

Street Youth Work ABC

Learning material for a beginner
at street-based youth work

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Introduction



“Good habits formed at youth make all the difference.”

Aristotle



This toolkit is for everybody who wants to know more about building connections with young people on the streets and in the public place. Regardless of the fact that this toolkit is addressed more for the beginners, even experienced workers can benefit from it.

The toolkit is not set in stone. The authors suggest adjusting it according to your needs, your area's needs and your organization's needs.

What is youth work?

- Estonian Ministry of Education and Research has defined youth work as “a creation of conditions for promoting the diverse development of young people which enables them to be active outside their families, formal education acquired within the adult education system, and work on the basis of their free will.” (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2022)
- Council of European Union has defined youth work as a wide term covering a variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature that are done by, with and for young people. Youth work is considered an ‘out-of-school’ education, as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders. Youth work is organized in different ways (by youth-led organizations, organizations for youth, informal groups or through youth services and public authorities). It is delivered in different forms and settings (e.g. open-access, group-based, programme-based, outreach and detached). (CoE Youth Work, s.a.)
- Estonian Youth Work Act (2010) in Subsection 4.1 defines youth work as the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of youth, enabling them to be active outside their families, have formal education acquired within the adult education system, and work based on their free will. (Youth Work Act, 2010)
- Youth work is an umbrella term for numerous different methods, part of which is open youth work. The previously stated term is widely used in Youth Centers.
- The nature and principles of open youth work, which are currently valid in Europe, are stipulated by the Confederation of European Youth Centers. Based on this, the aim of open youth work is to "offer development-enhancing and educational experiences to young people according to their own will in order to prepare them for active participation in a democratic society and to help them meet their development needs." (European Confederation of Youth Clubs, s.a.)



What is mobile/street-based youth work?

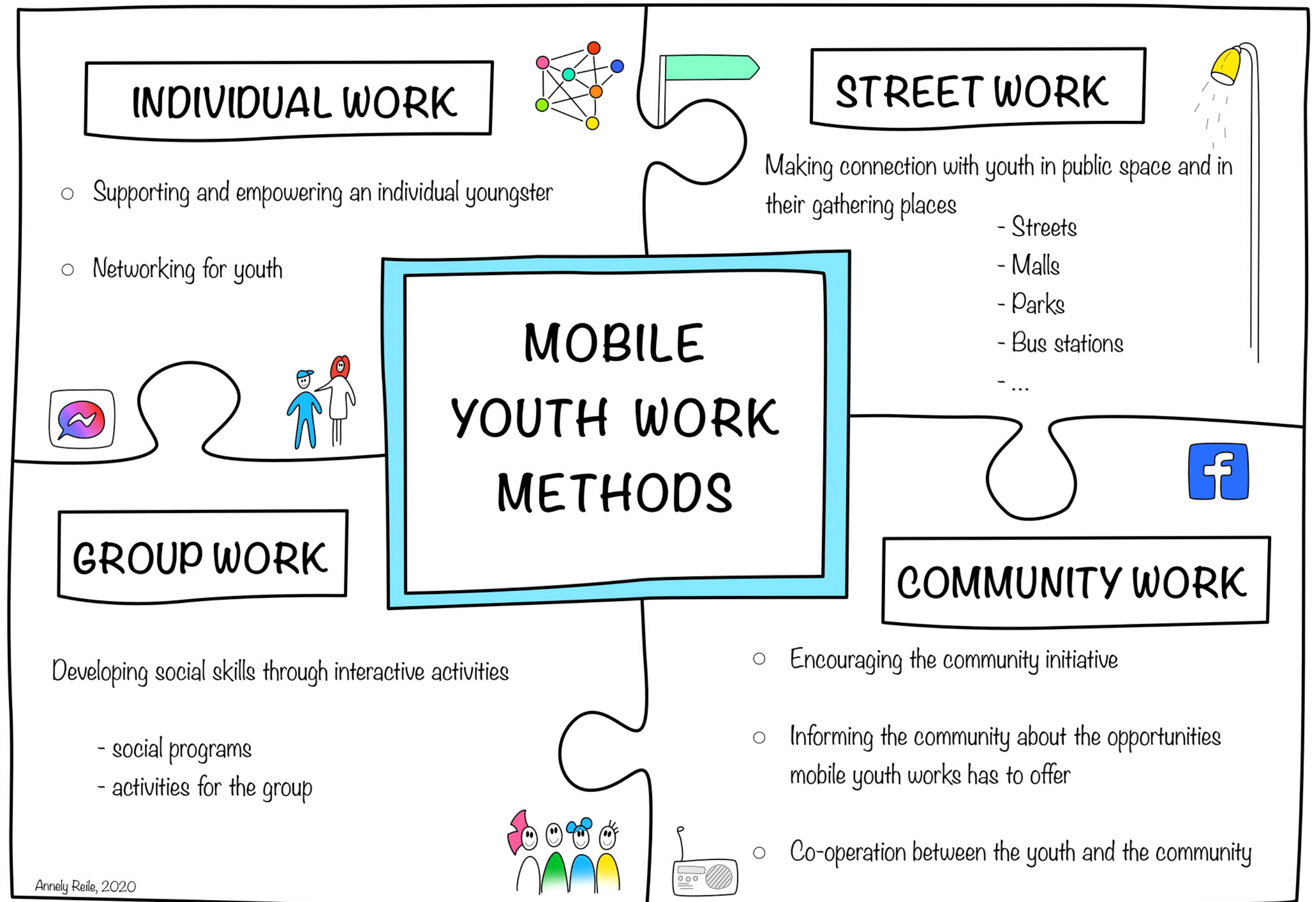
Mobile youth work is one of the prevention methods in youth work. The aim is to build trusting relationships and maintain the connection, supporting and empowering young people. If in open youth work the main environment is a youth center, then in mobile youth work the environment is wherever the young people are. It might be in the streets and other public places, at the malls, or even on the internet. (Vallsalu, 2013 p 7-8; Ristikivi etc 2012 p 10)



The sub-objectives of mobile youth work are:

1. Building a trusting connection with youth in public space.
2. Informing young people about the opportunities of youth work based on their needs
3. Developing social skills of young people
4. Guaranteeing quality networking focusing on the young people themselves

Mobile youth work can be divided into four methods: individual work, street work, group work and community work.





At the same time street work itself can be separated into two different approaches: outreached and detached youth work. (Pärnu MoNo..., 2020; Tallinna MoNo... 2019)

The difference of those two can be seen on the picture on the left.

The information below focuses mainly on street work /street based youth work, specifically what it is, how to do it, how to prepare it and what is its aim.



