable and taboo feelings are conserved in us and accumulated until a spontaneous outburst through a fight, deviant behavior, diseases, feelings of the pointless-ness of life and emotional senselessness. However even after the outburst, the accumulated and oppressed feelings do not disappear – they just get weaker for some time as if the steam has been released from a steam-pot, but then they have accumulated again. They keep destroying us and our lives, our bodies and mental health.

Prior to starting working, it is salient for one to understand one thing – THERE ARE NO WRONG FEELINGS! If there are feelings, it means we are alive. The issue of relevance, appropriateness of the way we express these feelings is a different topic for discussion. If we have a certain feeling it means it is rightful. We should allow ourselves to have any feelings. We should recognize our right to feel and live through our emotions.

Recognizing this right is the first step in our personal therapy. It is similar to our need to use the bathroom – yes, sometimes it happens at a wrong time and place, but it is our need. We feel we need to go to the bathroom – we do not offend or hurt anyone by doing so, this is or physiological need, which exists whether we want it or not.

It is the same with our feelings – they exist whether we want them or not, and our task at the first stage is to recognize them and accept. It is even better if we name them – ‘I am mad now’, or ‘I am feeling happy’, ‘I am upset’, ‘I am hurt’.

The next step after acceptance is being able to talk about our feelings, express them in an appropriate manner (or react in a comfortable and suitable place by accessible means).

4.1. Guidelines for work:

4.1.1. Recognizing our feelings.

It is scary, because it can take us back to the times when we were kids, and kids are extremely scared to be mad at adults, especially at meaningful people in their lives – parents, role models, and teachers. This creates a feeling of guilt – ‘How can I? This is wrong. I am a bad person if I have these feelings towards them...’ These thoughts block internal growth and result in inadequate self-esteem, internal conflict and different types of complexes.

Within us we have a vast amount of suppressed feelings. In the majority of cases it is a freeing of rage from the past, suppressed rage, towards our parents, relatives, teachers, etc. many events happen to us in while we grow up, and sometimes we lose some of the memories, we cannot consciously remember about those events. Nevertheless, all of the strong, emotional feelings we experience are responses to events that happened back then, and they are present in our bodies. We do not allow ourselves to recognize those feelings, and if we do not do so, we will not be able to work them through and release them.

Recognizing does not mean living with them. It is just the first step – a mature and accountable step. After recognition the majority of people immediately feel relieved. They feel they have found ‘a way out’.

4.1.2. Meeting the suppressed feelings (rage, pain, anger, wrath, hatred) and starting to BURST THEM OUT PHYSICALLY.

The rule is to physically outburst our emotions, and in doing so, do not destroy ourselves or other people (i.e. we do not want to fight someone or hurt ourselves or others physically or in any other way).

There are many ways to do that, and all of them should be physical – we can fight a pillow, a punching bag, scream, rattle dishes in a dedicated place, or express our feelings by writing with our left or right hands anything we want, without editing or censoring ourselves. The latter is especially efficient from the financial standpoint, or when we are surrounded by people, and we have strong feelings that we cannot otherwise express, because it is impossible to leave the room or find some private place.

This stage takes about 2-3 weeks, or longer in some cases. How often – once a day, or every other day for 10-15 minutes. After that the intensity of the outburst reduces and the need for outbursts disappears. We can feel weak and empty after each session. If we have these feelings more often after the outbursts, it means we are on a right track.

4.1.3. Starting working with our inner child and connecting with it.

At this stage we can start using all the exercises that we can find. They will be effective if the two previous stages were successfully completed.

Recognizing our feelings (tracking them, recognizing and naming them); LIVING THEM THROUGH by connecting to our internal structure – our inner child – and, finally, ACCEPTING them (if we have strong response or feeling we need to work them through physically as indicated above in stage 2). The combination of these three stages will give us a strong foundation to start truly loving and accepting ourselves, to accept our value and uniqueness (which is the beginning of adequate self-esteem). It will allow us to build our relations with people and keep in mind personal borders.

Based on this we will be able to use all of the psychological tools we have access to (including the ones offered in this manual), and they will be highly effective. We should put together our personal plan for therapy and move forward in a tempo we are comfortable with, taking into account our personal needs and abilities.

5. Therapeutic modules (exercises and techniques, by the issue they are addressing)

5.1. Exercises to interact with our inner child, to work on the problem of [first diagnosed problem...]

Baby picture:

Instructions: the exercise can be done in a group of any size. The instruction should be given after the participants prepare their pictures. The facilitator offers the participants to discuss the feelings that they have in the beginning and at the end of the exercise, to compare those feelings and think of what was easy and what was difficult for them. At the end of the exercise the participants are welcomed to give their feedback, but only if they want to. The facilitator should make sure there are no judgmental or criticizing statements.

Find your baby pictures, where you are 5-6 years old. Look at them attentively. How do you look at the picture? What do feel? Is that child happy?

Try and talk to that child. Ask him/her, how he/she feels? What is he/she missing? What hurts him/her?

