

A MANUAL FOR TRAINERS

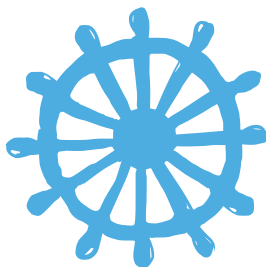
On course for work+life balance



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ON COURSE FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

NATASZA KOSAKOWSKA-BEREZECKA MAGDALENA ŻADKOWSKA MAGDALENA GAJEWSKA
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Introduction – setting a course on work-life balance

It is our pleasure to present this *Course on Work-life Balance for Couples. Manual for Educators* you can use in your trainer's work in the field of WLB (Work-Life Balance). The manual is the result of our training experience gained from working with female and male clients, as well as couples. It contains practical scientific knowledge we obtained through examining couples at different stages of their lives, especially as part of the PAR Migration Navigator project (www.migrationnavigator.org), where we examined Polish couples for three years. We were mainly interested in what factors enable couples to obtain work-life balance (www.migrationnavigator.org). The interviews we conducted allowed us to draw practical conclusions regarding actions that need to be taken in order for people to succeed in "juggling" household and work duties. Some of these conclusions have been included in *Couple's Navigator. Manual for couples* manual. These two publications are closely linked: we strongly suggest you read the manual for couples before you start using the manual for educators.

The additional value of this set of exercises is that its content is built on our professional experiences, specifically those acquired through pro-



fessional mediation, including the experiences of accompanying couples in various stages of conflict resolution. Thanks to conflicts, couples are very often able to enter a completely different, more constructive level of communication. As a result, conflicts, if resolved well, lead to positive outcomes for the whole family. We also drew on our therapeutic experience gained through accompanying couples in crisis. The exercises we offer allowed our clients to get in touch with various experiences linked to both their individual lives and their relationship, which can sometimes be seen as a challenge.

Trainers using the set of exercises we included in this book are free to follow the order we suggest or use them in any order they see fit. We designed the workshop so that participants go from easier to more difficult tasks in a controlled manner. Still, trainers working with couples in a group can adjust the order of exercises to meet the group's needs.

It is important to follow the participants' needs when planning using different exercises described in this manual for educators.

We set a course on work-life balance – the goal of these exercises is to give partners space to work together on their relationship, to better it and make it more satisfying for both partners involved. This type of relationship work will definitely be a challenge for them at times, because it will require them to be focused, to reflect on difficulties a lot more and practice the skills of putting themselves in the shoes of another. It is necessary to build – in an aware and mindful manner – a relationship, which will allow the couple to enjoy work-life balance galore. The assumption is plain and simple: work-life balance means that work supports life and life supports work. Work resources multiply life resources and life resources reinforce resources used at work.

The exercises we include below also draw upon various valuable trends, which are of use in self-development such as mindfulness (*mindfulness*, Williams & Penman, 2014), or Non-Violent Communication (Non-Violent Communication, Larsson, 2011; Rosenberg, 2012).

Considering our experiences with couples and family relations we suggest adopting positive psychology perspective. We want to support couples, to develop their strengths, to build and enhance their self-esteem. We want them to be able to enjoy themselves and their success, to share their knowledge, skills and experiences.

Additionally we have created a set of exercises for migrant couples in Norway. Living in a foreign culture is an experience that lets couples examine their relationship closely. They are far from their native homeland and such experiences tend to sharpen their senses and enable them to see themselves better. It also helps them decide what they want their mutual world to look like.

Our workshop is aimed at people building their lives in Norway – a very different country from Poland as far as lifestyle-influencing values are concerned. The goal is to look closely together at the experiences of couples living in a different culture and a different every-day reality. The differences between both cultures as well as the examples of exercises, which may support the couples' acculturation process, are also described. Our program can be used to work with couples experiencing acculturation process whether they are migrants or have been migrants.

The Plan

The suggested set of workshops includes 12 meetings (which last a maximum of 135 minutes focused on developing skills, which enable couples to obtain work-life balance). We have also planned one meeting for migrant couples. We recommend going through the whole workshop set in the suggested order, but the trainer, depending on the group's needs, may also do modules mentioned below separately. The suggested set can be used as a sort of a "basket" full of exercises to be done depending on the dynamics in a given group and following Participants' needs.

If a group works on Saturdays and Sundays, the trainer can choose to do more than one session on a given day, one after the other. You will find the workshop's subject area below, as well as a sum-up of the skills it develops all of which are useful in building work-life balance.

How long does it take?

Having 12 meetings that last maximum 135 minutes each (with the exception of workshop Coupling couple that is planned for one 180-minute workshop) might be a lot for some, but too little for others. We are suggesting such a duration of the course based on our experience with testing the materials for this manual. However if you have more time and participants are willing to work longer then we suggest adding two modules, one aiming at integrating the group (module 0)

and one allowing the couple to work on their common goals of development of their relationship (module X). Optionally the initial modules can be done separately for women and for men. We can also plan the modules to be realized with two meetings during 6-week period, or during 6 consecutive weekends. As you can see there are many ways of conducting the workshops for couples – it all depends on their needs and their time.

Table 1. A summary of the subject area and the set of skills developed by the Trainers' Manual: Couple on course

Module title	Skills developed	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – initializing the group process – setting a group contract – integrating the group 	3 · 45 min		
MIND THE COUPLE! – HOW TO LIVE UNDER PRESSURE AND NOT GO INSANE USING MINDFULNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – recognising the mechanisms of stress – mindful dealing with stress through developing the ability to observe one's own body, thoughts and emotions. 	3 · 45 min	3 · 45 min	3 · 45 min
COUPLE IN THE MOOD FOR CHANGE, NO FUSS – NO BALANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – effective communication techniques – active and emphatic listening – conflict solving – self-assertion – negotiating 	3 · 45 min	3 · 45 min	3 · 45 min
A COUPLE IN THE WASH, BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – understanding one's own and our partner's needs and expectations related to family life and household chores – exploring gender stereotypes involving work and household chores – managing work, family life and our spare time – implementing a new division of household chores 	3 · 45 min	3 · 45 min	3 · 45 min

Module title	Skills developed	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
COUPLING COUPLE – OVERCOMING MENTAL BARRIERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – looking at sexuality from afar – detecting inner difficulties limiting joy from sex and overcoming them – tightening bonds and intimacy between partners – greater relationship awareness by practising appreciating positive aspects of the partner in the context of his/her sexuality – understanding one's own and our partner's sexual needs and expectations of sex by sharing and receiving touch 	4 · 45 min		
COUPLE IN NORWAY – OR A FEW WORDS ABOUT IN-TERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND LIVING IN A DIFFERENT CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – intercultural communication – cultural intelligence – hints for couples planning on migration and having migration experience 	3 · 45 min		
SUMMARY OF THE COURSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – finalizing group process and summing up couples' accomplishments 	3 · 45 min		

Our participants

The recipients are couples having both short and long experience of being together but the workshops can be adjusted to the needs of single people who are yet to be in a relationship, who have just ended a relationship or those in between relationships. We suggest no more than 5 couples at a time take part in the workshops.

Diversity is very welcome here – working with couples from different age groups, divorced, patchwork families, mixed culture couples can bring interesting insight into how people achieve their “being together”. Majority of the exercises listed here can be conducted with homosexual couples. However our research was not conducted among homosexual couples. Hence we suggest adapting the whole course (especially mod-

ules 3 & 4) to the reality of homosexual couples. Diversity is very mind-opening commodity and added value at every workshop.

Trainers

People implementing this set of workshops should have a BA or better yet an MA degree in Psychology, Sociology or Early Education and a minimum 48 hours of experience as trainers who can help workshop attendees develop the various social skills described in each module. They also should be certified trainers who have completed a trainer's course, which involved interpersonal training or graduated from a trainer's course acknowledged by their respective national psychological organizations. In order to make the course as diverse as possible, each module can be led by a different trainer.

Additionally:

To ensure a sufficiently high level of trainers' expertise with regard to the "Mind the couple. How to live under pressure and not to go insane" module, which draws on the notion and practice of mindfulness, the trainer who realizes this module should have his/ her own experience in the field of mindfulness, which can be confirmed by the participation in at least 16 hours total of workshop(s), which develop the competence of mindfulness.

In running "Couple in the mood for change: no fuss no balance" module trainers would find a basic mediation course useful (one that lasts at least 40 hours).

In "A couple in the wash. Breaking gender stereotypes" module trainers should be experts in the field of managing the ins and outs of everyday life. Trainers who realize this module should be very empathetic and experienced in helping people, particularly couples, implement changes in their lives.

The workshop "Coupling couple – overcoming mental barriers" requires a trainer who is open minded and therefore has a non-judgemental attitude towards sexuality. That is why this module best be realized by a certified sexologist .

"Couple in Norway – or a few words about intercultural communication and living in a different culture" is best done by people who are cultural adaptation trainers.