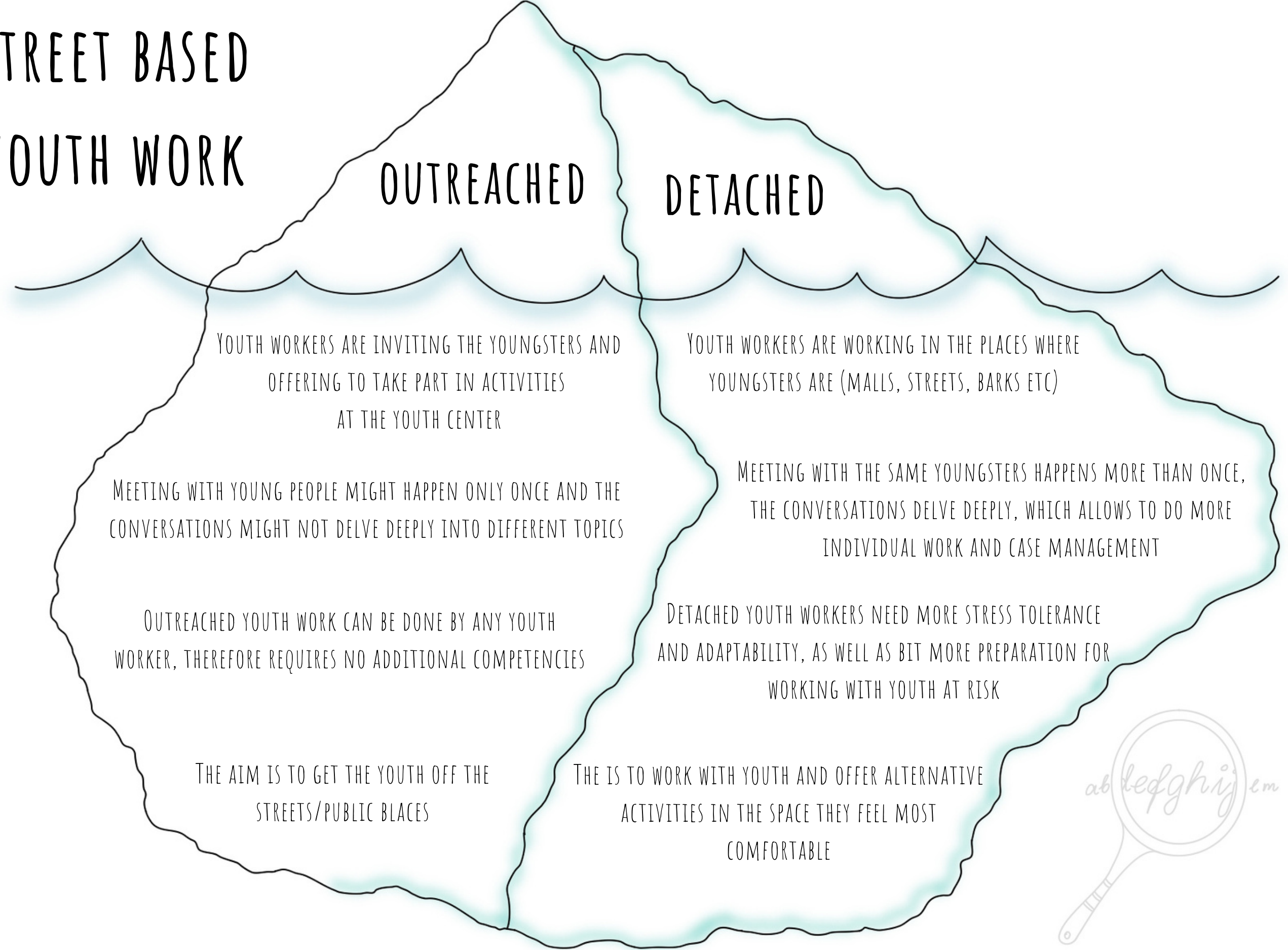
Target group

There are different ways to categorize young people in public space. In Estonia, we refer to 'street youth' as all the young people on the streets because in Estonia the term "street youth" generally refers to young people who are living on the streets, consuming alcohol, drugs etc.

The focus of mobile youth work is on the youngsters who engage in risky behaviors, but at the same time involves all young people who are in the public space. This means that we can target young people who do not have a place to go as well as those who are on the streets just because they are bored. This means that street youth work is not only a prevention tool, but also a youth work method in a wider sense.

Agewise, the target group depends on the needs and the services that one offers. In some countries, the age group is from 7 to 30, while in Estonia, it is from 7 to 26. Ultimately, the service provider can choose the age group most suitable for their goals. It's important to keep in mind that most probably the same methods that work with 7-year-old persons would not work with ones who are 26 years old.

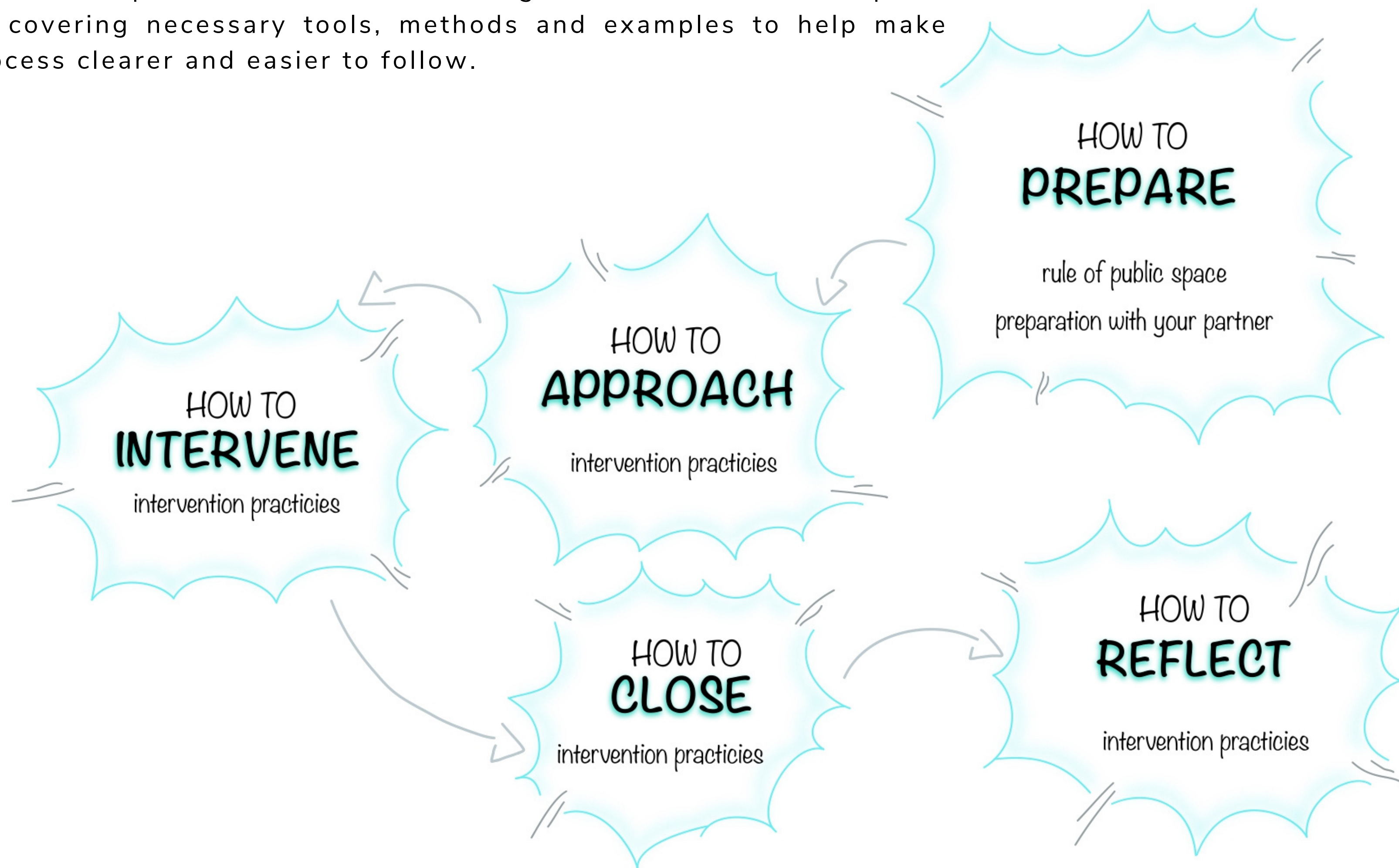
STREET BASED YOUTH WORK



Street youth work in steps

In working with street-based youth, there are five steps one has to take. These are: preparation, approach, intervention, closing and reflection.

- The further chapters of this booklet will go over each of the steps in depth, covering necessary tools, methods and examples to help make the process clearer and easier to follow.



How to prepare?

Acknowledge the rule of public space.

It is open for everybody, therefore all of us are responsible for its cleanliness.

IN ORDER TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE, YOU HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF

Think about your safety and your boundaries.

1. Set the date, time and goal with your partner or team for doing street work.

2. Set the details: which areas are you going to visit, divide the roles, what activities are you using.

3. Prepare mentally: think about opening and closing strategies, subjects you want to discuss, etc...

4. Gather all the necessary equipment you will need for the day.

5. Leave some extra time to catch up with your partner - how both of you are feeling, do you need to make changes in plans, etc...