Listen to him/her and support. Promise him/her that you will take care of him/her, protect and help him/her. Tell the child that you love him/her, that he/she is awesome. Let him/her feel that they are loved and needed. Do not hold yourself, your feelings and words, back. This is your inner child, who needs your support, attention and care. Give yourself as much time as you feel you need. Do not be ashamed of your feelings. You can end the exercise if you have a feeling of relief and acceptance.

Talking to our inner child:

Instructions: the exercise is conducted in a small group (up to 8 people). After reading out the instruction, the facilitator asks questions to each participant and carefully listens to the answer, free of any judgement and without interrupting. Then each participant with the help from the facilitator, puts together an individual plan for purchasing a toy for an inner child (or going to the cinema, or any other action). At the end of the exercise the facilitator asks the participants to reflect on their feelings.

Sit comfortably, close your eyes and try to remember yourself at the age of 5-6. If you are doing the exercise for the first time, it might be difficult for you to connect with your inner child. But keep trying, until you connect. Tell him/her that you want to talk, to see and listen to him/her.

Apologize for ignoring him/her for many years, for scolding him/her, not taking care and loving him/her. Say that you want to catch up and make him/her happy. Ask what he/she needs to be happy, what he/she wants to hear, to feel or to have as a present. Give him/her that present, whether it is a toy, a small adventure or something else. Try to talk to your inner child at least one minute every day. After a while you will notice changes in yourself, the way you and your body feels.

5.2. Exercises for positive self-perception, understanding peculiarities of self-perception and perception by others; resource techniques

Colorful little people:

Instructions: this exercise makes sense only in a group of people, who are unfamiliar with each other. Otherwise, the previous experiences of interaction between people will interfere. As a result of joint work, the group members will get feedback from each other that is based on the information they hear. The exercise helps self-understanding and develops self-presentation skills.

To conduct the exercise the participants should focus on their feelings and thoughts. The facilitator indirectly uses the method of focused presence. For this exercise you will need paper sheets of different colors.

Say the following to the group: choose a color you like the most. Fold the paper in two and without using scissors try to tear the paper so that it is shaped like a person. This little person is you.

Ask each participant to share why they have chosen that particular color, and ask them to tell their names, which are also the names of the little paper people. Ask the participants to tell in more detail what each name means, who gave that name to a person, and if they like their names. Ask the participants to write down their dream on the paper people's head. Ask them to share what their dreams are. On the hands, ask the participants to write down what they can do with their hands; and on the legs, ask them to write down who inspires them or a name of a person, who inspires them.

This exercise also gives space for the participants to ask the paper person other questions and choose different topics for discussion. They can talk about health, safety, threats and risks. The narration can be done in the first or the third person, which gives the participants freedom of choice and the feeling of safety.

Below are some questions that the participants might be willing to ask:

1. How does the person feel at the moment?
2. What are his/her life values?
3. How does this person react when he/she is hurt?
4. How did he/she fight the pain, if he/she has been betrayed or when he/she feels danger?
5. How does the person feel, when he/she is in danger? Does he/she need other people? What does he/she expect from other people?
6. What helps him/her to overcome the most difficult situations in his/her life?

Movie audition (developing a feeling of personal importance):

Instructions: the exercise should be conducted in any group of any size. The aim of the exercise is to develop a sense of meaningfulness, positive self-image, understanding the specifics of self-perception and perception by others.

1. List five key moments from your life that make you proud.
2. Pick one achievement from your list that makes you proud the most.
3. Get up and tell the group 'I do not want to brag about it, but...' finish the phrase by your achievement.

Questions for discussion:

- What did you feel when you shared your achievement?
- Do you think that the other people in the room felt the same way you did?

Why?

Strengths and weaknesses:

Instructions: For this exercise you will need a sheet of paper and pens. The exercise can be done in pairs. It helps to recognize and accept the rejected qualities. Reframing allows to learn more about the self and increase self-esteem.

On a piece of paper, write down 10 definitions, words or statements about you, which hurt you, make you doubt yourself and hate yourself. 10 definitions that are either your own or you heard from others and you agree with.

Guided by the principle that the opposite side of any disadvantage is an advantage, for each of the unpleasant statements write down something good about yourself. For example, the opposite for insolence could be bravery; for arrogance – high expectations; for stubbornness – the strength of the character. Think of positive sides of accusations against you.

You can do this exercise in pairs, where you will help your partner. You can exchange your lists and write down positive statements for each other.

If you feel happy, relieved, free and accepted, you can finish the exercise. You can turn this exercise into a positive habit – when you hear unjust accusations to you, change them into statements that will protect you and support you.

Even if...:

Instructions: For this exercise you will need paper and pens. There is no limit to the number of participants. The exercise helps to develop the feeling of valuing oneself and of unconditional love.

Write down two lists. In the first one write the following 'I do not love myself, because...' and add ten reasons why in your opinion you do not deserve to be loved.

In the second write 'I love myself, because...', and continue with ten positive statements about yourself.

Now, looking at the first list, tell yourself - 'I deserve to be loved even if...', and finish the sentence by reading out the negative statements.

How do you feel? Do you feel any resistance? Do you feel happy or relieved?

Take the second list and say (or write down) - 'I deserve love even if I do not...' and finish the sentence by adding the positive statements.