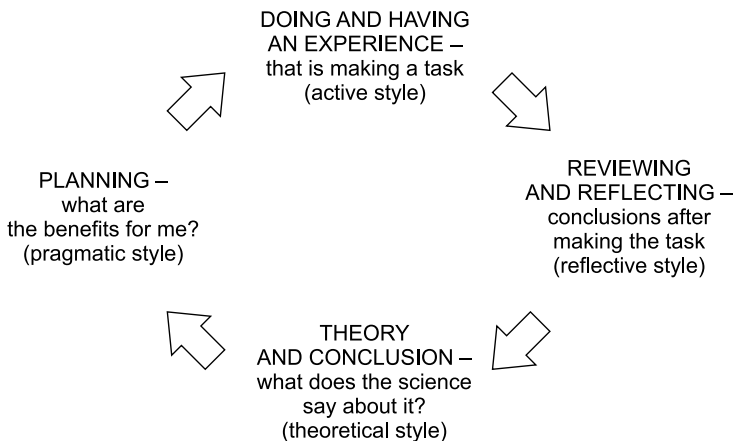
An excerpt from the trainer's manual

Three important issues worth knowing before we start working with a group, which has come together to develop skills, which are necessary to achieve work-life balance:

First of all, when planning how to use the trainers' manual and how to organise workshops it is worth considering David Kolb's theory (1984). He describes four subsequent stages of effective learning: doing something and experiencing it, reviewing and reflecting on the experience, and learning from the experience and planning. Each of these stages can open the cycle of acquiring new knowledge and each is equally important. They are directly connected with the four learning styles:

- 1) **active style** – preferred by people who learn by doing;
- 2) **reflective style** – preferred by people who learn by evaluating and drawing their own conclusions;
- 3) **theoretical style** – preferred by people who learn from theoretical models;
- 4) **pragmatic style** – preferred by people who learn by planning and recognising the link between the task and a specific problem in their lives.

When planning the meeting/ workshop it is good to include elements from all four styles and to use this cycle:



Picture 1 The learning cycle by David Kolb

Source: our own elaboration on the basis of D. Kolb *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1984

The awareness of group process dynamics is very important while working with a group. Group dynamics usually flow in the following sequence (by Klaus Vopel, 2009):

- 1) **Orientation stage:** people in the group cautiously get to know each other, most of all searching for similarities and things they have in common, which – in effect – brings people in the group closer together. However, it is an illusory sense of intimacy that needs to be boosted in the next stage. It can be recognised by the fact that the couples are not very keen to answer questions about their difficulties.
- 2) **Conflict / maturation stage:** a group or couple, working together, encounters new challenges and notices that what they have been doing up to now does not seem to be working. Enthusiasm and motivation to work decreases. The meetings become non-constructive, up until “somebody does something” that makes the group “explode”. People start to open up about what they dislike. The trainer’s role in this stage is particularly important: it is to ensure openness in the communication of needs and expectations of particular people in a group or in a couple. It will enable the creation of new cooperation and communication rules. It will also let the whole group work more efficiently and in a more mature manner. A successful transition through the conflict stage is therefore a prerequisite for the group to enter a higher, more effective level of cooperation that is also called...
- 3) **The synergy stage,** where the group, already fully integrated, copes with difficulties and achieves new goals until it encounters the next crisis... or until it reaches the last stage, the last workshop, where...
- 4) **The group’s closing stage takes place:** time to sum up, evaluate cooperation, celebrate progress, success, plan for the future, and finally, say good bye.

It is important to take into consideration the group’s development stage and the group’s needs in a given moment every single time a trainer decides whether to go forward with an exercise.

Third of all, kindling the spark of internal motivation in a group is a crucial issue in trainers’ work. Internal motivation is activated when one strives to fulfil one’s needs – that is when people want to be active!

People with a sense of internal motivation have such a strong need to achieve their goals that make their lives meaningful. As a result they tend to achieve their goals more effectively.

Hence for a trainer it is important to remember that people develop their skills best when their two basic needs are fulfilled:

- 1) the need to belong (e.g. in a group, in a couple)
- 2) the need to be recognised in a group/ couple, to show oneself and one's talents.

It is worth caring for fulfilment of these needs during our work on each module. We especially recommend taking care of this aspect of work with participants if one trainer is replaced by another.

According to Jac Jakubowski (courtesy of the TROP group's educational materials), the learning process is also effective when:

- 1) **The group feels safe** – so we establish a cooperation contract at the very beginning of work: what rules are to be obeyed by all to achieve common goals – e.g. we respect other's opinions when they are different from ours, we engage voluntarily in tasks, we are open to other peoples' opinions, we keep to discretion rules etc. The contract must be accepted by all the people in a workshop group. Particular rules may change if the group has such a need and everybody agrees to change the rules. An additional safety conditions are to always talk through difficult situations or to encourage the constructive resolution of potential conflicts in group or couple (especially in the conflict stage).
- 2) **What the group does is meaningful** – when suggesting particular exercises to couples or individual group members it is worth emphasising what they can gain by doing this exercise (e.g. they can make their relationship better). Therefore every discussion, game or simulation must be talked over and summed up at the end of a workshop meeting (in line with Kolb's cycle). Before each workshop meeting the trainer should also specifically answer the following question: what will the group/ couple know/be able to/ feel after the meeting?
- 3) **The group is active** – therefore it is important to use group activating methods and to gradually give the responsibility back to the people in a workshop group by giving them more and more

responsible exercises and encouraging them to take on new challenges. An additional method to support workshop group activity is to give constructive feedback (what you already do well, what leaves room for improvement).

- 4) **The group creates a positive rapport** – therefore it is important to emphasise the benefits of cooperation (strongly encourage group members to share positive things within and outside a couple), to openly believe in success, to celebrate success. Mutual appreciations, and open communication, modelled by the trainer, are also crucial.

The points listed above are a summary of basic trainers' know-how. More information can be found at many open-access manuals train-the-trainers type that are published on-line.

In order to make our manual more user-friendly we have introduced the following icons into description of the exercises:



– time



– homework or home practice



– table talk/summary encouraging group discussion



– woman



– men



– can be printed from: www.migrationnavigator.org

Thanks

We want to thank our husbands and partners: Łukasz, Maciek, Marcin, Marcin and Michał for their love, support, inspiration, open minds and exciting course set on work-life balance, and to our children: Franek, Inka, Jagna, Marysia, Mikołaj, Ola, Róża and Staś.

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And finally, for English edition: we wish to express our gratitude to Ola Cacha and Kasia Dudulewicz – thanks to your translation and proofreading, respectively, our manuals will be useful for couples in Norway and all around the world!

Module 0

Integration

Integration of the workshop group is necessary at the beginning of the course (whether the group will realize all the modules or just a few of them).

Module goals:

1. Getting to know each other in a group.
2. Creating a good rapport.

Duration: 1 meeting – 135 minutes



Exercise 1. Let's meet
Exercise 2. A Blind Date
Exercise 3. Group expectations
and group contract

Meeting and
integrating the group

Description of exercises

Exercise 1. Let's meet

The goals:

1. Getting to know each other in a group.
2. Creating a good rapport.
3. Building a sense of emotional security .

Duration 15 minutes



Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

We greet the participants. We ask them to sit in a circle. For now they can sit together, to feel safe.

2. The Activity

We ask each participant to introduce him/ herself by their first name and an adjective starting with the first letter of their name. This adjective is supposed to describe the role the person plays in their relationship in a funny way, e.g. Dominating Dominika, Reticent Richard. Then we ask couples to say how long have they been together for.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

To wrap up the activity, get the participants to repeat the name and corresponding adjective of each group member and check if everybody has to know each other, including the trainer.



TRAINER'S NOTES



Each trainer has his/her own favourite exercise to begin with. Whatever it is it should help participants remember each other's names.

Exercise 2. A Blind Date

The goals:

1. Getting to know each other in a group.
2. Creating a good rapport.
3. Building a sense of emotional security.



Duration 60 minutes

Materials needed:

Print-outs of the following chart for everyone.

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

We invite you and your partner to simulate a blind date. Each of you will receive a list of questions. You should answer them as "I" first, and then as "My Partner".

2. The Activity

Participants answer the following questions. Be sure that participants jot down their answers themselves, without looking at what others are writing. We suggest participants fill in the “My answer” column first, and then the their “Partner’s” column.

Question	Your answer	What you think your Partner will answer.
1. What's your favourite breakfast?		
2. When it comes to fruit you hate...		
3. You feel most comfortable in (e.g. Velour sweatpants)...		
4. At home the thing you like doing the most is...		
5. What's your favourite type of physical activity?		
6. Your blood type is...		
7. Which side of the bed do you like to sleep on?		
8. Your favourite position is...		
9. When do you like to have sex the most?		



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion



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TRAINER'S NOTES

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This exercise arouses a lot of laughter and is a good

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ice-breaker. However the trainer should be very

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sensitive to any signs of violating participants intimacy

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boundaries – they can be later discussed when

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establishing group contract.

Exercise 3. Group expectations and group contract

The goals:

1. Build a sense of security.
2. Creating a good rapport among group members.
3. Committing to participate in the workshop.



Duration 60 minutes

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

From now on we shall be seeing a lot of each other. Therefore, it is important for you to know what to expect and also what your rights and duties are. What are our goals? That is why we I shall divide into two groups now.

2. The Activity

We divide the group in two – men and women in two separate groups. We ask them to draw a poster “my relationship after completing the workshop” and show us what they expect – as a group – from the module / cycle. Next, still in gender sub-groups they determine the rules they should keep to when interacting with each other (group members with each other, group members with the trainer, couples in the group with each other) to reach the goals they have set for themselves and to fulfil their expectations. We point at exercise 2 as an example of a training situation where some rules were needed.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

We talk through the work done by both groups. Together, we agree on and jot down a group contract. We hang it on the wall and take a photo for future reference. We go back to the contract at the beginning of each meeting. Promise the group that other trainers will also refer to this contract – which of course can evolve if a trainer or the group so wishes or agrees to this.



TRAINER'S NOTES

This is an exercise which is crucial yet standard.

We rely on the intuition, knowledge and experience

of Trainers when it comes to doing this exercise

and therefore the description is only a suggestion.