Preparation is one of the most important parts of street youth work, especially for a beginner youth worker. This is the phase where one will set the times, places and goals, gather necessary information and equipment and build common ground and make agreements with partners as well as prepare mentally. In this chapter you can read what are the steps you need to take and what to need to be prepared for before going on the streets.

One of the main things to consider before and while doing street based youth work is the fact that you are working in the public space, which means it is the place for all the citizens. Therefore everybody are responsible for keeping the space clean, usable and safe for everybody. Youth workers' role is to explain to the young people what the rule of public space represents.

Another key thought to keep in mind is that in order to help and support somebody else, you have to take care of yourself. Keep your mind sharp and take responsibility for your health. That means, that in all your decisions, you should consider your safety first, whether it is choosing how to intervene in a situation, when to approach and when not and, most importantly, when not to do street youth work alone such as in dangerous neighborhoods or late at night.

Secondly, we are not on the streets to moralize young people or judge them or their choices. Young people should be considered as equal partners - that means that youth workers must be honest, polite, respectful and expect the same kind of behavior from the young. Equal partnership does not mean that we give youngsters so much responsibility that they cannot handle it. Underaged people cannot be held as responsible as grown-ups when organizing events, writing projects or doing any other kind of activities, but they can learn from the youth workers, ask for support or guidelines, get feedback and reflect on the development and mistakes made.

Thirdly, before going to the streets, it is necessary to think about what to accomplish or what is the goal of the day. While doing that, it is important to consider what realizable goals street youth work can meet and what local youngsters actually need from the service. Another thing to consider before committing to the goal is the personal limits and competences of youth workers.

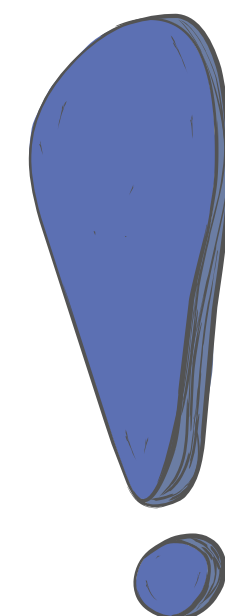
It means that the goal can depend on following aspects:

1. how experienced and competent the workers are
2. how much time there is for street youth work
3. how much time do youth workers have for follow-up activities
4. what subjects are youth workers prepared to discuss with youngsters
- 5.....

It is important to know that even if the goal is set, it can sometimes change during the street youth work, so it is important to be flexible, for example, if you plan to do observation but see something that needs immediate intervention.



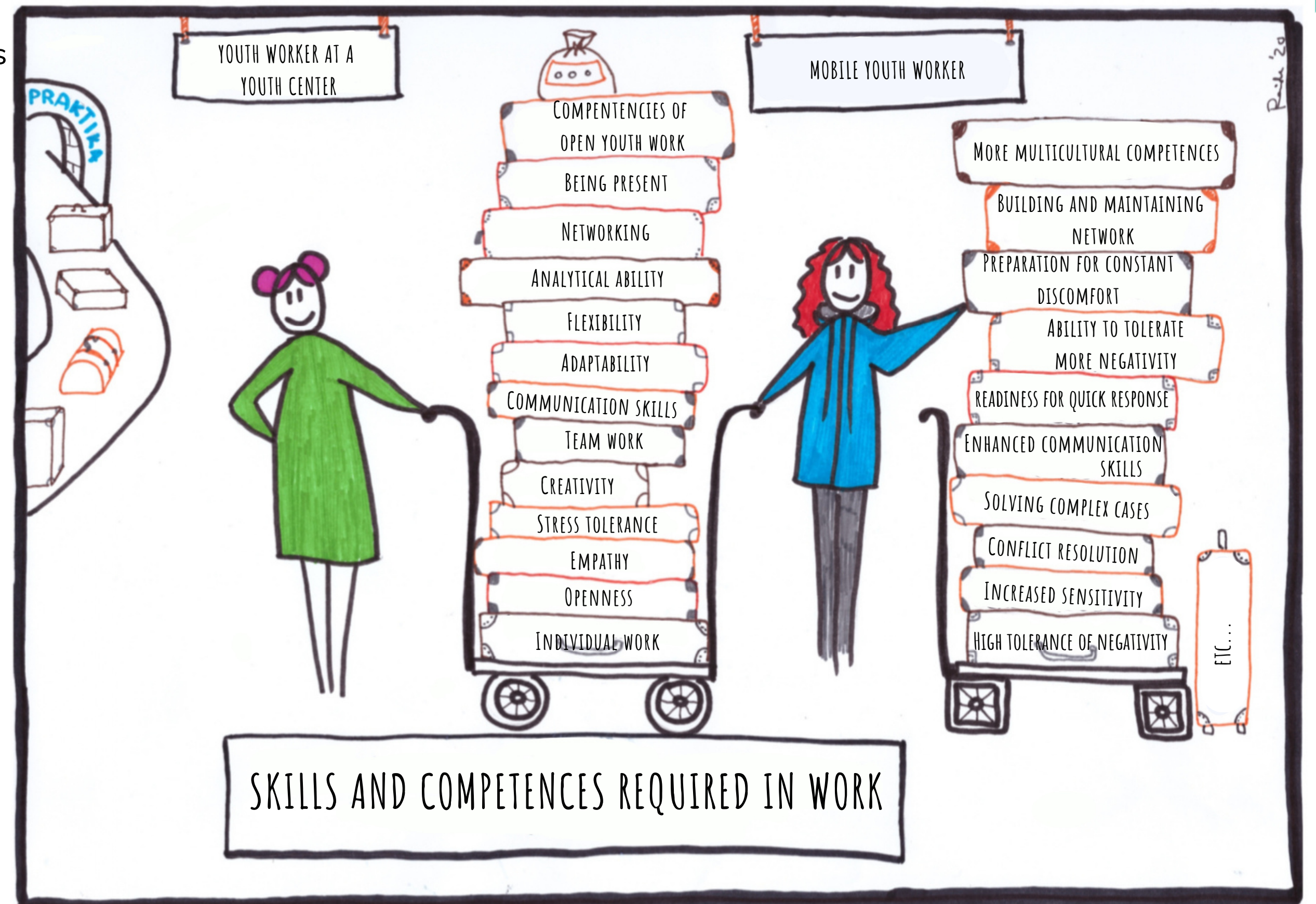
"Before going on the streets, we search for information about upcoming events and other opportunities that we can recommend. We also talk through different topics with our partner, such as our physical and mental state, specific wishes or conditions, our equipment, topics we can discuss with young people and our roles and methods for the day. We discuss who starts and carries the conversation, how much we are going to walk, are we up for making new contacts or mainly talking to young people whom we know already; what subjects and situations we want to avoid." (Anonymous mobile youth worker, 2022)



A great recommendation is use a backpack. So-called street work backpack is a great way to carry all the necessities with you. Below we also discuss uniforms, but the backpack is a perfect place to put the logo of your organization.

A good street youth worker:

1. Analyses his or her character, interests and the type of skills and competences he or she needs to develop in order to connect and communicate well with youngsters.
2. Acknowledges that young people have their own life and habits in public space and that the habits and behaviors can be influenced or changed if the youth worker uses his or her competences and strengths and respects the youngsters.
3. Complies with confidentiality, trust. Think carefully about whom and how you share information you gained from young people.
4. Uses his or her own interests in communicating with young people and also knows the opportunities that are available for young people who share similar interests.
5. Does a lot of self-analysis and reflects on the conversations held with young people improvements or changes that can be done.
6. Cares about the interests and needs of young people to offer the best possible service.
7. Already from the start sets strict and clear boundaries.
8. Observes and follows the person's body language.
9. Is honest and open-minded and treats young people with respect.
10. Is flexible with his or her plans and time if the situation requires.