How do you feel now? Is it easy for you to accept yourself? Do you feel easy and relaxed?

The aim of the exercise is to develop the feeling of unconditional love towards oneself - positive acceptance of oneself without any limitations.

My best qualities:

Instructions: for this exercise you will need some A4 sheets, pens, glue and photos of the participants (alternatively, you can ask the participants to draw themselves in the middle of the sheet; in this case, you will need some colored pens). The facilitator helps the group to be positive and offers instructions as needed.

The aim of the exercise is to develop understanding of our versatile nature and bringing back our positive 'I-image'.

Take your favorite picture of yourself. If you do not have one, then take a picture and print it out. Stick it in the center of a paper sheet. On small sticky notes write down your good qualities (one quality per each). It is preferable that you indicate at least 30 qualities. Stick the notes around your picture. Find a place for this incredible picture either at home, or in office. Keep adding new qualities that you remember.

I am myself:

Instructions: for this exercise you will need paper and pens. The exercise can be done with a group of any size. The facilitator's task is to help the participants to understand and express their feelings.

The exercise is aimed at developing an understanding and acceptance of one's individuality.

Say the following: Write a love letter to yourself. List your individual traits, special things about you and weaknesses. It should be an honest letter, as if you are writing to your best friend. Listen to your heart and not the mind while you write it. After you finish, read what you have written. What do you feel? Listen to your feelings. Accept those feelings. Thank yourself for everything you have been through. Wish yourself something that you really need.

When I become myself:

Instructions: for this exercise you will need A4 paper and pens. The exercise can be conducted in a group of any size. The facilitator should pay specific attention to the feedback from the participants at the end of the exercise.

The aim of the exercise is to develop a positive projection for the future.

Take a sheet of paper. Divide into four parts, so that you have four ~~mis~~spaces. Draw symbols in each of them: 'When I am not quite happy by myself', 'I am flawless and perfect', 'I am calm and free', 'A message from me – a free person, who live harmony, to myself when I am unhappy and strive for perfection'.

Think about what feelings you have for each of these situations. What will you take away from this exercise?

You can conduct this exercise individually or in a group.

I am my own friend:

Instructions: for the exercise you will need paper and pens. The facilitator ensures that all the stages of the exercise are understood by the participants and controls if they fill out the tables correctly. It would be recommended to discuss in the group the difficulties and insights the participants have during the exercise.

The aim of the exercise is to track real difficulties that require time, attention and self-care, self-analysis and search for ways out.

Write down in four columns the following characteristics:

- everything that our body tells us (discomfort, pain, blocks, where are these blocks?);
- emotions and feelings that bother us and repeat every once in a while;
- thoughts about yourself and about your life;
- difficulties at work;
- taking care of your health: body, soul, psycho emotional condition, accepting yourself.

In this exercise, we act as an attentive friend to ourselves. We honestly reflect on each of the above aspects, trying to notice everything, without singling out meaningful and less meaningful thoughts.

As a true friend, who takes care of you, do not just calm yourself down, but make a clear plan of how you will take care of yourself.

Make the plan as detailed as possible; include the dates and indicate specific people, specialists that you might need for treatment, rest, therapy. Note that everything is important. Remember that in this exercise, you are the best friend of yourself and you should take everything seriously. You should support yourself physically and mentally to keep living and feel that you are living in full.

Under the rain:

Instructions: this is an individual exercise that can be given to the participants as a home task. The facilitator explains in details the task of the exercise and the participants are offered to write down the affirmative statements.

The aim of the exercise is to develop the feeling of unity with oneself.

For this exercise, you will need warm water. There is no one in your space – this space is only yours. If you are doing this exercise in the morning, you need to get rid of the negative feelings from the past days, if it is afternoon or evening – try to release tension and forget about contacts you have had with other people. This exercise will help you restore your boundaries, reconnect with yourself, rebuild your trust, love and care to yourself. You are the true you and you will remain true under the rain. Affirmative statements – ‘I am in harmony with myself, I feel easy and calm. I interact with myself, but I am myself and I am unique. I allow myself to be free. I thank the people, whom I have seen today. I let them go, and bring myself back. I am myself’.

Fireflies:

Instructions: the facilitator reads out the words to the participants. The exercise can be done orally or written down. The task of the facilitator is to help those participants, who find the exercise difficult. Please note that the trusting space helps the participants to open up. It is recommended to conduct the exercise after a warm-up exercise in a small group. The exercise is aimed at making one understand one's talents and recognize one's leadership potential.

The facilitator says the following to the group - '... And again, going back to the ones, who were the first to take care of us, to our teachers and relatives, who did not always recognize and accept any of our talents, I want to add that our attitude to ourselves and to our importance that we remember, we carry through our lives. We are constantly fighting our way through myriads of doubts, proving that we are special, as if we are passing a test. This stands in a way of unfolding our talents, and even if they do unfold, we still consciously or unconsciously stick to the views from our childhood, as the memory about them stays within us.