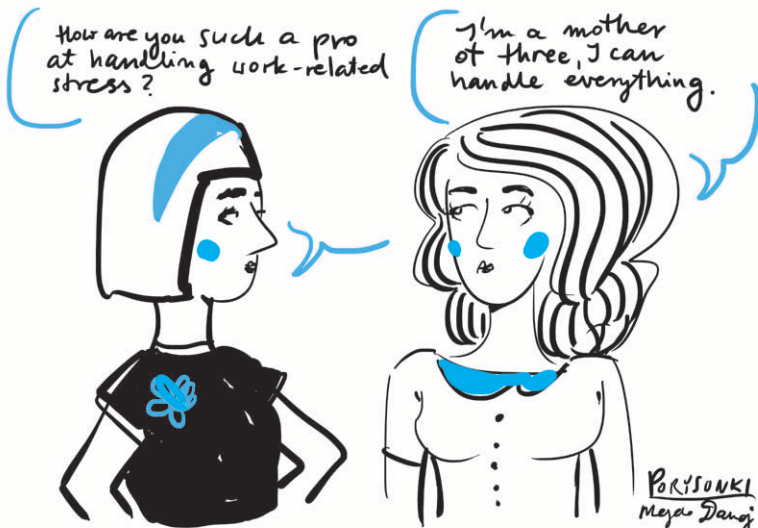
Module 1

Mind the couple! – how to live under pressure and not go insane using mindfulness

The workshop on dealing with stress mindfully is a chance to reflect on the meaning of stress in everyday life and to get to know the basics of practicing mindfulness, a helpful technique, which can be used to deal with stress constructively.

The goals of the module:

1. Pointing out three crucial areas of dealing with stress:
 - a) Leaving the zone of concern and entering the zone of influence. Stress is an inevitable part of life, and each of us is responsible for searching for effective ways to deal with its negative outcomes.



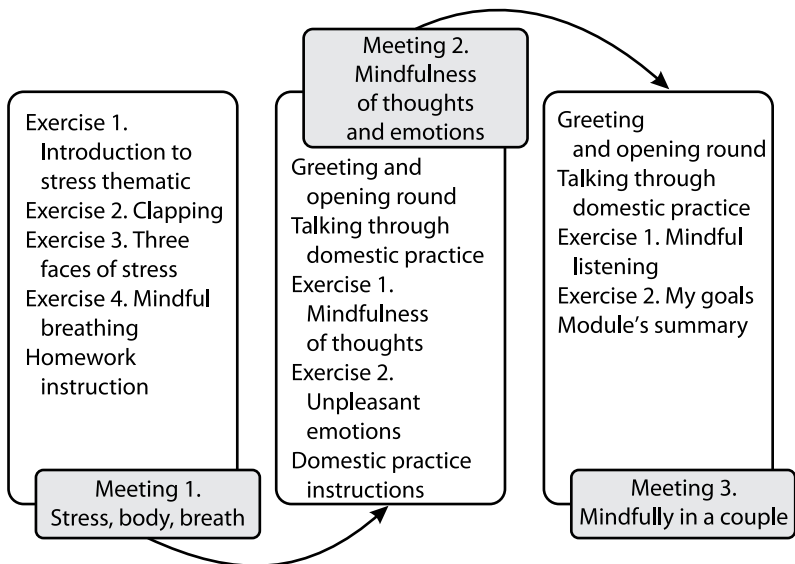
- b) Mastering the ability to evaluate a stressful situation realistically. The concept of mindfulness gives us tools to observe ourselves in a stressful situation. The perspective we gain through focusing our attention on the present moment in a non-judgemental way creates a chance to refer to existing stress factors in a more astute way.
 - c) Mastering the strategy of self-support. Dealing with stress, most of all, requires practice.
2. Introduction to the concept and practice of mindfulness as an effective way to cope with stress.



Duration: 2 meetings, each 135 minutes long

Requirements:

1. Preparation: you need to be experienced in the practice of mindfulness to conduct this workshop. If your practice has been irregular you need to start practicing mindful breathing at least two weeks before the workshop is set to take place, in line with the instructions in exercises, which can be found in the chapter by the same name in *Couple's Navigator*. Besides, observe your stress reactions in every-day life situations and pay attention to the thoughts that appear in your mind, the emotions you experience and the way your body reacts to them. If you are not able to catch your reaction in real time as the stressful situation unfolds, you can check what is happening on these three levels (body, thoughts and emotions) after some time, too, when the "adrenaline rush" has subsided.
2. Read Chapter 1 *Mind the couple! – how to live under pressure and not go insane using mindfulness* from *Couple's Navigator* and the book by Kabat-Zinn J. (2013), *Full Catastrophe Living: How to Cope with Stress, Pain and Illness Using Mindfulness Meditation*.



MEETING 1 (135 minutes)

Description of exercises

Exercise 1. Introduction to the issue of stress

The goals:

1. Reflecting on our own stress reaction.
2. A definition of stress.
3. Tips on how to handle stress effectively.

Duration 40 minutes

Materials needed:

Flipchart, markers

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Everyone uses the word “stress” all the time. Every one of us experiences stress in our every-day life, although we very seldom – or never – ask what it means to us and/or how it affects us. This exercise is a good opportunity to do so.

2. The Activity

We divide participants into groups of two/ three/ four (depending on how many people there are in our training group



– there should be a minimum of 2–4 subgroups). Participants recall and share stressful experiences from their everyday lives and finish off their story with the sentence: 1. “I become stressed when...” and 2. “When I am stressed...”. One person from each group writes down all the responses to these sentences. One person from each subgroup reads all the statements aloud, first point 1, then point 2. The rest of the group is supposed to listen carefully.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

First, we discuss and sum up the images of stress, which emerged from the statements read by each subgroup. We focus on what we all have in common when it comes to experiencing stress and then move on to how we differ in our experience of it. Next we change our perspective on stress a little by broadening it to include the concept of mindfulness as introduced in the Chapter 1 *Mind the couple! – how to live under pressure and not go insane using mindfulness in Couple's Navigator*. Pay special attention to participants' subjective evaluation of the stress-inducing factor triggering their stress reaction.

TRAINER'S NOTES

It is good if couples work in separate sub-groups.

This way we create a safe space to talk about

a partner-related stress in participants' lives. When

summing up this exercise it is also important to

appreciate the constructive ways of dealing with

stress that participants use in their lives. The notion

and practice of mindfulness should be introduced

as something complementary to the tried and tested

- ways of dealing with stress participants already have
- working for them, not as their replacement. We want
- to avoid the backlash that could ensue if we introduced
- mindfulness as the end-all be-all remedy to stress.
- This module is meant to be an invitation to experiment
- with constructive ways of dealing with stress and
- thereby an opportunity to experience something new.

Exercise 2. Clapping

(based on: R. Burnett, *Mindfulness in Schools*,
TEDxwhitechapel talk)

The goals:

- 1) Experiencing what it means to practice mindfulness.
- 2) Experiencing the phenomenon of attention one can control.
- 3) Becoming aware of the fact that we have two modes of functioning: being and thinking.

Duration 20 minutes



Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

One of the long-term ways of dealing with stress is the practice of mindfulness, in other words being very intensely aware of ourselves and our surroundings. This exercise is a short introduction to mindfulness.

2. The Activity

Place your hands parallel on the level of your chest. We will clap together. First I will count: 3, 2, 1 and then we will clap our hands 3 times. Clap as hard as you can.

Now place your hands on the level of your chest with about a 10 cm gap between them. Look ahead and focus your attention on your hands without looking at them. Direct your attention to the sensations taking place in your hands at this very moment.

What do you experience in them? Warmth? Cold? Are they pulsating, trembling or itching? Do you experience any pressure, pulling or pushing sensations? And now let's play a little with turning our attention to different body parts: try to focus your attention on your left thumb.

And now direct your attention to your left-hand pinkie. And now focus your attention on the tip of your right hand's pinkie.

Slowly lower your hands and place them comfortably on your thighs.

Now direct your attention to what you do a thousand times a day, without paying attention to it: to your breath. Experience your breath as it flows through your nostrils.

Feel the air as it flows through your body, notice how your belly and chest fill up and rise when you inhale and deflate when you exhale.

Stay with your breath for a little while.

Slowly turn your attention to the space we are in.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

When talking through this exercise we ask participants about what they experienced during the course of the exercise. Ask participants what kind of emotions they felt during the exercise, if there was something extraordinary for them in this experience. Make sure you also ask them what they experienced when they tried to focus all their attention on their hands and what their gut reaction was to the exercise.

This exercise shows that:

1. You can focus your attention intentionally. We can turn our attention to all the bodily sensations we experience as well as to our thoughts and emotions in the same way we turned it to our pinkie. Mindfulness as a practice of directing attention in an intentional and non-judgemental way to whatever we are feeling and thinking in a given moment may refer to each of these levels of being.
2. Every one of us has two spheres of internal functioning: the sphere of being or experiencing, which this exercise was supposed to activate by turning our attention to the body, and the mode of thinking, which "turned on" unintentionally during the

course of the exercise. The mind automatically turned to judgemental thoughts, fantasies, interpretations, memories, plans. This mode can be described as acting on remote control: your body is here, but your mind is somewhere else.

During these three meetings we will experiment with directing our attention to certain things and on sharpening our perception when we focus on our inner worlds made up of bodily sensations, thoughts, which appear in our mind and the emotions, which prevail. We will also take a closer look at the way mindfulness is useful in reducing stress.

TRAINER'S NOTES

1. This is the first exercise which directs participants' attention to the inside world of their body and mind.

This situation may seem awkward to some people (expect awkward laughter) because we as people are definitely more accustomed to turning our attention to the outside world. It is interesting to ask about and discuss reactions that emerged while the participants were doing this exercise. It is a good opportunity to show participants that mindfulness is the practice of being aware of everything that we think and feel in a given situation while being completely non-judgemental towards others and ourselves. In mindfulness, things are neither good nor bad – they just are.

2. Watch Richard Burnett's talk on Mindful Schools.

Exercise 3. The three faces of stress

The goal:

Recognising stress as a phenomenon experienced on three levels: bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions.



Duration 45 minutes

Materials needed:

Stressful situation form

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Fill in the form based on the a stressful situation you experienced – the one you recalled during the last exercise.



Stressful situation form

Describe the stressful situation (Who? What? Where? When?)