When working with young people with different personalities the following must be kept in mind:

- we cannot understand neither feel what the other person is going through. When talking to a young person, you must look beyond your experience. Example: getting a satisfactory grade at school is tragedy for some people, but an achievement for others. This is not the place to say: "It's nothing".
- make sure that one can ask for help. By asking help, one reflects that youth workers as well are vulnerable as human beings and it helps to build trust based relationships as well as equal partnership.
- look behind the mask. Be considerate, patient and open. Youth workers are looking for the core of action, not the action itself.
- building a relationship with a young person takes time and the result will not be immediate. The work one does is an investment in society and a long-term result.

Preventative measures to consider

Before starting work with street youth, it is important for youth work to consider his or her safety first. Since most of the work with street youth takes place in the evenings when it's dark and the areas being visited might not always be the safest and most well-lit, it is especially important to follow some measures. First, choose the areas and times so that you don't put yourself in dangerous situations. Secondly, never to do street youth work alone.

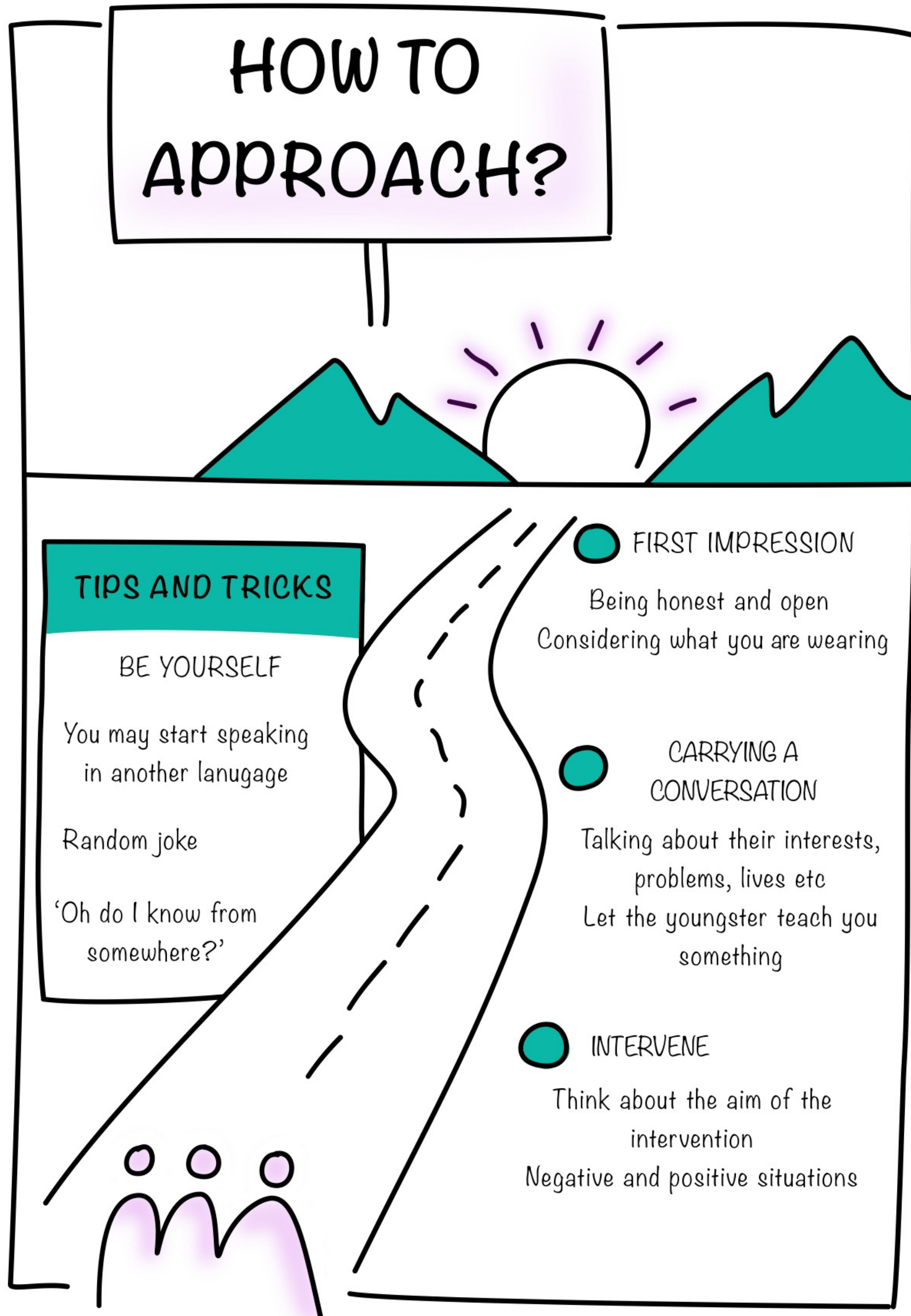
Another thing to keep in mind is to make sure that your mobile phone is charged. That way you can always call for help. Also, have a mobile phone at hand in case young people need to contact somebody, for example, their parents, friends or some specialists. A good idea is to carry either a company identity card or business cards as this helps to earn trust of young people who you connect with and also in case the grown-ups have questions about why you are interacting with youngsters. You should also offer your business card to young people so that they can contact you in the future.

Lastly, a youth worker should always learn to trust his or her gut feeling if one senses that something might be wrong. If you don't feel safe or comfortable in a situation let your partner know and leave sooner rather than later.

- "Before choosing our route, me and my partner check where youth workers have gone to on previous days, what areas haven't been checked in a while and what the weather is."

- "Before going to the streets I think about my goal for the day and what I am going to observe during street youth work. Then we set the route with my partner (although our plan and route can change and often does). We also discuss what kind of equipment we need and if we need any specific tools or materials."





How to approach?

While doing mobile youth work there are some things to consider and think through before connecting with young people. That includes your appearance, uniform, body language and pick-up lines or methods you can use to start a conversation with a stranger. In this chapter, you will find a couple of thoughts and tips on how to approach and what to consider. *And as always, your safety comes first!*

Making a first impression

While approaching young people in malls, parks and other public places, it is important to consider and think through what impression you create. It means that you should think about what helps to build trust within a group of young people. What helps is being honest with them about your objective and profession. It will be great if you could wear a uniform or have business cards with you. A uniform helps to build trust, not only with the youth, but also with adults. In terms of the uniform, it should not stand out, because sometimes young people don't want other people to know that they are talking to a youth worker.

Therefore you should wear casual and regular clothing with a logo, job title or even a name.



It is also important to consider the environment and body language while making contact. If you can't decide how to approach, young people might see you observing them and feel unsafe already. If you need more time to consider your approach, you can always choose a route that is not direct, as opposed to going straight into the group. That can even help you look more casual and natural. For example turning a corner and coming from the other side or just checking your phone or bag and then approach.

When establishing a contact, keep it casual and easy, ie just have a chat. If the young person is new to you or there are some new members in the group, it's important to introduce yourself - who you are and what you are doing there. It's important because young people might get scared that you are a police officer and so on.