To accept our talents, we need to look at the most simple, often unnoticeable things. Let's think of at least seven different talents. For example, I know an activist, who has talent - she makes everyone around feel joyful, she enjoys communication, but she does not think of it as of talent, but the people around do. The other woman is a hard-worker, but she always criticizes herself. There is also a young woman, who knows a foreign language, she is active and committed, but she is very shy. Another woman is very communicative, she is brave and ready for changes in herself and in her work, she is a great cook and she is a life of any party, but she thinks she is too emotional. All of these people are real. They are extremely talented and have great potential.

The people around notice these unique qualities, but these women are too critical towards themselves and do not accept their talents and positive traits.

Rational and emotional, active and calm, young and wise, brave and careful, creative and conservative, energetic and withheld – we all are different, but we are moving towards one joint mission. So, we should not be ashamed to admit that we have talents”.

You can list your talents yourself, or you can ask your colleagues and friends to do so. Sometimes they can see something that we do not notice.

My strengths:

Instructions: this exercise can be done orally or written down. It is important that the facilitator tracks if the participants are focusing on real difficulties that they face in their lives. It is important to have a talk and ask additional questions that allow analyzing the real situation.

The exercise helps to realize one’s internal and external resources.

Write down the challenges that you often face in your life. Think about what helps you overcome them, allows us to keep going, despite the difficulties. These could be external forces that support us, or our own, internal sources. It is important to understand what they are and keep them in mind.

I want to change in me...:

Instructions: the exercise can be conducted in a group of any size. You will need paper and pens. The facilitator helps the group to stick to statements that are free from judgement and makes sure that they do not criticize others or themselves.

This exercise helps to develop new qualities and accept one's own qualities.

Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. In the first column put down 'Qualities I want to get rid of', in the second one 'Qualities I want to gain'. Think about yourself and write down the first column by words that come to your mind. Do not overthink. Write down up to 5-8 qualities. Then go to the second column and write down the qualities you would like to have. Do not criticize yourself, and write whatever comes to your mind. Read out what you have written down. If in the two columns there are qualities that oppose each other, then delete the quality from the first column. For example: 'I want to get rid of low self-esteem' and 'I want to have better self-esteem'.

Then prioritize by giving each quality a number - 1 is for very important and meaningful, 2 is for important, 3 is for it would be good, but not that important. Think of what you can do yourself, and achieving what you will need some assistance. What kind of assistance will you need? Write it down in details and make sure you reach out for support.

Mirror-signal:

Instructions: this exercise is conducted in pairs or mini-groups (3 people max). The facilitator offers the participants to split in pairs and explains the meaning of judgment-free attitude. The exercise is effective if conducted in small groups (up to 10 participants).

Please note that the facilitator should track the time limit and pay attention to following up how the group reacts to the stories. At the end of the exercise, the facilitator should focus on the feedback from the participants. The aim of the exercise - help in learning to be less judgmental towards oneself and others.

Give the group the following instructions: today we will practice judgement free attitude towards ourselves and others. After we split into pairs, I will set the time, so that one participant starts to tell about himself/herself to his/her partner. Then, after my signal, you will take turns, and the partner will tell his/her story for 3-4 minutes - everything that he/she thinks is important and interesting. During the next 4-5 minutes, the participants are welcome to share with the larger group about themselves and their partners, but only if they are willing to. The others observe and in case the narrator is judgmental in his/her speech or mimics, they give signals by clapping or raising hands. The narrator then shares his/her feelings.

My goals:

Instructions: the exercise can be done in a group, in pairs and individually. You will need paper and pens. If it is conducted in a group, it should be a small group (up to 10 people). The facilitator's task is to track the timing and support the participants in the process of personal goal-setting.

Please note that the feedback from the participants should be timed - every participant should have a specific time limit to voice their goals and life direction.

The aim of the exercise is to help developing life goals.

The exercise can be done individually, in pairs or in groups.

First, write down what you want from your life. You have 15 minutes to complete this task. Be free and open in your wishes, be creative and think of different aspects of your life.

Then within two minutes choose what would you like to do within the next three years. You will have a new list at end of this task. If you need to, spend another 2-3 minutes to add to the second list.

The goals you have list should be as much specific and realistic as possible. Think of them as if it is the most important thing in your life.

After you finish, read out the list of goals for another three years, and using that list make a plan for the next 6 months.

Have a look at your new plan, and think if it has goals that are realistic to achieve within 6 months. Think of time and resources you have access to. Do you need to make sure you have all resources first and then start implementation of the goals?

If you need to, correct the new plan. The main aspect of this exercise is that at end of it, it becomes clear what direction you should move to.

A right to life:

Instructions: the exercise can be conducted with any number of participants. In the beginning of the exercise, the facilitator can use any dynamic meditation technique that will set the self-exploring tone to the group. By asking questions the facilitator motivates the participants for self-analysis. The aim of the exercise is to help the participants to understand how important it is to take care of themselves, understanding the interconnection between external and internal survival factors.

There are some basic needs, which are important for our survival.

Let us start with the four major forces – the water, the air, the earth and the fire.

What does the water mean for a person? Aside just drinking water (up to 2 litres a day), water symbolizes nurture, energy, cleansing, freedom.

To what extent do you provide yourself with water?