.....

.....

.....

What was your reaction to this situation?

.....

.....

.....

What kind of thoughts did it evoke?

.....

.....

.....

What kind of emotions did you experience?

.....

.....

.....

Do you remember the way your body reacted? Perhaps you remember the way your body tends to react in similar stressful situations?

.....

.....

.....

2. The Activity

1st part (10 minutes long): Sit comfortably and turn your attention to the current position of your body...¹ Straighten your back without experiencing excessive tension. Close your eyes. It will make it easier for you to turn your attention to your internal world and bodily sensations...

Fell your feet... Buttocks... Hands... Arms... Feel your head, the way it is placed at the top of your spine...

Pay attention to your breath. Feel the wave of air passing through your body when breathing in and out...

Now recall an every-day life situation that also involves your partner, which in your opinion produces a repetitive, stress-triggering pattern in you, perhaps the feeling of irritation, anger or other unpleasant emotions. Choose a situation relating to the division of household chore, for example, and your expectations towards your partner. Try to choose a situation you feel ready to reflect on right at this moment.

Try to recall the last time this situation took place. What was your reaction? What were the emotions involved? ... What kind of thoughts emerged in your mind? ... Perhaps you remember the way the situation affected your body? Can you recall what bodily sensations you experienced at that moment?

If you are experiencing some tension right now, rest assure it is normal. Pay attention to the part of your body where this tension is present. Notice this fact and turn your attention to your breathing, to the wave of air that goes in and out... If your eyes are closed, you can open them now.

2nd part: Fill in the form referring to the stressful situation you recalled during the exercise you have just completed.

3rd part: Pair up with your partner. One of you will be participant A and the other participant B. In compliance with the rules of the "I statement" (the trainer reminds the way the "I statement" is formed), the partners say to one another: what situation they have chosen (describe the facts), what they have noticed regarding their stress reaction on the level of their body, mind and emo-

¹ "... "this occurs in some exercises and means a pause letting the participants to comply with the instructions you give.

tions. They also share difficulties (if there were any) with filling in the form. Participant B listens empathetically (the trainer reminds the couple what empathetic listening is) and pays attention to bodily sensations that occur during the process of listening. After that, partners swap the roles.

After switching roles and completing the exercise, partners share their thoughts with one another. After everybody in the group completes the exercise, each member shares his/ her reflections from the speaker's and listener's point of view: what have you experienced as a speaker/ listener? It is important to use the "I statement" in this part of the exercise.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

You can ask the following questions during the discussion: What are your thoughts after completing this exercise? What new/ important/ precious things surfaced in this exercise? What was difficult for you? What is the sense in observing your stress reaction on three levels: bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions? Do you notice your bodily sensations when you experience stress? Is it easy/ difficult? Why should we do it?

It is important to emphasise the meaning of distinguishing those three levels of stress experience: the level of bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions. Noticing them and focusing our attention on them during the experience of stress is an essential foothold. It helps us understand stress better and to refer to it while it ceases to be a "black hole" and becomes a process with specific dynamics, activating a few spheres of our functioning. Moreover, it becomes a process one can mindfully work with.

Direct the group's attention specifically to the level of bodily sensations, as noticing them in a stressful situation is crucial to making a change from an automatic reaction to stress to a mindful answer to stress. Sensations from the body might be an anchor that stops a person experiencing stress for a while and gives them time to realize what is happening to him/ her instead of being immediately trapped in an automatic reaction.

The issue of working in pairs is also important in this exercise. Talk through the exchange between partners regarding what was new and important for them in the proposed way of analysing the stressful situation. You can refer to the excerpt from

Chapter 1 *Mind the couple! – how to live under pressure and not go insane using mindfulness* from *Couple's Navigator* regarding the anecdote about cats' bowls and encourage participants to experiment with their recurring stressful situation in a new way.

TRAINER'S NOTES

This exercise refers to a stressful situation in everyday life and its third part is conducted by couples themselves. It can trigger difficult emotions which it evoked when the couple experienced this situation. Therefore, make sure you encourage participants to choose a stressful situation for this exercise which they will not mind sharing with the group. It can be related to the division of household chores, for example. It is important that the situation participants choose is not too difficult and/or does not trigger too much stress, because it is better to take the first steps towards change on safe ground.

Exercise 4. Mindful breathing

The goals:

1. Experiencing mindful breathing.
2. Realising the importance of breath in soothing stress.

Duration 20 minutes

Materials needed:

Mat/ blanket to lie on



Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

We talk about the importance of breath in the context of experiencing stress

2. The Activity

(10 minutes) Lay on your back comfortably. Stretch your legs, place your feet flat comfortably to the sides of your legs. If you feel uncomfortable around your lumbar area, put a rolled blanket under your knees or bend your legs and place your feet flat on the ground. Align your arms along with your body, palms facing up, in some distance from the torso.

Pay attention to your body. Feel the way its weight is distributed. What parts of the body do you feel the most? It may be your head... Back... Buttocks... Calves... Heels...

Hands... And maybe some other part of your body.

Notice the fact that you breathe...

Turn your attention to the wave of air as you breathe in and out...

Direct your attention to your breath flowing through your nostrils, throat, chest, and belly. In what place do you feel it the most distinctly? Find this place and focus your attention there...

Turn your attention to inhaling and exhaling. Probably after you focus on your breath for a while, various thoughts will engulf you. If this happens and you engage in a thought, just notice it and redirect your attention to your breath again. Do it every time your attention is distracted. It can be helpful to concentrate your attention on the place in the body where you feel your breath the most. This place may act as an anchor, which can hold your attention, even if just for a moment, while you experience breathing...

Notice every consecutive breath you take in and breathe out...

While you approach the end of this exercise you may start moving your fingers and toes... Start to move your body in accordance with what you need now. You can take a deeper breath and stretch thoroughly. Then lie on your side and when you feel ready, stand up slowly.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion



You can ask the following questions during the discussion: What have you experienced during this exercise? Have you succeeded in focusing your attention on your breath? What was difficult for you? How did you cope with those difficulties? What are your thoughts after completing this exercise? do you see yourself practicing mindful breathing in your everyday life? When could this practice be useful to you?

We encourage participants to run a sort of experiment in the week that follows. Tell them to take one week to practice mindful breathing in their everyday lives as it may bring interesting reflections. Emphasise the fact that the next meeting will start with a discussion about their experiences gained during the domestic practice.

Domestic practice



The goal:

Marrying the notion of mindfulness with its regular practice

Duration 10 minutes



Procedure, step by step

At the end of the meeting we introduce a domestic practice experiment to be done throughout the week, 'till the next meeting. We announce that the next meeting will begin with a discussion about the experiences gained within the domestic practice of mindfulness.

1. Next week set aside 10 minutes a day to exercise focusing on breathing. Sit in a chair in a quiet place. Set a timer/ alarm clock. Keep your feet based on the floor, your back straight – it does not have to touch the backrest. Keep your hands loose on your thighs. Feel the weight of your body. Breathe mindfully. Feel the air flow through your body as you are inhaling and exhaling. You can find a place in your body, where you feel your breath the most. Focus your attention there. Remember, it is not about thinking about breathing, but about experiencing it. Feel as the air comes into your body and passes through your nose, throat, chest, into the belly. Next, feel it when you are exhaling. Concentrate on the wave of air

as you are breathing in and out for a few minutes. Your mind may wander, involved in various thoughts and emotions. It is a natural reaction. Your task is just to notice this fact and then gently re-focus on breathing.

2. In stressful situations that take place during the next week, try to pay attention to signals coming from your body. If you fail to mindfully breathe when experiencing stress, you can take a short break from life and listen to your body after the event. Check then, which parts of your body you feel the most and what kind of a sensation it is: pulsating, pressure, trembling, tension or maybe relaxation etc.

MEETING 2 (135 minutes)

Description of exercises

Greeting each other and the opening round



Duration 15 minutes

Procedure, step by step

We share a thought sitting in a circle: "I start this meeting with..."



Exercise 1. Talking through domestic mindfulness practice



The goal:

Pondering the meaning of regular mindfulness practice in the process of dealing with stress.

Duration 20 minutes



Procedure, step by step

You can ask the following questions during the discussion: Were you able to find time to exercise? What were the difficulties? How did you cope with them? What are your thoughts regarding domestic practice of mindfulness? Did you notice any change in your stress reactions? (if so) What kind of a change was that?

TRAINER'S NOTES

Practicing mindfulness at home regularly may be a big challenge for many people. It may so happen that nobody practiced at home. If that is the case, you can ask if anybody has any reflections after the last meeting. Additionally you can suggest 10 minutes of mindful breathing as an introductory exercise.

Exercise 2. Mindfulness of thoughts

The goals:

1. Observing our thoughts.
2. Realizing the importance of thoughts in the experience of stress.

Duration 40 minutes



Procedure, step by step

1. The Activity (10 minutes)

Sit comfortably. Stretch your back and check if there is any tension in it. If there is, you can slightly change the position of your body... Put your hands comfortably on your thighs. You can close your eyes if it feels comfortable. Your eyes may also remain opened. If you choose to do so, fix your sight on some point in front of you on the floor.

Feel the places where your body rests on the chair and the floor...

Now turn your attention to your breath, to the wave of breathing in and out... Remember, it is about experiencing breath, not about thinking of it. Feel as the air comes through your nostrils and flows further through your throat, chest and belly. Focus on each consecutive breath as you breathe in and breathe out...

Perhaps you can notice that when you direct your attention to your breathing, the various thoughts that appear in your mind. Perhaps even now you are in the middle of some specific thought. Just notice this...

Perhaps there is a crowd of thoughts or maybe there are few of them...

Instead of involving yourself in the content of your thoughts, you can just notice how each of them emerges, lasts and leaves... Perhaps a certain thought lingers. That is also ok...