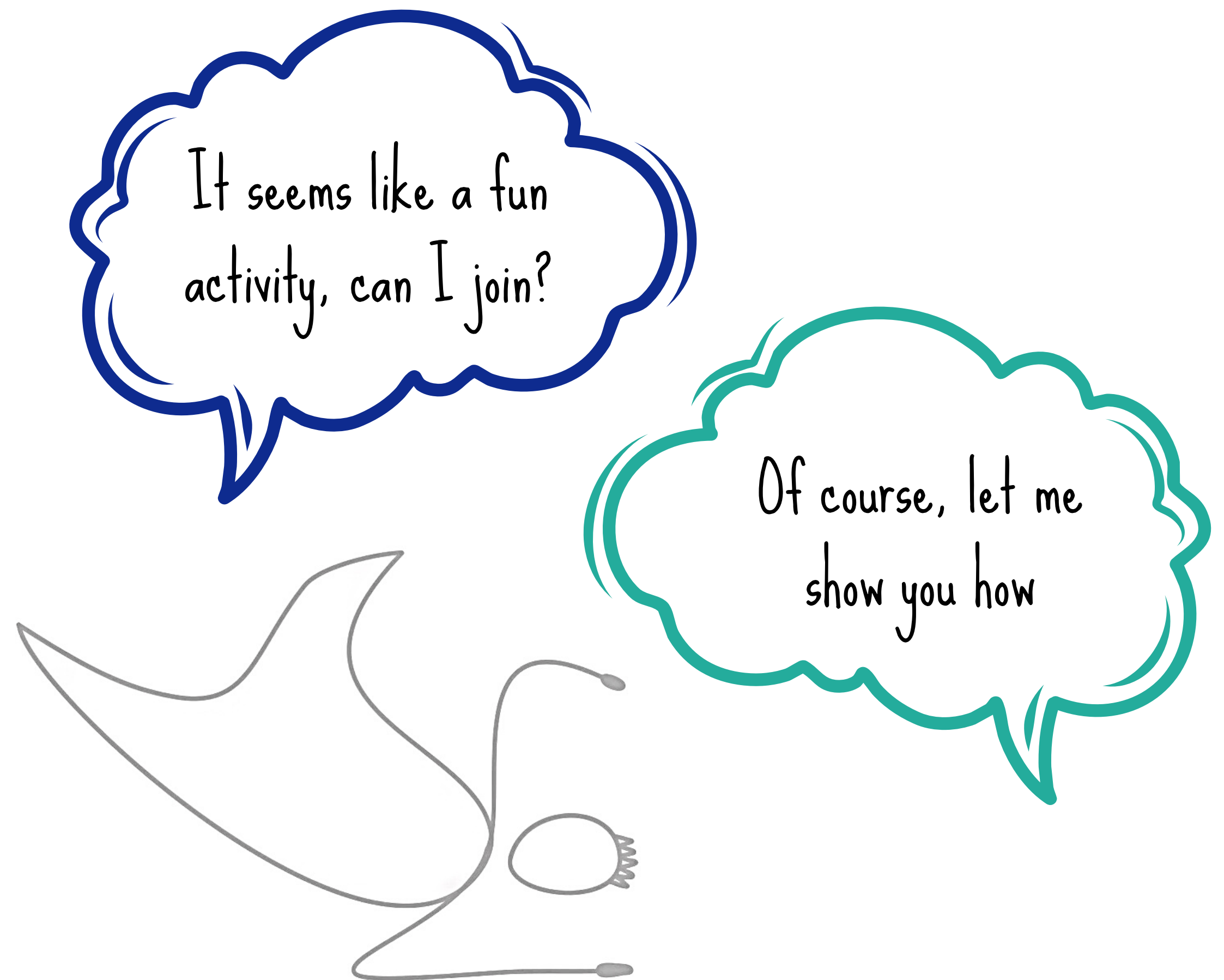
Tips and tricks

It's always important to make a good first impression, but it is not easy to even start a conversation with a youngster for the very first time.

Below you can find some tips and tricks shared by mobile youth workers.

All these methods might not work all the time and with all youngsters. For that reason, it is very important that the youth worker has a couple of methods or so-called pick-up lines, to start the conversation with. It is important to keep in mind that all methods don't work for all practitioners, but you can always take what works best for you and for your current situation.

The most important thing while experimenting is to be honest and be yourself. Don't pretend to be somebody else, youngsters will see immediately that you are insincere.



INTERVENE



WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE WITH THE INTERVENTION?

YOUR OWN AND YOUR PARTNER'S SAFETY FIRST!
DON'T PLAY HERO

AFTER INTERVENING WILL THE TRUST-BASED RELATIONSHIP REMAIN?

TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE REASON BEHIND THE ACTION



WHEN YOU SEE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR OR AN ACT, EMPOWER THE YOUTH

METHODS TO USE:
STRENGTH BASED APPROACH
SOLUTION CENTERED APPROACH

REGARDLESS OF THE SITUATION YOUTH WORKERS ARE NOT THERE TO MORALIZE



How to connect and intervene?

A lot can happen on the streets. No two days are the same and therefore it is important to be ready for everything. Of course one can never be prepared for all situations, but it's still easier if you know what are the possible outcomes or situations that you can find yourself in. In this chapter you will find a couple of tips on how to connect on the streets and when/how one should respond to or intervene in different situations and why it is important to discuss those things with your colleagues.

Conducting a conversation

While having a conversation with the young people it is crucial to keep the focus on them or their group. That means talking about their interests, problems, lives etc. Of course it helps to earn trust if youth workers also share some details about themselves, but the main focus of the conversation should be on the youth. Nevertheless, it is good to know which are the topics that you, as a youth worker, are willing to talk about. Try to find common interests and if are none, be prepared to ask questions - let the young people educate you or introduce something totally new for you and don't be afraid to fail. For example, if the young people are doing parkour, ask them to show you a couple of tricks and try it out for yourself. And again, it is not important to be good at those things, just show interest and willingness to try those activities that are important for them. That way you can earn their respect and their trust.

If the conversation is not going well, but young people are ready to spend time with you, it is the opportunity for the youth worker to propose an activity (discussion game, card game, sports etc). The chosen method can depend on the interest of the group, surroundings or equipment you have with you.

We also need to talk about the rule of public space. If young people seem uncomfortable or they don't want to communicate at this moment, then just move on (more on that in the next chapter)

Intervention

Since the streets are public spaces, things happen. There could be good or bad situations and often we need some kind of intervention. Street youth workers can be the adequate and necessary professionals for doing that. For the intervention to be adequate, it is necessary to talk about methods and approaches with other members of your team to make sure that the methods are similar and based on the same values.

With an intervention it is important to think about what we want to achieve and what is our goal. That is essential for making the street youth work service professional and consistent and you as a youth worker reliable and competent.

Situations and intervention methods:

Substance use - the approach depends on your goal and what kind of substances we are dealing with (whether it is cigarettes, alcohol or even drugs). It is crucial not to moralize or tell them what to do, but more to discuss with them about the reasons they are using substances and what can be possible consequences - trying to find the core. It is also good to set a good example ("Please don't smoke near me, because I care for my health").

If you see severe alcohol use or dangerous drug use, contact the police, but make sure that you don't lose the trust of the youngsters while doing so which is why you should let the youngsters know that their safety is your priority.

Mental or physical violence - here it is important to consider your safety first. If there is a chance of being hurt yourself, then it is necessary to call the police rather than trying to save the situation by yourself. But if it seems possible to handle it by yourself, it is good to know some methods such as street mediation or just hearing the youngsters out and trying to get the emotions out in a safer way.

Bullying - sometimes the easy approaches work the best. For example explaining why their actions are bad, or how they can hurt somebody. Even easier is just asking why the youngster is bullying and if he considers how it affects others.

Littering or damaging public property - to reflect with them that it is the public place and therefore everybody is responsibility to keep it clean, because it also affects themselves. If they are doing graffiti, you can show them places where they can do it legally.

Seeing acts of kindness or positive actions - if you see that some youngsters are picking up the trash and throwing it away or they take care of an injured animal, it is a good place to intervene and compliment their positive behavior. All the situations don't have to be negative - it is good to notice the positive acts and acknowledge these.

"There was a time when I was doing a study visit to a different city and got to know approaches by other mobile youth workers. By then I was mostly doing outreach youth work and hadn't had some much experience in detached youth work. There was a group of underaged youngsters smoking and drinking alcohol, the workers approached them and didn't touch the topic of consuming substances. I must say, I was intrigued by that and wanted to know why. It was eye opening to hear the reason behind that. The mobile youth workers said that that type of intervention wasn't their goal at the moment, the goal was to get to know information about youngster who they hadn't seen or heard for a while and by this type of approach they had fulfilled their goal."