The air means breathing in fresh air, free breathing, I take from life, I give to life. To what extent do you allow yourself to breathe fully? Do you breathe in 'toxic' information? Do you remember to breathe out old and new offences, wrath, anger, feeling of guilt, which turned into carbon already?

The earth is for the foundation, stability, grounding. How attentive are you towards yourself, your sustainability in terms of your health, rest, self-realization?

Is there a balance between your work and leisure, responsibility and relaxation, resources and aspirations?

The fire is for warmth in your relations, love, friendship, communication. How ready are you to accept from and give warmth to people? The balance and harmony are important aspects here.

Thoughts at the end and in the process of this exercise help realize that our basic feeling of safety and the quality of our lives depend to a great extent on our care of ourselves, self-acceptance and love to ourselves.

I am home, I am at work:

Instructions: the exercise can be conducted with any number of participants. You will need paper and pens. The facilitator reads out the instructions to the group and asks them to be self-observant. It is important to hear the feedback from all the participants at the end of the exercise.

The purpose of the exercise is to expand personal capacities, and understand stereotypical behavior models.

Refer to the group: Split a sheet of paper into two columns by drawing a vertical line. In the first column write down 'I am home', in the second - 'I am at work'.

Then fill in both columns giving as many details as possible by answering the following questions – What am I like at home? What am I like at work? Another way to fill in the columns is by finishing these statements – ‘When I am home I never...’ and ‘When I am at work I never...’. This will help to think of some patterns of behavior and thinking in different situations.

After you finish, analyze the following:

- similar traits;
- opposite traits;
- similar qualities in different situations;
- lack of common traits;
- Which list was easier to put together? Which list is bigger?
- What is your attitude to visible differences in the two lists?

Comment: this exercise helps the participants to step back and have a look at how they interact with their jobs. It helps to understand our attitude to the overall situation, see where there might be a problem, and track how we balance out our energy between the job and home.

I do, whether I want it or not...:

Instructions: the exercise can be conducted in a group of any size. You will need paper and pens. The facilitator should make sure that the participants do not make any judgmental or criticizing statements during a discussion at the end. It is important to hear feedback from each participant.

The exercise is aimed at clarifying personal goals, analyzing them and prioritizing.

Ask the participants to write down on separate sheets of paper:

- the three things they would like to do more often (these could be some tasks, exercises, entertainment, etc.)

- three things they would like to stop doing in the same amount as now or stop doing completely.

Then ask the participants to explain, why they do not do enough of the things from the first column and they do so little of the things from the second column.

At the end of the exercise discuss with the group what was difficult in completing the task.

Eyes to eyes:

Instructions: the exercise is conducted in pairs. It is recommended to use this technique in a small group (up to 8 people). The facilitator can use the focused presence method. It is important to ensure that the instructions and time limit are taken into consideration. At the end of the exercise, it is important that the feedback is given by all the participants through group reflection method.

The exercise is aimed at developing communicative skills and empathy.

The participants split into pairs and look into each other's eyes for 3-5 minutes, trying to think what was his/her partner like as a kid. Then one of the partners starts telling the other one what he/she thinks his/her partner was like. While one speaks, the other one carefully listens without interrupting. Then the partners take turns. At the end of the exercise, the participants feedback on their thoughts and check whether they were right or not.

Emotions diary:

Instructions: the exercise can be used as a home task for individual work. You will need paper and pens. The facilitator explains how to use the emotions diary. During the next meeting, it would be effective to ask the participants, who have completed the task and discuss the outcomes in a small group.

The aim of the exercise is to learn self-observatory skills and self-discipline, self-knowledge, self-diagnostics of oppressed feelings, which require 'reaction'

Take a sheet of paper and split it in two by drawing a vertical line. In the column on the left write down 'Events', in the right column - 'Feelings'. During the next 10 days shortly write down all negative situations that you encounter in the left column. And in the column opposite write about your emotions triggered by the events.

For example, 'A person stepped on my foot' and 'Irritation, anger, offense' (or some other feelings you had).

'The mother-in-law (husband, boss, etc.) yelled at me' and 'Anger, wrath, pain, sadness', etc.

In 10 days, count what are the most frequent feelings (not more than 3). For example, 'wrath - 112 times, feeling offended - 64, disappointment - 55'.

This exercise is helpful in terms of diagnostics and correction. It helps to recognize and understand one's feelings. It also helps to accept them and pay attention to the suppressed and neglected feelings that you will need to work on.

5.3. Exercises to reduce emotional tension and stress related to the lack of time

There are 4 golden rules to effectively manage the time.

1. Understand the important.
2. Get rid of the unimportant.
3. Learn to say 'No'.
4. Accept help from others.

Life circle:

Instructions: the exercise can be done in a group of any size. You will need paper, pens and colored pens. The facilitators make sure that the instructions are followed and supports the participants throughout the exercise. The feedback time should be tracked.

The aim of the exercise – developing skills for self-knowledge, self-analysis, diagnostics of personal achievements, developing positive self-attitude.