The mind tends to involve itself with the content of thoughts and weave various stories. It is a completely natural process. However, the goal of this exercise is to catch the process of thinking and to observe it – as if through a windowpane...

You can try to name your thoughts. If a thought emerges, notice if it is related to “planning”, “recalling”, “judging” or “daydreaming”...

Remember, you can re-direct your attention to your breath at any point of this exercise. And then come back again to observe your thoughts...

Notice them and let them go...

In the end of this exercise turn your attention to your breathing once again.

2. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion



You can ask the following questions during the discussion: What have you experienced during this exercise? Have you succeeded in mindfully observing your thoughts? What was difficult for you? How did you cope with those difficulties? What are your thoughts after completing this exercise?

It is a big discovery for many people that our mind is busy with the thinking process almost all the time. The easiest way to see it is by doing an exercise as simple as the one above. Passive tracking and focusing our attention on the processes taking place in our body and mind let us discover the sheer magnitude of thoughts flowing through our heads. In the introductory readings to the practice of mindfulness the metaphor of clouds floating in the sky appears most often. When looking at a chosen part of the sky you will notice that clouds come and go. It happens slower or faster, depending on speed of the wind. It is similar with thoughts. In this metaphor our mind is the sky with clouds passing through. Some of them remain there tenaciously, but in the end they pass and others appear. Some come back, and the process is never-ending. In this case the practice of mindfulness aims to make us realize that thoughts are events in our mind that come and go. However, we often treat thoughts very seriously, and consider them to be a true reflection of the world, whereas in fact they are only interpretations. This exercise aims to show us that we can take a look at our thoughts, focus our attention on them, and simultaneously not involve ourselves in their content. Noticing stress generating thoughts may be the first step on the way to putting them into the right perspective. I can notice e.g. That the thought “I am not good enough at (being a worker, parent, partner etc.)” reinforces the experience of stress in me. It evokes anxiety, anger with a touch of sorrow and makes me take up more and more challenges although I am already overloaded. Treating this thought as just a thought may be the beginning of freeing myself from its strong influence.

Initiate a group discussion on different kinds of thoughts that reinforce the experience of stress in group members. In the context of partner relationships, examine stress-generating thoughts such as: “I made a fool of myself again”, “I will never get where I want”, and “Nobody loves me”.

TRAINER'S NOTES

While discussing this exercise it is important to refer to the knowledge about thoughts and the thought process taken from the notion of mindfulness (you can find it in e.g. Literature section suggested below). It is crucial to emphasise that the mindfulness of thoughts, whether they be negative or positive, does not aim to get rid of the former or nurture the latter.

According to the notion of mindfulness, both kinds of thoughts are just thoughts we can take a look at. This notion of moving away from thoughts is a kind of a mental training and - in effect - it lets us decide, which thoughts to follow, and which to abandon.

Exercise 3. Mindfulness of emotions

(based on: Petra Meibert, The Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches and Polish Institute of Mindfulness)

The goals:

1. Self-reflection regarding the recognition of emotions that accompany stress.
2. Getting to know the four steps to mindfully deal with emotions.



Duration 50 minutes

Materials needed:

The "Unpleasant emotions" questionnaire:



1. Think of an emotion, which is difficult for you, one that reoccurs in stressful situations in your everyday life. If there are a few of them, choose one.

.....

.....

2. Factors that bring on this emotion (situations, behaviours, people):

.....

.....

3. How do you react when this emotion surfaces? (e.g. marginalisation, belabouring, avoidance mechanisms, blaming yourself, blaming others, intellectual analysis etc.).

.....

.....

4. What strategies do you use to cope with this unpleasant feeling? What do you do? How do you behave? (e.g. smoke a cigarette, talk to someone, eat, drink alcohol, work, seek out pleasure etc.)

.....

.....

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

The exercises we have engaged in so far have all been about observing our body, breathing and thoughts. Mindful dealing with stress also requires us to notice emotions we feel in difficult moments of our lives, which can be the biggest challenge to us.

2. The Activity

Each group member fills in his or her own form, then shares his/her thoughts with the group.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

You can ask the following questions during the discussion: Which emotions are difficult for you to experience? What is your typical reaction to this feeling? Actually, what in itself is difficult in experiencing... (emotion)? What do you think the concept of mindfulness has to say about dealing with difficult emotions?



Focus the discussion about this exercise on the recognition of the essence of difficult emotions and the way to deal with them in line with the concept of mindfulness.

Emotions emerge automatically and we react to them the same way: automatically. It is very important to realise that there are two stages in experiencing any emotion: the moment when the emotion emerges, and our reaction to it. If we treat an emotion as a particular energy then it can be described on the level of bodily sensations and thoughts. For example, when observing the moment of anger onset I can notice I feel it in my body as a strong pulsating sensation in the temple area, a stinging in my eyes and a sense of pressure in my chest. Some thoughts appear in the mind like: "How could he do it?!", "He does not respect me" etc. Undoubtedly, experiencing such a condition is not pleasant, but we make things even more complicated and difficult for ourselves when we stubbornly insist on referring to emotions as positive or negative. According to the concept of mindfulness, emotions can be divided into pleasant and unpleasant, which suggests we enjoy and cling to the former and dislike, avoid or even try to get rid of the latter as soon as possible. So, for example, when anger appears – I explode to get rid of it and when Sorrow appears – I "drown" it in a glass of alcohol. However when we try to avoid an emotion or get rid of it we are effectively tilting at windmills and deepening our emotional suffering. The alternative is to face the unpleasant emotion, which is what mindfulness practice encourages us to do. Paradoxically, it turns out that when we do that the unpleasant emotion just goes away on its own.

Mindful dealing with difficult emotions requires taking four steps: 1) recognise, 2) name, 3) accept, 4) examine (check how your body feels and what thoughts accompany your emotions). A substantial part of this technique is to observe ourselves without identifying with the stories/ narratives that come to our mind as we are experiencing a given emotion. In this respect, mindful breathing and directing our attention to sensations in the body are exceptionally good supporting tools.



TRAINER'S NOTES



This exercise may begin with a short introduction to the world of emotions, containing a few basic facts about them.

Domestic practice



Goals:

1. To encourage the performance of everyday household chores in a mindful way (as suggested during the previous meeting) for the entirety of the following week, up until the next workshop.
2. To sum up the meeting in a few sentences.

Duration 10 minutes



Procedure, step by step

Give instructions on how to conduct the domestic practice experiment and in a few short words encourage group members to practice mindfulness every day. Emphasise the fact that the next meeting will start with a discussion of experiences gained through domestic practice of mindfulness.

1. Next week set aside 10 minutes a day to exercise focusing on breathing. Sit in a chair in a quiet place. Set a timer/ alarm clock. Keep your feet firmly planted on the floor, your back straight – it does not have to touch the backrest. Keep your hands loose on your thighs. Feel the weight of your body. Breathe mindfully. Feel the air flow through your body as you are inhaling and exhaling. You can find a place in your body, where you feel your breath the most. Focus your attention there. Remember, it is not about thinking about breathing, but about experiencing it. Feel as the air comes into your body and passes through your nose, throat, and chest, into the belly. Next, feel it when you are exhaling. Concentrate on the wave of air as you are breathing in and out for a few min-

utes. Your mind may wander, involved in various thoughts and emotions. It is a natural reaction. Your task is just to notice this fact and then gently re-focus on breathing.

2. Pay attention to the bodily sensations you experience. Listen carefully to your body from time to time. Check which parts of your body you feel the most and what kind of sensation it is: a pulsating sensation, a sense of pressure, trembling, tension or maybe relaxation etc.
3. Be aware of the thoughts and emotions that accompany you during a stressful experience. Are you able to focus your attention on your breathing when you are overcome with strong emotions?

MEETING 3 (135 minutes)

Description of exercises

Greeting each other and the opening round



Duration 10 minutes

Procedure, step by step

We share a thought sitting in a circle: "I start this meeting with..."



Exercise 1. Talking through domestic mindfulness practice

The goal:

Pondering the meaning of regular mindfulness practice in the process of dealing with stress.

Duration 20 minutes



Procedure, step by step

Compare: Meeting 2, exercise 1.

Exercise 2. Empathetic listening

The goals:

1. Experiencing of mindful listening of the other person.
2. Realizing the importance of emphatic listening in a relation building process.

Duration 50 minutes

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Let's start with a discussion about the following topic: What does "mindful communication" mean to you?

Write down a list of statements on a flipchart. Pause at empathetic/ mindful listening, which constitutes, we might say, the empathetic communication between people. It is a special skill, which turns out to be worth developing. Despite the fact we have two ears and one mouth, which would mean we are supposed to listen twice as much as we speak, most of us find listening quite a demanding task. Usually we are absorbed by our own story, which we revel in our head, even when we are not really the talkative type. This exercise invites you to focus your attention solely on the other side of a conversation – really listen to them in a mindful manner.

2. The Activity

Step 1: Sit comfortably facing your partner. One of you is person A, the other – person B. Person A has 5 minutes to elaborate on the sentence: "In our relationship I really appreciate...". We encourage A to elaborate comprehensively on what he/ she finds precious in their relationship. It is a good time to share positive

feedback, which is perhaps scarce in everyday life. We encourage participants to share what they like in one another. B listens mindfully and tries to mindfully tune into the signals that flow from his/ her body. If A finishes before the 5 minute mark, both people stay in their places and wait for the next stage of the exercise in silence.

Step 2: After 5 minutes (the trainer lets the workshop participants know when the time is up) person B paraphrases what he/ she has heard from person A.

Step 3: Person A tells person B, if he/she feels understood. A and B share thoughts about how they felt in their roles.

Step 4: A and B switch roles. The instructions stay the same.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

When discussing the exercise we can ask the following questions: How did you feel when you were talking and were not interrupted even once? How did you perceive your partner when he/she listened carefully to what you were saying? How did you feel when you were mindfully listening to your partner? How did you feel when you were the one talking? Which role was more difficult/ easier for you? Why? What are the prerequisites of mindful listening?