 <p>WE ARE HONEST</p> <p>YOUTH WORKERS ARE OPEN ABOUT OUR ROLE, AIMS, PRINCIPLES AND CONNECTIONS ARE BASED ON YOUTH WORK DOCUMENTS</p> <p>OUR ROLE</p> <p>ACKNOWLEDGING THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORKER/SOCIAL WORKER AND THEREFORE WE WILL ACT ACCORDINGLY</p> <p>BEING CONFIDENTIAL</p> <p>WE ARE DISCRETE AND TRUSTWORTHY. CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUNGSTERS STAY BETWEEN US</p> <p>NETWORKING</p> <p>WE TRY TO FIND HELP AND SUPPORT, USING YOUNGSTER-CENTRIC NETWORK</p> <p>SUBSTANCES</p> <p>EXPRESS OUR STAND ON SUBSTANCE USE</p> <p>MAPPING</p> <p>THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE</p>	 <p>PRETEND OR SEEK POPULARITY</p> <p>WE DO NOT PRETEND TO BE ANYONE ELSE OR HIDE WHO WE ARE, THEREFORE WE DO NOT MAKE CONNECTIONS BASED ON LIES OR UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR</p> <p>FORCE OUR OPINIONS ON YOUNGSTERS</p> <p>WE DO NOT TELL YOUNGSTERS WHAT TO DO OR HOW TO ACT</p> <p>SHARE DISCRETE INFORMATION</p> <p>WE DO NOT SHARE INFORMATION WITH THIRD PARTIES, IF IT IS NOT NECESSARY</p> <p>IGNORE</p> <p>WE DO NOT LEAVE YOUNGSTERS ALONE WITH THEIR PROBLEMS AND DO NOT MAKE THE PROBLEM SMALLER THAN IT IS</p> <p>MORALISE</p> <p>WE DO NOT THREATEN THEM WITH ANY KIND OF PUNISHMENT</p> <p>BURDEN/OVERSHARE</p> <p>WE DO NOT OVERLOAD YOUNGSTERS WITH INFORMATION</p>
	

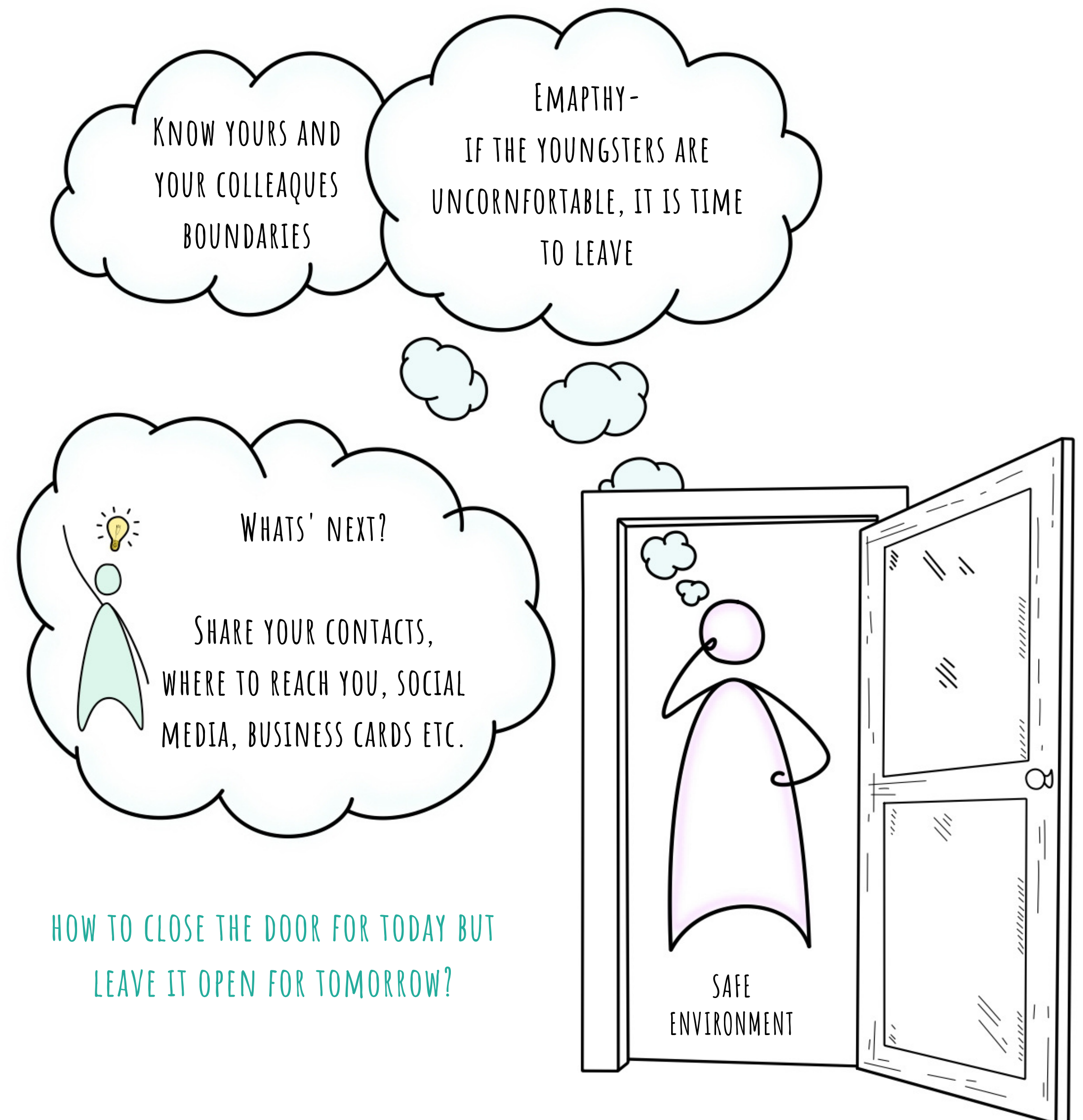
How to close?

While doing street youth work it is also important to recognize the right time to end the contact or finish the conversation. Whether it is because the youngsters are showing no interest or saying that they don't want to talk to you anymore, they are starting to smoke or drink or you just find that it is a good time to move on, it is good to have some exit strategies in street youth work. In this chapter you will find a couple of methods and thoughts on how to close the door while leaving it open for the next time.

When to leave?

The main principles to remember in this case are respect and empathy. As the streets are a public space, it is up to the youth if they want to talk to you or not. If they seem uncomfortable or express unwillingness, it is the youth worker's responsibility to notice that and leave. Nonetheless, it is important to leave in a way that there is a possibility for meeting again, if they are up for it and that possibility should also be understandable for the youngsters.

One reason to leave would be if the situation becomes uncomfortable not for the youngsters, but for the youth worker(s). That can be firstly because the youngsters start behaving in a way that contradicts the principles of youth work. This can for example be smoking or drinking. In this case, it is important to express the reason as to why you are leaving, but in a non-judgemental way. For example: "We will come back next time, when you are not drinking" or "I don't like the smell of cigarettes, so we are leaving for now".



Since a street is a more free environment than a youth center, you cannot really set the rules or tell them not to drink or smoke, but you can also not show that you are okay with their behavior. Again - it helps to discuss these approaches with your team or with your partner, so you carry the same values and similar message to the youth.

Another reason to leave the young people can be if there is something that triggers or makes the youth worker uncomfortable. We all have topics that we are not willing to discuss or that makes us too emotional or distressed. In case these topics come up, it is important to express your discomfort to your partner in a delicate way or to just remove yourself from the situation. Again, it is extremely crucial to know your partner well enough to see when he or she is uncomfortable and to know what to do in that case. It is good to also talk it through beforehand whether 1) you both exit or 2) the other youth worker continues the conversation, while the first one leaves. A pre-agreed signal is a good option to communicate between partners, without alarming the young people. But if the group understands that something is up, it is important to be as honest with them as you can to make sure they don't feel guilty and understand that they can still talk with the youth workers the next time they meet.