Take a piece of paper and a pen and colored pencils. Draw a circle or a big square and split it into 8 pieces. Give these pieces the following names:

- Health
- Personal life
- Family relations
- Money
- Work
- Spiritual growth

- Self-development
- Time for rest

On a scale of five assess each of these pieces and paint it with any color you like. The red color symbolizes the most interesting spheres of our lives, green and blue colors the least interesting. After you finish the exercise, you will see which aspects of your life need more attention.

It is recommended to conduct this exercise at least once every 6 months to track where you are progressing and where not.

Learn to feel the time:

Instructions: the exercise is better to be done individually by the participants. The facilitator gives detailed instructions.

The aim of the exercise is to learn to be more sensitive to internal biorhythms of our bodies, learning time-management skills.

It is an important skill. It allows us to efficiently use our time resources. Probably it has happened to you that you look at a clock and wonder how come 30 minutes, and hour, two hours passed by so quickly. Train your time intuition by guessing the time throughout the day without looking at a clock. This exercise will help you to learn to feel the time and to listen to your own biological clock.

What am I doing:

Instructions: the exercise is better to be done individually by the participants.

The aim of the exercise – developing goal-setting and time management skills; prevention of procrastination.

Throughout the day ask yourself a question ‘What am I doing and why am I doing this?’ This will help you to realize how important are the tasks you are doing at the very moment, and whether you are wasting your time in vain. This exercise can be done for three days in a row, after which the results should be tracked and the exercise can be repeated in a week.

Day timing:

Instructions: the exercise is better to be done individually by the participants. The facilitator can give the participants an example of how the exercise should be done.

The aim of the exercise – to learn time management skills, prevention of procrastination, developing prioritizing skills and self-discipline.

This exercise will help you to see how efficient and productive you are. During the day write down how much time you spend on different tasks.

For example:

Watching TV – 2 hours

Chatting with a friend on the phone – 40 minutes

Cooking - 1,5 hours

Shower – 30 minutes, etc.

This will help you understand how much time you wasted and how much time was spent on doing something. It will also help you to prioritize the tasks and will help you to be more organized.

An effective time management tool – The Eisenhower matrix:

Instructions: the facilitator reads out the instruction to the group and helps them to fill out the squares. You will need paper and pens. When discussing the exercise, the facilitator gives details and explains what would be the outcome of the exercise.

The aim of the exercise – learning time management and prioritizing skills.

The Eisenhower matrix is a tool that helps prioritize the tasks. When we effectively prioritize the quality of life improves, and the resources are used rationally. Each minute, each hour of our lives are spent with the use. Thus, this is one of the ways to manage our time effectively.

How to work with the matrix?

You will need to split the tasks into four categories:

Important and urgent

Important and not urgent

Not important and urgent

Not important and not urgent

1. Important-urgent	2. Important-not urgent
3. Not Important-urgent	4. Not Important-not urgent

The first square: list here all the tasks that are important and you need to do immediately. If you do not complete these tasks there will be negative consequences. Ideally, if you manage your time effectively, this square should be empty. We should strive to complete our tasks on time so that they do not become urgent.

The second square: here list the tasks that are important, but for which you have enough time. If you do not complete the tasks listed here in time, they will become urgent. If you prioritize your tasks it helps you avoid psychological and physical pressures.

The third square: here you indicate the tasks that you have to do, but they are not resultative in terms of achieving your goals.

These are the tasks that are not important at the moment, but they need to be done immediately. They might be important for someone else, but for you they are not.

The fourth square: the tasks that do not bring us any practical benefits. They are not important and not urgent. Completing these tasks brings us joy and satisfaction, but even if we do not complete them, there will not be any negative consequences.

This matrix will teach you to use your time efficiently. You will have more free time to boost your productivity, you will manage to do more tasks and will achieve your goals, which will result in a better mood.

5.4. First aid – techniques for emotional self-regulation after the stressful situations

1. Wet your forehead, temples, and pulse using cold water.
2. Look around and mentally describe every object you notice.
3. Look out of the window, focus on what you see.
4. Slowly sip a glass of water, focusing on your feelings when the water goes through your throat.
5. Imagine you are in a space that you like – a garden, a beach, in the shower, etc.
6. Say something soothing out loud. For example: "Today I am ignoring negative things".
7. Think of something interesting – let it dominate your mind.
8. Think of pleasant moments from your life and try to feel as you felt in that moment with all your body – take the same pose, smile, try to remember your gestures the way you walked, etc.
9. Use logic and analyze the situation. Think less of the meaning of the negative act. Try and find something positive. Calm down first and say to your-self 'I will think about it tomorrow'.
10. Do not block physiological reactions in form of crying, laughing, willingness to hit something, willingness to talk.
 - You can get rid of irritation and aggression by hitting an imaginary object or fighting a pillow, etc.
 - You can become less emotional if you talk to someone, because it will help you to release your emotions and make the right decisions.

- Do some extra physical activities (sit-ups, jogging, walking upstairs, etc.).
- Find a place where you can talk everything through, yell, cry - an empty room, a car.
- Technique 'An empty chair' - imagine a person, who offended you is sitting on that chair. Tell him/her everything you want, express all your feelings.