The discussion should aim to define “mindful/ empathetic listening” and its meaning in building a partner relationship.

TRAINER'S NOTES

Feel free to change the sentence we suggest you use




- "In our relationship I really appreciate..." to something

else. Still, it is important that the sentence of your

choice is a positive one and focuses couple's attention

on the strengths of their partners and the potential

within their relationship.

-  We encourage you to read the article by
-  Jac Jakubowski: "Training yourself to spontaneously
-  react in an empathetic way" available on www.grupatrop.pl.

Exercise 3. My goals in dealing with stress

The goal:

Planning effective ways of dealing with stress – a strategy based on group members' own tried and tested strategies and mindfulness strategies, which they recently learnt

Duration 35 minutes



Materials needed:

"My goals" handout

My goals



Goals for three months to come	How do I want to achieve them?	What obstacles do I envision?	How am I going to overcome them?
1.			
2.			
Goals for two months to come	How do I want to achieve them?	What obstacles do I envision?	How am I going to overcome them?
1.			
2.			

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

“My goals” exercise is a chance to reflect on the actions participants want to take, renew or perhaps intensify, in the field of dealing with stress and caring for broadly defined individual welfare on one hand, and the well-being of their relationship on the other. The practice of mindfulness can complement our own, tried and tested ways of caring for ourselves.

2. The Activity

Participants fill in the “My goals” form individually. Then they start working in pairs. Encourage participants not to choose their partners. Each person chooses one short- and long-term goal and tells their partner about the strategies they plan on using to reach these goals, potential obstacles they envision and the ways they plan to deal with them. The other person practices mindful listening.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion



Wrapping up the session and saying goodbye

The goal:

Encourage personal reflection over the participation in the module.



Duration 20 minutes

Procedure, step by step

Participants sum up their participation in the last three meetings. We can suggest they start their statements with: “I end our three meetings with...”

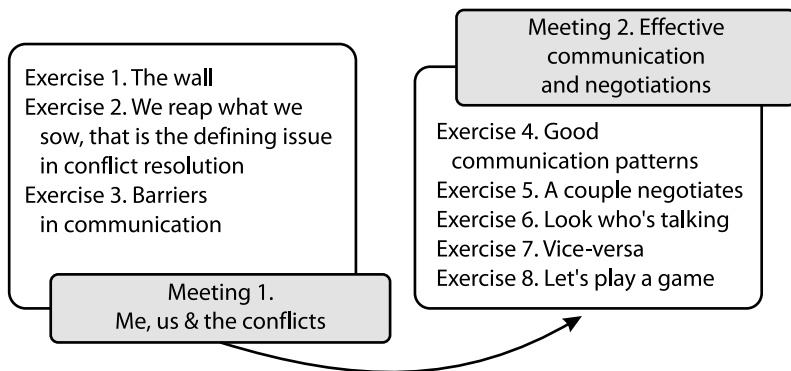
Recommended reading

- Everly G.S., Rosenfeld R. (1981), *The nature and the treatment of the stress response*. Plenum Press, New York.
- Kabat-Zinn J. (2009), *Wherever you go, there you are. Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*, Hachette Books.
- Kabat-Zinn J. (2013), *Full Catastrophe Living: How to Cope with Stress, Pain and Illness Using Mindfulness Meditation*, Bantam.
- Siegel R.D. (2010), *The mindfulness solution; everyday practices for everyday problems*, The Guildford Press, London, New York.
- Williams M., Penman D. (2011), *Mindfulness: An eight-week plan for finding peace in a frantic world*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Books.

Module 2

Couple in the mood for change, no fuss – no balance

The goal of this module is to equip couples in basic communication techniques useful in negotiations through: 1) partners' behaviour analysis in a situation of conflict 2) using techniques supporting couples in communication used by mediators. Before starting the module it is worth reading Chapter 2 in *Couple's Navigator*, as the exercises below are structured in such a way to fully correspond with the knowledge delivered in the chapter. It is the Trainer's decision which exercises to use – this decision must be based on the current needs of the group.





Description of exercises

MEETING 1

Exercise 1. The Wall

The goals:

1. To make the group realize how easy it is to incite conflict and unhealthy competition between people.
2. To show how often our need to win dominates our need to achieve a common goal.
3. To experience the consequences of sporting a competitive attitude which is an ineffective method of resolving conflicts when the parties' interests are interdependent.
4. To introduce circumstances which support a co-operative attitude.



Duration 45–60 minutes

Materials needed:

Flipchart, markers

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Divide the group into 2 teams using a simple method of division into ones and twos. One group stays in the classroom, the other leaves. Each group has the same task: they are supposed to convince the other group to move to a place away from the one they are in now (e.g. By the wall). The other group has the same task – it has to persuade the first group to move to a different place than the one they are in now. There is only one limitation: using physical force is forbidden. After the trainer reads out the instructions the group starts the tasks when it is ready – it does not wait for a sign from the trainer.

2. The Activity

Both groups sit in separate spaces (it is important that they are not able to see and hear each other) and plan how to convince the other group to do what they want them to do. When both groups are ready usually one of them starts negotiating with the other. The trainer starts the clock at the beginning of negotiations and stops it only when both groups have completed the task and have reported this fact to the trainer.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Because the workshop group is divided into two teams, which cannot communicate with each other it is often assumed that both groups are opponents and are supposed to disturb each other. Hence, both their level of trust and their willingness to fulfil each other's requests are low. If, additionally, one group uses manipulative strategies, which are supposed to convince the other party to complete their task, the exercise may take a long time. However, usually the two groups complete their tasks using the trade-off technique – group members move to the indicated place in turns – first a person from first group moves place and then a person from the other group moves place. As a result, the exercise which technically could take about 30 seconds to be completed takes about 12–15 minutes.



Questions worth discussing:

1. What were the tasks assigned to both groups?
2. Why did the task, which technically should take 30 seconds long to complete take so long?

3. What did you think about the second group and their task? Why?
4. What strategies came to mind when you were brainstorming your strategy in the group?
5. What were the consequences of implementing these strategies?
6. What conclusions – drawn from this exercise – could be generalized to resolving conflicts between partners in a couple?

It is worth referring to the fact that people react differently to conflicts and have different attitudes to conflict situations. You can refer to a very famous story:

Once there were two sisters. Usually in stories like that one is beautiful and the other is ugly, one is wise, the other – stupid. However these sisters were very similar to each other, both equally wise and beautiful. They lived in peace, life was good. They did many things together, they helped each other out. But one day they fell out. It just so happened that there was only one, fresh, juicy, ripe orange in the house. They both said they wanted it very much and so each of them wanted to snatch it. The sisters started to quarrel. And because they did not like it, they soon came up with a great idea; at least that's what they thought. "Of course! We can cut the orange in half, it's a win-win solution!" – they shouted. And that's exactly what they did. Each of them took their half to the kitchen, where they began to prepare it to be eaten, separately. And what happened? One sister peeled the orange, threw out the peel and juiced it. The other peeled the orange, threw out the flesh and grated the peel which she needed for a cake she was baking (based on Witkowski, 1999).

It surely was not the best solution to this situation. We often think that a compromise, that is when everyone gives up a part of their needs is the best solution. The above example of the two sisters and the orange nicely illustrates the fact that a lack of direct communication of one's needs may lead to a situation, where both parties lose equally much – when they needn't have had to. When we want to resolve some conflict situation it is good to realise that we do not have one or two ways of achieving an agreement, but in fact we have five of them.

People approach conflict in different ways – Tosi et.al. (1990) created a general model of response to conflicts and distinguished 5 ways of reacting to conflict:

Avoiding conflict altogether is typical of people wanting to avoid emotional tension and potential confrontation-caused failure at all costs

and therefore prefer to back off . It can take the form of physical separation from conflict (“I will leave the house so as not to listen to this grumbling”) or psychological separation (I’ll just read my newspaper as you go on about whatever it is you’re upset about, in one ear it goes, out the other). Avoiding conflicts gives us the opportunity to take a deep breath and buys us time to think things over.

Adjusting is acting according to the other party’s expectations and is typical of people who care mostly about maintaining peace and quiet in their relationships, regardless of their own needs. They prefer to give up on them as long as they avoid conflict. On the other hand, this strategy may signal something to others. One may admit somebody is right, somebody has good will or give up some needs on behalf of the other hoping that next time the partner will reciprocate in the same manner . It is also a beneficial strategy when the other party has some advantage over us and we are looking out for potential benefits in the longer run (ok, I will take parental leave so that you can continue to work and I will have better relations with children thanks to that).

Competition – it is based on the assumption that conflict results in a win-lose situation. A person reacting in this style will seek out arguments to show that somebody is right and somebody is wrong. It is a good strategy if quick decisions are to be made, especially in critical situations (we do not have time to discuss with children if it is a good idea to lie on the street because it is comfortable there, when the light has changed from green to red). It can lead to conflict escalation in a relationship and little flexibility towards each other. Partners may stand fast and achieve their goals at all costs.

Compromise – it is based on the assumption one cannot have everything, so everyone must give up something for a couple or group to achieve agreement. On the other hand compromises leave us with a sense of hunger, as everyone has to give up something. It is often a sign of good will and the desire to take care of the other party.

And finally, **cooperation** brings better results – it assumes that agreement enables us to fulfill the needs of both partners. It requires lots of time and a positive attitude to understand the other person’s needs. Both partners make an effort to develop a solution giving each other the opportunity to fulfill their needs.

Therefore, in a situation of conflict, the first step we ought to take is to choose the right strategy to resolve it by asking ourselves a few simple

questions – how much do I care about this relationship? How important is the issue of conflict to me and how much strength do I have and need to talk about it, how much time do I have? Considering all this, which of these 5 strategies is the best in this situation?