Leaving the door open

Whatever the reason for leaving is, it is important to do it in a way that allows you to approach the same group the next time or gives the youngsters an opportunity to contact you, if they want to do so. Luckily there are some tips that help you do just that.

Some tips for example:

Asking if you can approach the youngsters the next time you see them. This sentence is mainly about giving the youngsters the power to choose whether they want to communicate further, but at the same time express the wish from your part.

Giving them your business card - Business card seems like an old-fashioned tool, but if the youngster has a problem they want your help with, or they just want to talk to you further, but they don't have a phone at the moment, it is a good way for them to have your contact information. While giving it, it is good to express that you are happy to help them or talk with them, but also set boundaries. For example saying, that if it is not a life or death situation, you will answer during work hours, or that you prefer communicating through a certain platform.

Showing your organization's social media channels - This is a good option, if they are interested in participating in some of your organization's events or services, for example coming to the youth center. This way, you give them an option to seek out for more information and also ask further questions, if they have any.

Setting up a new meeting time - If you have a conversation or a topic to discuss further, it is good to set up a new time and place for meeting. If it is more official, like planning an event or primary counseling, you can invite them into your office. If it is more unofficial or the youngster does not want to come to the office you can just say that you will be on the streets again on this day and time and you can come there if you want to talk further.

Give or ask for feed-back- If you really enjoyed speaking to the young people or you are proud of their development, achievement etc, it is good to express that. That way they are also left with a positive emotion from talking to you. If the youngster is up for it, you can also ask for feedback. For example: "Was the conversation comfortable for you and why?" or "Did you like our method of approach".

Telling the young people that if they see people with the same uniform on the streets, it is okay to approach them - This applies, if you have a special uniform that you wear while doing street youth work. You can let the youngsters know that every time you do street youth work, you wear the same uniform and it is okay to go and talk to the youth workers on the streets when you see them wearing it.



How to reflect?

Since non-formal education and learning is based on reflection, it is also an essential part of street youth work. That is how you evolve and improve as a team. Therefore it is extremely important to not only reflect by yourself, but also with your partner and your colleagues. From time to time it is good to have meetings or covisions (?) to reflect on the topics together with the whole team. In this chapter you will find some thoughts on how to reflect and how to measure success of street youth work. In the end of the learning material, you can also find a couple of methods for reflection.



Reflecting and collecting data

Reflecting on your work should be done all throughout the process. Before going to the streets you can go over your last times, check your learnings and set a goal and what you want to improve or try out on that day. During the process, you should reflect and talk with your partner to make corrections on the things that weren't working for you as a team or did not work with the youngsters. After the process you can reflect on the overall experience, give feed-back and set future goals. For all of these reflections, different tools can be used, whether it is a more formal reflection on paper or a more flexible one that you do orally.

One method for reflecting and collecting data after going on the streets is a logbook. There you can add a bit of statistics about where you did street youth work, to whom did you speak to and other necessary information, as well as reflect on the topics you discussed, things you observed, methods you used and so on.

If the logbook is anonymous and does not mention any personal data, it can also be shared between the network partners to further develop the cooperation. It is also a good basis while reflecting with your partner, because you can go through all the contacts made one-by-one and discuss what worked for you, give each other feed-back and set goals for the next time.

Measuring success and productivity

Similarly to open youth work, it is also quite hard to measure the success or results of street based youth work, since the results cannot be measured in numbers or percentages and the impact can show up much later than the act itself. Sometimes you give your contact information to a youngster and they write to you months or even years later. Sometimes you have a discussion with a youngster and years later you find out how it impacted or changed the life of the youngster. But even knowing that, it is sometimes hard to motivate oneself, when the results or impact are not visible or perceptible.

You can measure the success or impact of street based youth work if young people:

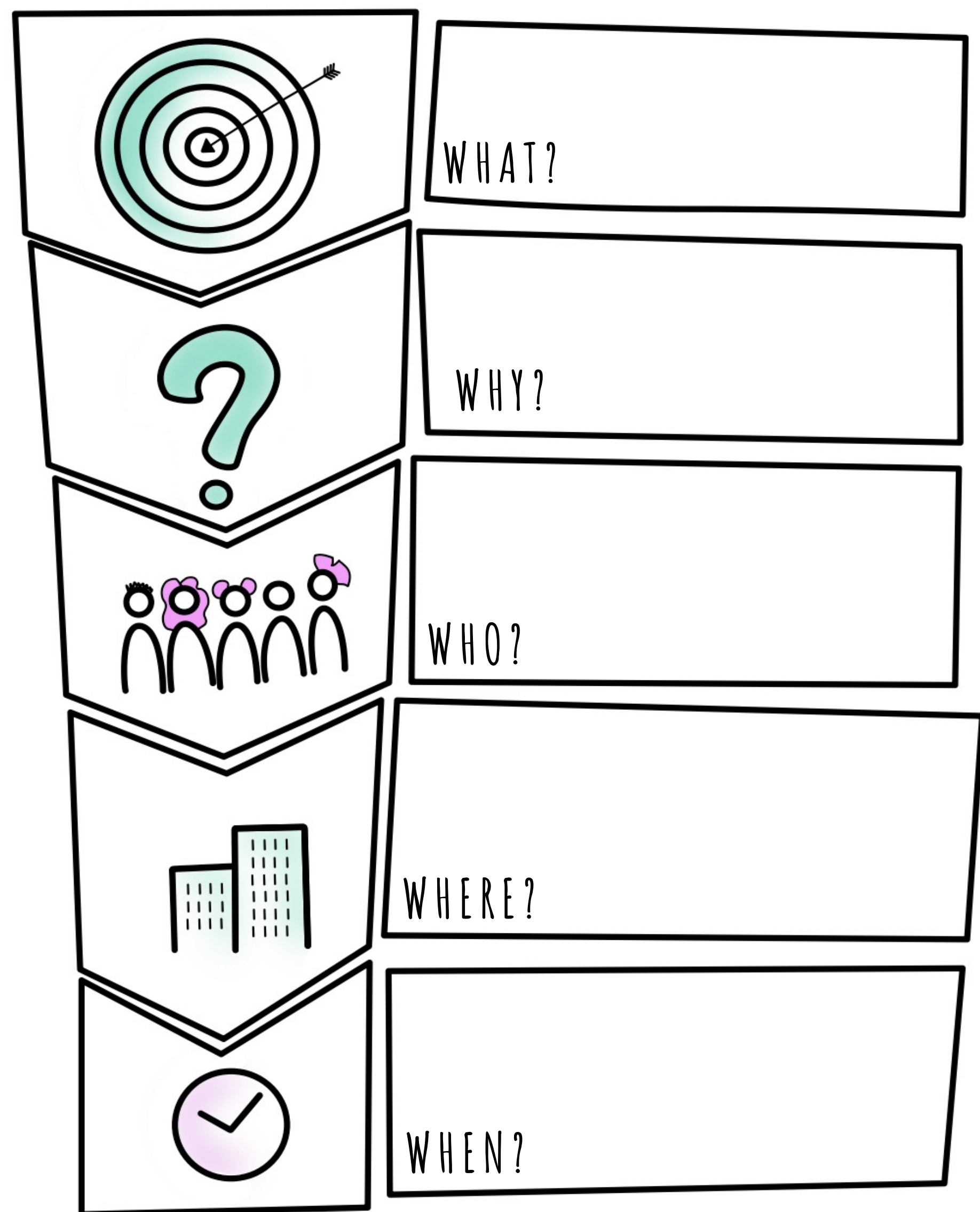
- make the youth worker feel comfortable while making contact
- recognize the street youth workers and greet them
- are able/ready to express their wish to speak to the youth worker or decline the conversation
- are open about their lives, relationships, problems etc.
- are aware of the opportunities of youth centers and youth work in general
- are able to receive information or support from the youth workers and ask further questions
- participate in youth work activities, events, trainings
- come to the open youth center
- know the difference between formal and non-formal education and the opportunities that non-formal education offers
- start following social media channels connected to youth work
- contact a youth worker on social media/e-mail/phone after meeting on the streets
- seek help or guidance with a problem, either by going to see a specialist or asking for a youth worker for help to do so
- There are fewer young people just wandering around the streets with no purpose - either they have found their way to a youth center or a hobby class
- There's a network of specialists who are all working for the same goal - for example local police, children protection specialists or a local community.