5.5. Body-oriented therapy exercises

These exercises allow relaxing physically, get rid of irritation and frustration. For these exercises you will need to be dressed comfortably, mats. The participants should be informed well ahead.

The arch:

Stand straight, legs apart, toes slightly turned inside. Bend your knees as much as you can. Try to keep your heels close to the ground. Put your fists on your waist and slightly bend backwards. Breathe in so that the air reaches your belly. Stand in this position for a minute. Pay attention to the body parts that are tense. If you relax in this position your legs will start shaking. It is a natural reaction of your body to the tension.

Grounding:

Stand straight, legs apart, toes slightly turned inside and try to bend forward. Bend your knees and reach the floor with your fingers. Make sure that the weight of your body is concentrated on your toes. Take a deep breath through your mouth. Slowly straighten your legs, but not fully. Keep breathing in deeply and try to stay in this position until your legs start shaking. Feel the connection with the ground. Straighten up slowly.

Exercise for hands:

Bend your arms keeping them in front of your chest. Close your eyes.

Breathe in softly and make fists. Then flex all your arm muscles starting from your shoulder and finishing with your hands. You need to make strong fists so that your muscles start vibrating. Keep breathing in softly. Flex the muscles until they slightly hurt. Put your hands down so that they hang freely along your body. Breathe in and out softly. Try to relax fully.

Concentrate on the feelings in your arms – how strong and warm they are. If your arms are not warm yet, repeat the exercise.

Unbending:

Make a deep breath and while breathing in straighten and unbend as much as you can all parts of your body – your back, your spine, neck, waist, arms and legs, fingers and toes. Hold this feeling when you breathe in for some time and then breathe out and fully relax. Repeat the exercise a few times.

Exercise for fingers:

Flex your wrists as much as you can and hold your fingers apart for both of your hands. If you can, do it for your feet too. Repeat several times.

Fists:

Make fists as strong as you can. Then unfold your hands, holding your fingers apart, and shake your hands. By doing this you are getting rid of worries, fears and anxiety. Repeat the exercise several times. It helps you relax before an important speech, meeting or when you are stressed.

Breathing exercises:

Sit comfortably. Keep your back straight. Take a few deep breaths. Then close your left nostril with your finger, inhale through the right nostril and exhale through the left. Then inhale through the left and exhale through the right nostril. Repeat for 5-10 minutes. For an added effect, you imagine that you breathe in peacefulness and breathe out worries. It is recommended to do breathing exercises regularly.

Bubble:

Slowly take a deep breath. Breathe the air in as much as you can. When you feel like you cannot anymore, breathe in a little bit more. Imagine that you are a bubble and you are expanding. Feel that the air is filling all parts of your body. When you can expand no more, hold your breath and imagine that the air within massages your inner organs. Then breathe all the air out, slowly and calmly.

Squeezebox:

Imagine that your fear is a squeezebox, playing in your chest. Take a breath, squeezing it in. Then slowly breathe out, drawing it out. Repeat several times.

Touches can also help us relax, feel our body and physical support. It has to do with our childhood memories: we used to calm down when picked up and caressed. Also this type of exercises teaches us to take better care of and love ourselves. The following exercises will help you “recover”, reduce fear and anxiety, when you are frightened by something. You can also ask someone you trust to hold you, hug you or wrap a blanket around you. Don't be afraid to ask for help, voice your fears or share your emotions. If it makes you feel better.

5.6. Self-support exercises

The facilitator introduces the participants to exercises for individual use, conducts them with a group and tracks the changes in participants' condition. In the end, it is recommended to gain feedback from the participants:

1. You can do this exercise in both sitting and lying position. Put your hand on the back of your neck. Don't press it, just keep it below your nape. Put your other hand in your solar plexus (below your ribcage). Hold until you feel the fear retreating.
2. Put both your hands on the sides of your head, as if each of them is touching and soothing the two hemispheres of the brain. Hold until you feel better.
3. Put one hand on your forehead and the other on your nape. Imagine that your hands form a container for your thoughts. Hold until you relax and feel the fear or anxiety retreat.
4. Patting. This exercise will help you feel your body, shake off the feeling of overwhelming fear. Pat your body everywhere for a few moments, until your psychological and emotional state is improved.

5.7. Yoga exercises

Recommendations for yoga exercises: prepare a room for yoga sessions – it should be convenient, the temperature should be comfortable for the participants – if it is too cold or there is not enough air in the room the exercises will not be effective. Other factors may also affect the quality of the exercises, such as: the room is too bright, loud noises. The exercises cannot be done right after a meal. It is preferable to start the exercises with a feeling of internal calmness and comfort.

Deep breathing:

The first thing that you will notice when doing this exercise for the first time is feeling energized. Proper breathing enriches the body with the oxygen and fastens metabolic processes. Stresses and negative emotions either decrease, or stop keeping you anxious. This helps to improve the night's sleep.

Stand straight, keep your hands down the sides. Breathing in, and lift your hands, palms up, until they come together over your head. Breathing out, lower your hands to your chest level. Repeat 3-5 times. Your attention should be focused on the balance between your movements and your breathing.