It is also important to state at this point that some strategies are easier and more comfortable for us because our life experience has prepped us to use this strategy, and not the other.

You can also ask people in the group if they know which strategy is their typical reaction to conflict?

TRAINER'S NOTES

It is good to divide couples when dividing the group so that partners are in opposite groups; it is also worth asking if the presence of a close person in the other group helped or rather made the negotiations harder? Why?

If the group completes this exercise quickly you can refer to other groups' experiences - e.g. one of the groups needed an hour and a half to complete this exercise. This fact can be the starting point for a discussion about why people assume that the other party is their opponent and are convinced it wants to interrupt them. You can also stop the exercise at some point e.g. after 15 minutes if at that point the group still hasn't finished negotiating a solution to the conflict.

- It is important to ask what enabled the group to finish this exercise so fast or just resolve it altogether.
- The crucial question is also what can be "taken" from this exercise to be used in different situations.

Exercise 2. We reap what we sow, that is the defining issue in conflict resolution

The goals:

1. To analyse the typical causes of conflict in personal relationships
2. To practice defining issues and searching for solutions

Duration 60 minutes



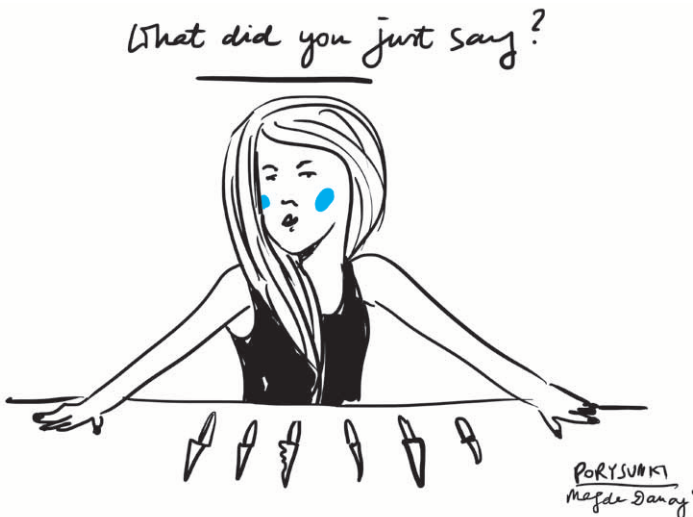
Materials needed:

Flipchart, markers

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

As a warm-up exercise, the trainer asks the group to come up with as many definitions of the word "PIMPLE" as possible. These



definitions are generated by the whole group and written down on a flipchart by the trainer. When there are at least 10 definitions of PIMPLE the trainer asks about each of them: what solution to resolving the issue of the “PIMPLE” the group suggests (e.g. a symptom of sex hormone imbalance – we should go see an endocrinologist; the effects of a poor diet – we should change our diet, a symbol of youth – we should emphasise it). The result: the way we define the issues in a given conflict influences the solutions that come to mind, therefore it is important to name the causes of any conflict multiple times and look at the conflict from many different perspectives.

2. The Activity

The trainer refers to Moore’s conflict circle described in Chapter 2 in *Couple’s Navigator* and asks each couple to give their own example of a conflict (or two-three of them) and to define the conflict issues in them (data, interests, structure, values, relationships). Then he/ she asks to show different possible solutions of a given conflict. Each couple presents an example of a conflict along with their own analysis of possible causes and presents various possible solutions (without indicating which one is the best solution).



3. Summing up the exercise encouraging group discussion

In this exercise, we developed a creative approach to conflict resolution by generating solutions based on different elements of a conflict. It is worth asking couples if in real life they give themselves time to come up with various solutions to a given conflict, without critically evaluating them. Holding back from passing judgement on the potential causes of and solutions to a conflict may also help us emotionally cool off during conflicts. It is worth mentioning Moore’s conflict circle description.



TRAINER'S NOTES



It is good to have some real life examples to encourage couples to talk various conflicts over. We also recommend you show your favourite film clips about conflicts which

- will enable the group to define issues in a conflict,
- e.g. "Crash" (Paul Haggis, 2004), "Mr. And Mrs. Smith" (Doug Liman, 2004). If couples in the group touch on
- issues which evoke strong emotions during the discussion
- of examples, it is important to give them a safe space
- to release tension and enable them to work out some
- solutions for the future.

Exercise 3. Barriers in communication

The goals:

1. To raise awareness of various communication barriers
2. To practice various patterns of constructive communication

Duration 45–60 minutes



Materials needed:

Flipchart, markers

The "Abigail and the crocodiles" story

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

During this exercise we will take a closer look at the typical barriers in communication which can stand in our way when we try to reach an agreement. Warm-up: the trainer asks the workshop participants to jot down answers to the following questions:

How old is the old lady?

How much do the expensive shoes cost?

What does it mean to be a little late (exactly how late is a little late in minutes)?

What does it mean to live nearby (how far exactly)?

Next, everybody reads their answers aloud. The discrepancies in understanding the same words show how important it is to be precise, and how differently we understand the same words.

2. The Activity

After the warm-up, the group is given the text of the story and – first individually, then as a whole group – it is supposed to create a collective rating using a consensual method (each person must be turned through persuasion). Time: 10 minutes.



Abigail and the crocodiles

Many long summers ago there was a woman named Abigail who fell in love with a man named Gregory. Gregory lived on one side of a river, whilst Abigail lived on the other. In the river separating the lovers there lived a man-eating alligator. One day the bridge that linked the two banks of the river was destroyed by high waves and was to be rebuilt in 6 months' time. This was a very long time for lovers as in love as Abigail and Gregory. So Abigail went to Sinbad who owned a boat and asked him if he could get her to the other bank. Sinbad agreed but only if Abigail agreed to spend the night with him as his lover. Abigail said no and went to her mother for advice. The mother said Abigail was an adult and had to decide what to do with her life on her own. On second thought, Abigail realized that doing what Sinbad asked her to do was the only way to be reunited with her lover. After spending the night with Abigail Sinbad kept his promise and delivered her straight into Gregory's arms.

When Abigail told Gregory what had happened, he turned her down in disgust. Broken-hearted and spurned, Abigail asked Slug for help. Outraged and compassionate of her situation, he sought out Gregory and beat him badly (to Abigail's great delight).

In your opinion, which character behaved the worst? Give each character an appropriate rank (1 – the most improper behaviour, 5 – the least improper behaviour in your opinion)

Abigail

Gregory

Sindbad

Mother

Slug

After the group rates the characters we ask each person to evaluate:

- 1) To what extent they felt they had been heard out, how much their opinion mattered in the discussion, how much others were interested in their opinion on a 0–100% scale
- 2) To what extent they were satisfied with the result of the discussion on a 0–100% scale

The trainer writes down the results on the flipchart

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

During the sum-up we find out answers to the following two questions: 1. What good was there in the group discussion that we obtained such results, 2. What would have to happen to give all of us a 100% in both criteria?



We write down the conclusions on a flipchart and create a list of good communication techniques to be used by couples in every day conflicts.

Finally, the trainer gives some additional information about the characters of the story:

- Abigail is 15 and famous for sharing her bed with others
- Sinbad is HIV-positive
- The mother knows Sinbad is HIV-positive
- Slug is a professional boxer and has just left the prison
- Gregory is 95 years old

The conclusion of this exercise is also that we never have all the information, so the goal of communication is not to judge people and evaluate who is right but to understand the behaviour of the second party. This is the best foundation for good communication.



TRAINER'S NOTES



It is worth finding out what partners in a couple most care about in a conflict situation. Frequently our goal is to make the other person admit we were right.

This exercise shows us that trying to understand someone is much more effective not mention kind and humane.

Exercise 4. Good communication patterns

The goal:

To develop effective communication skills



Duration 40–60 minutes

Materials needed:

Flipchart, markers

A multimedia presentation with examples of communication techniques

A sheet with examples of communication techniques

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

In this exercise we focus on the development of more effective communication techniques, which are potentially useful for us in negotiating issues in our relationship.

2. The Activity

We hand out a sheet titled: Stings and Lures.

Stings and Lures

In the sentences below underline those words/ phrases, which can be annoying to your interlocutor. Suggest in what way the statements can be transformed to gain a more positive overtone.



Add a couple of your own statements, which you have found to annoy your partner.

Stings	Lures
It's not gonna work.	
You're doing it wrong.	
You're late, as usual.	
I hope you'll spend your day productively.	
Once again, I really don't know what your problem is.	
Why are you so tense?	

Next the trainer sums up various communication techniques (take a look at the attached Power Point presentation), and then asks the group members to complete the exercise.

Change the following statements to FAE – Fact – express your Attitude – Expectations



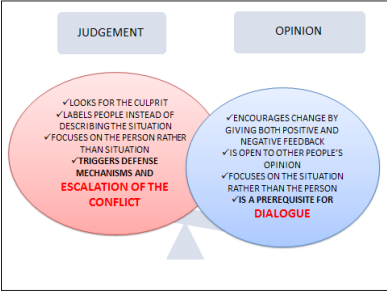
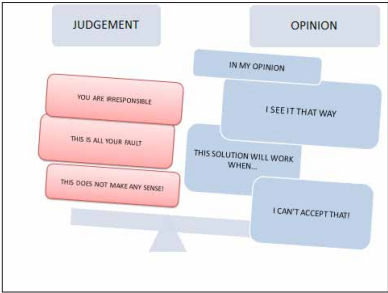
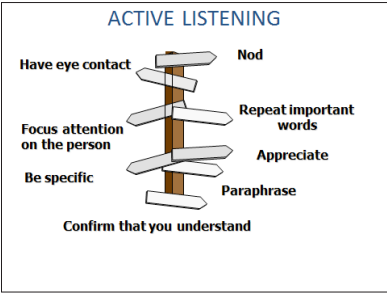
1. You're always late!!!
2. You're such a moron, how could you come up with such a solution!!!
3. Someone keeps arriving remarkably late to meetings and perhaps doesn't care whether we complete our tasks
4. Why do I have to do it in the first place?
5. You're always in such low spirits after work.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Together, the trainer and the group make a list of statements or sentences which they promise to steer clear of in their mutual communication. When we talk with our partner it is important to maintain an understanding attitude and to try and justify our opinion to make it clear to our partner. It is not about who is right but why a given situation occurred.