Success or impact of digital youth work:

- New conversation with a youngster online (started by either the youngster or the youth worker)
- Regular contact with a youngster online
- Young people are taking part in online activities
- Youngsters picked up online find their way into the youth center or youth work in general

"We have made exact plans during street youth work, not beforehand, because then we see what the real situation and need is at the moment. Success isn't always about how many young people we talk to, but about the debt of conversation we can achieve with one group and the trust we build. Trust guarantees us that young people are willing to talk to us next time and maybe visit the youth center."

THE 5W OF REFLECTION



One of the methods for reflecting different situations on street.

About the project

Street Youth Work ABC is an Erasmus+ KA2 project with the aims of developing practical competences for street youth work, developing new practices for teaching and supporting street youth workers, including more youngsters at risk in youth work activities and building cooperation with local organisations. During this project the partners created two intellectual outputs: a) training videos about street youth work b) this document for beginner street youth workers.

The need for this kind of a project came from the need to develop the competencies of the street youth work practitioners from Estonia and Latvia and also to make the process of training new youth workers easier and more effective and systematic.

The Street Youth Work ABC project consisted of:

1) a job shadowing meeting in the spring of 2022, where Latvian practitioners had an opportunity to experience and observe the street-based youth work practices in Tartu, participate in a intervention methods training and a supervision.

2) Video camp in Latvia in the summer of 2022, where the participants from Latvia and Estonia had an opportunity to create the content, script and filming of three short videos about street youth work.

3) Final seminar, where different experts from Estonia and Latvia had a chance to see the videos and other outputs from this project.



Partner organisations

Tartu Youth Work Center is a subdivision of the culture department of the Tartu City Government, which started work on May 2nd, 2018. The aim of the center is to create an inspiring and innovative youth work environment for the youth of Tartu for them to grow up to be active, creative, and happy people. The center operates on three premises: Anne Youth center, Lille Youth Center and Ilmatsalu Youth Center.

The primary objectives of Tartu youth work are (Youth Work in Tartu 2021):

Giving youngsters diverse opportunities for involvement and increasing their inclusion and opinions in the development of the city;

-enhancing youth entrepreneurship, creativity, self-initiative and to help them get first experiences in the labour market

-increasing the availability of youth work;

-developing and doing evidence-based youth work;

-increasing the professionalism and competence of youth workers and recognizing their value.

The Baltic Regional Foundation is a non-governmental organization founded on 12 May 2011 with the aim of promoting the development of civil society, non-formal education, intercultural dialogue and inclusion, proceed youth work and encourage, inspire and support creative ideas through training, projects and consultations. The activities of the organization open the door to new experience, knowledge and opportunities, promoting non-formal and informal learning.

The main target group of the organization is young people, especially from social risk groups - young people who do not work and study, school drop-outs, young people with fewer opportunities, etc.

The organization is located in Riga, but regularly organizes events throughout Latvia, cooperating with other non-governmental organizations, youth centers, local governments and state institutions. Educational, various European projects are actively implemented - training, seminars, conferences, both locally and internationally, also with a number of participants exceeding 100 people.

Street Youth Work in partner countries

Street-based youth work is a field that can be completely different from country to country. For that reason, it is important to understand the backgrounds, aims and target groups, while discussing the subject internationally. The chapter below includes short descriptions on the street-based youth work in Riga (Latvia) and Tartu (Estonia).

Riga, Latvia



In Latvia, attention has been paid to working with street youth for several years, however, at the moment this issue is not clearly arranged at the political and strategic level. In the Youth Policy Guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Science for 2021-2023, special emphasis is placed on the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and this also includes attention, activities and initiatives in the field of street youth work. In 2018, the Agency for International Programs for Youth went to Lithuania to see how work with street youth is carried out in this country, where it has had a systematic approach for more than 10 years. However, Latvia has not yet been able to implement such a systematic approach.

Nevertheless, various initiatives and projects are being implemented in Latvia that develop street work with youth, for example:

- Municipalities can submit projects on street work with youth in National project competitions that are coordinated by the Agency for International Programs for Youth, and some municipalities also do so, for example, Ikšķile, Kuldīga, Rīga.
- Non-governmental organizations implement activities and projects in this topic, for example, the association "Attīstības platforma YOU+" which is currently conducting extensive research on street youth in Liepāja – what are the reasons young people spend time on the streets, what interests them, what activities they would like to get involved, etc.
- The Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia is currently attracting experts to develop handbook for social workers, which will include guidelines, video lectures and training on how to work with street youth.
- Some municipalities delegate functions to perform street youth work to non-governmental organizations, for example, the delegation of Riga municipality to the "Resiliences centrs".
- Some municipal social services implement separate programs, the target groups of which are also street young people, for example, in Riga and Tukums there is a social rehabilitation and support program "Jump".
- The association "Open Radošie Centri" provides safe places where young people can simply spend their free time or express themselves creatively. These are places for young people to take refuge, prepare themselves to eat, do their homework or just relax. Currently, 13 Centers (5 in Riga) are open in various cities of Latvia.



In the Riga City Municipality, youth work is planned and coordinated by the Youth Division of the Education and Sports Department of the Riga City Council, based on the Riga City Youth Work Program 2019-2023. Until 2019, work with street youth was mainly carried out within the framework of the municipal social work system, which was implemented on an occasional basis, without creating a common, structured system. Therefore, in 2019, the project “Practical youth work in the vicinity of Riga” was implemented.

Currently, the city of Riga is organizing systematic work with street youth in several places in the city where young people gather. The work is performed by 4 employees of the association "Resiliences centres". Also the Riga municipality is actively working on the improvement of the system, with the aim of expanding work with street youth in the city of Riga.



Tartu, Estonia

Tartu Youth Work Center has been providing outreach youth work service in Tartu since the autumn of 2020. Outreach youth work is one part of mobile youth work and its main goal is to introduce youth work opportunities to the young people and to reach out to young people who otherwise would not be involved in the activities of the youth centers. The outreach youth work is being done by all youth workers on the streets, shopping centers as well as on different digital platforms where the youth are active.

In the summer of 2021 the service was provided five days a week from 16.00 to 19.00. In the winter street youth work was carried out twice a week from 16.00 to 18.00. During the last year youth workers made over 2800 contacts with young people. Street-based youth work is done in addition to open youth work and the budget is also shared. That gives us the opportunity to combine the two methods to provide the young people the service most comfortable and effective for them.

Outreach youth work offers Tartu Youth Work Center an opportunity to:

- create contacts with youngsters who spend their time on the streets
- observe where youngsters are gathering
- communicate with youngsters on subjects that are relevant to them, such as healthy lifestyle, current affairs and social climate, risky behavior and its prevention
- introduce opportunities and activities targeted to the youngsters
- offer young people support and contact a specialist if necessary
- engage in digital youth work where youth workers are present and offer support in social media and other digital platforms
- cooperate with other specialists and organizations

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Worksheets for a street youth worker

PREPARATION

DATE: _____

AREAS TO VISIT

PECULIARITIES OF
THE PLACES

THE GOAL OF THE DAY

RISK ANALYSIS

TOPICS TO DISCUSS

ACTIVITIES TO DO

EQUIPMENT TO TAKE WITH YOU

REFLECTION

DATE: _____

3

THINGS I LEARNED

2

OF MY FAVOURITE MOMENTS

1

THING I WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO IMPROVE?

I AM PROUD OF