Hanging on the wall:

This asana allows you to stretch all of your body parts. It is aimed at decreasing the level of tiredness, physical or mental tension. Proper and systematic use of this exercise will not just help you to get rid of tiredness and improve your body shape, but also will help your sciatica.

Stand by a wall. Put your hands on the wall, keeping them shoulder width apart. Now slowly step back and lower your hands until they reach your stomach level. Slightly bend your knees and push your hands against the wall, arching your back. You can “drop” your head. Keeping this position, deeply inhale and exhale several times. On each exhale try to relax your jaw muscles. Slowly step closer to the wall, slowly lifting your hands to the initial position.

The pro of this exercise is that it can be performed at home and at work. It is also suitable for pregnant women.

Child's pose:

Child's pose (balasana) calms down the nerves, helps to resist stress and chronic tiredness. It also helps if you have vertigo as it improves blood circulation.

Sit on your heels and slightly part your knees. Breathing in, lift your hands until they are above your head. Keeping the pose, stretch upwards a little bit, then, breathing out, slowly lower your hands and put them on the floor as far from your body as you can. Feel the stretch in the small of your back. Breathe deeply. Then as you inhale to return to the “hands above the head” position. As you exhale put your hands on your knees. Relax. Repeat 3 times.

Sleeping pigeon:

The pigeon pose allows to take off tension, relax your body and avoid stress.

Lie on your back and bend your knees, with your feet flat on the floor. If your right leg and put your ankle on the left knee. Keep your legs bent to avoid hurting your knee joint. In this position you will feel like your backbone “falls” to the ground. For an added stretch, connect your hands behind your legs and pull to yourself. Breathe deeply. Then put your feet back on the floor and repeat the same with the left leg. This pose stretches thigh and back muscles.

Twists during the “sleeping pigeon”:

This asana results in a slight increase in blood pressure, and also enlarges lungs. As a result, a healthy pressure is released to the heart. The exercise is also useful for prevention of urinary disorders. After this exercise you will feel lightness in your body and improvement of your general condition.

Take the same position as in the previous exercise (right ankle on your left knee); “roll” your left leg, so that your right foot is flat on the floor. Press your right foot into the floor to stretch your right thigh muscles. Keep your back flat on the floor. The stretch and the twist happen through the backbone. Use your stomach muscles to finish the pose and put your feet in the initial position. Put your right foot back on the floor and repeat with the left leg.

Legs up the wall:

There are many advantages to this simple pose: the body restores itself, the body relaxes, the tension is taken away from the spine, soothes swollen or cramped feet and legs, improves blood circulation, facilitates venous drainage and increases circulation.

This is a “soft” version of the ‘upside down’ pose. At first, sit by a wall, with your right shoulder closer to it, bend your knees and put your feet flat on the floor. Put your hands on the floor and turn to the wall, slightly bending backwards and put your feet flat on the wall. Then bring your hips closer to the wall. Keep the pose for as long as it is comfortable for you, but without straining. Breathe deeply. If the floor is hard, lay a rug or a yoga mat on it beforehand.

When finishing the pose, bend your knees and slowly put them on the side, helping yourself with your hands. After that return to the sitting position. It is recommended to lie in your back for 20-30 seconds or a minute after this pose in order to restore your blood circulation. The following exercise will help you with that.

Sleeping pose:

This asana (Shavasana) is effective to relieve all types of tension: physical, mental, emotional. For a person living in a dynamic rhythm this asana is important to keep oneself healthy and restore the body.

This pose is performed after the upside down “asanas”, and at the end of a yoga session. This simple pose is performed like so: lie flat on your back, hands by your sides, legs parted for about 15-20 cm (or 30, if it is more comfortable). Turn your hand’s palms up. Breathe deeply, without straining. Focus on your breathing. Imagine your body becoming soft, like it is melting. Clear your mind. If thoughts keep coming into your head, just focus on your breathing. Do shavasana for 5 minutes minimum. You can do it longer, for up to 40 minutes, if you have time. It is believed that a 40-minute shavasana can replace a full night’s sleep (but only if this asana is fully mastered).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to wish all the activists, human rights defenders, or anyone else, who have found something new or useful in this manual, to remain committed, to follow your life principles and to keep going in the chosen direction. Good luck!

And here is a short story to sum everything up:

'Paddles'

A boatman was taking a traveler to another shore. The traveler noticed that there were signs on the paddles. On one of the paddles it said 'Think', and on the other one 'Act'.

"Your paddles are quite interesting", said the traveler. "But why?"

"Look", replied the boatman smiling. And he started using just one paddle, which said 'Think'. The boat was making circles at one spot. "Sometimes I thought, made plans", the boatman said. But nothing useful happened. I was just making circles, just like this boat right now".

Then the boatman switched the paddle, and started using the one which said 'Act'. The boat kept making circles, but this time in the opposite direction. "Other times I did the opposite - I acted without thinking, without any plans. I wasted a lot of time and effort. But kept making circles anyway", the boatman continued.

"That is why I decided to make these signs, so that I do not forget that *every time I use the paddle on my left, the next move should be made by the paddle on my right. That is the only way to get where I want to*".