To wrap up the activity. The trainer may give examples of positive techniques, which support communication in situations of conflict (as in the slides attached).



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

FACT – ATTITUDE- EXPECTATION – (5 IN 1)

STEP 1 - FACT
I have prepared dinner almost 5 times this week.

STEP 2 – EXPRESSING ATTITUDE VIA:
FEELING: I am angry and tired with the fact that I am the only one preparing dinner for everybody.
CONSEQUENCE: As a result I don't have time for other tasks and I have to work at nights.
LIMIT: I won't be cooking so often anymore.

STEP 3 - EXPECTATION
I want us to share cooking for our family – I can cook twice a week only if you cook twice a week.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

**If FEA won't work...
Then Step 4**

SANCTION... If you don't cook then let's eat out everyday – you pay for it!

Step 5

Sanction becomes realized

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

PARAPHRASING...

STEP 1
I understand that you.....
As I understand you well.....
Wait, I need to understand what you felt...

STEP 2
Paraphrasing what the person said

STEP 3
Verifying („right?")

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Glass is half full...

➤ **NEGATIVE:** „I can't help you!"

➤ **POSITIVE:** „I would suggest that you contacted.... „

Appreciating

➤ I am very impressed with how you taken care of the kids today - rarely do they look so elated!

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

GIVING FEEDBACK...

ZORRO

I really like when you plan weekend activities for our whole family

We spend great time together and have fun in the same time, I would rather know in advance what you plan - last Sunday you invited guests over to our place and I thought we would finally clean the garage.

Prepared by: Natasza Kosakowska-Berezecka

TRAINER'S NOTES

It is good if during the course of the exercise the trainer introduces some difficult communication situations to the group in order to let them master various techniques. As a result, a bank of problems may come into being – a set of various situations difficult which are difficult for couples.

We are not able to predict the scale of Participants' needs or desires to develop communication competence. That is why we recommend Trainers adjust the difficulty level of the exercises enclosed in accordance to the needs of a given group, especially when it comes to the part referring to communication and resolving problems. It can be helpful to not only read the contents of the manual, but to also to make up for the gaps in your knowledge starting with basics.

We attach the below handout (print it out) to be given out to all those who want to know more about the basics of interpersonal communication.

Materials for participants: A Talk



Surely you have experienced something that can be called a misunderstanding in conversation with another person; you are familiar with the feeling of not being listened to and/or heard. Effective and positive communication is the purpose and dream of many of us. We crave to be understood and understand others, especially our partners. One of the reasons people are together is the fact that they like to talk to each other and spend their time together. However, it sometimes happens that the only reason couples continue to talk to each other is the fact that they are together. Where do those discrepancies come from?

On the one hand, they are influenced by the individual and biographical characteristics of the couple, on the other hand – the meaning the

couple ascribes to the conversation and whatever the conversation is for them also influences them. Is it an opportunity to get to know each other and show interest in one another or is it just a way to organize everyday life, something to sustain the everyday routine? For it often happens that despite the fact that being understood is important to us, we fall into known traps making it impossible to maintain openness and mindfulness during everyday conversations. The most common mistakes we make in communication are:

- 1) Comparing ourselves with others; meaningfully evaluating who is smarter and who is not
- 2) "Reading minds" which was mentioned above, i.e. The situation when we think we know better what our interlocutor wants to achieve than they do
- 3) Preparing an answer; before our partner has even finished talking we already have an answer prepared
- 4) Filtering; we skip some parts of a statement, in favor of the parts which are very critical or those which praise us
- 5) Evaluating; the initial judgment of a person projects on our interest in the statement the person directs at us
- 6) Associations; you stop listening actively and allow your thoughts to live a life of their own
- 7) Identification; you want to share the world with people so much that you compare each of their experiences with your own
- 8) Believing you are right; we become masters of *eristic*, we use *ad personam* arguments only to emotionally coerce our interlocutor to share our opinion
- 9) Change of track; when a topic becomes too uncomfortable for us to bear we change it to another
- 10) Winning others over; we like to be liked so we do not say everything, our statements are full of compliments or we use arguments someone wants to hear

What are strengths and weaknesses of the way you communicate with others?

Effective communication in a couple lets us resolve many conflicts and problems. Effective does not mean letting one partner persuade the other to his/ her opinions. Communication between adult partners, drawn from the perspective "I am ok and you are ok" is devoid of manipulation

and trying to purposefully exert influence on the partner. It requires focus, active and empathetic listening, respecting ourselves and creating space for differences in opinion and assertiveness between interlocutors. Reaching such a level of understanding with other people requires, firstly, looking closely at the communication model we function in and working on its separate elements. Therefore we need to remember that the communication process consists of the following elements:

- 1) interlocutor's intentions
- 2) the meaning of a statement
- 3) the form of a statement
- 4) emotions in a statement
- 5) gestures, our intonation and tone while communicating
- 6) noises which make up the background of the conversation

Most of all it is worth remembering that we like to talk with people who listen to us, who are ready to give us their time and attention. Actively listening means fully understanding the meaning and content given by our partner. The conditions are: a calm atmosphere which enables us to focus on our interlocutor and the conversation, refraining from judgment, maintaining a partnership attitude, checking if we really understand each other. The last element requires us to find courage and openness to additional questions; paraphrasing what we heard to make sure we understood our partner properly and they understood us. The ability to paraphrase, be very precise and ready to clarify is also helpful.

Homework



Choose a day you will dedicate to listening to your partner. Careful listening will be your primary task. After each conversation, think about your reactions and what your intentions were (look: at exercise, p. 58 in *Couple's Navigator*).

Sit together and talk about whatever you want, e.g. Tell each other how your day was. However, follow these rule: one person listens actively, the other person answers, then you swap roles. Active listening assumes that:

- 1) You maintain eye contact with the other person;
- 2) You paraphrase, ask open and closed questions;
- 3) You dedicate your full attention to the other person;
- 4) And you don't play with anything, you only listen!

Have you ever tried to understand this person, did you want to learn something about your partner? Write down your emotions. Share your observations with your partner. And now swap roles so that the other person can try to focus on active listening.

Exercise 5. A couple negotiates

The goals:

1. Simulating negotiations in a couple.
2. The practice of communication skills and techniques in real life scenarios.



Duration 120 minutes

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

The trainer briefly reminds the group what happened during the last meeting, emphasising the significance of constructive communication techniques. Then he/ she asks people to get into pairs but not with their respective partners. Next, one person in a pair preps the other to play a certain character in a scene from their lives they are going to re-enact. Alternatively, if the group is ready, they can put a 'difficult situations' scene they had prepared before.

2. The Activity

Each pair presents a difficult situation, then, the group discusses it with the trainer in the following way:

- 1) Which aspects of the pair's conversation are the pairs satisfied with, what would they improve
- 2) Which aspects were the strengths of the talk and which could leave room for improvement (ask the group)
- 3) Finally the trainer gives feedback, positively reinforcing group members.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Talk through the exercise and discuss the rules of effective partnership (p. 61) included in *Couple's Navigator* to sum up.

At the end of the meeting each couple chooses one goal they want to achieve in the following week or month. They may present it next time the group meets.

To enable couples to adjust to these new ways of communicating and foster their self-esteem each group members receives a blank sheet of paper which is fastened to their back. Next, the whole group takes turns writing positive, honest and meaningful feedback on each other's backs.

TRAINER'S NOTES

It is worth introducing the "FREEZE FRAME" rule so that the couples presenting various situations have the opportunity to stop and be given a hint as to what to do. It is also important to reinforce a couple in the feeling that they are really well-prepared to make decisions that - very probably - will lead them to integrate the goals of each partner.

When preparing for this exercise it is good to introduce active listening. For instance, you can ask partners to tell each other how they spent their day in 20 minutes. One person talks, the other listens in a way he/she would like to be listened to. Next we switch roles: the speaker becomes the listener and the listener now becomes the speaker.

Alternatively, for some groups of participants we also suggest the use of a set of exercises dedicated to marital games. Chapter 2 in *Couple's Navigator* (p. 54–58) will be an important introduction to these exercises. You can also broaden your knowledge to better helm such a meeting by reading "What games do people play?" (Eric Berne 2007).

Exercise 6. Look who's talking?

(based on: McKay, Davis, Fanning, 2013)

The goals:

1. To deliver knowledge about the characteristics of statements from the level of a child, an adult and a parent.
2. Through this exercise we enable the development of a skill of referring to the statement form we typically use when we talk with ourselves and others.

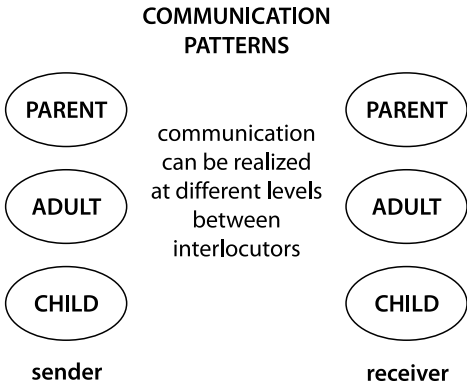


Duration 30 minutes

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

As a means of introducing this segment, discuss levels of communication with participants: Parent, Adult, Child by E. Berne. Also present a game of your choice (they are all described in *Couple's Navigator*). Invite participants to join the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of communicating on a parent and child level. Discuss the benefits of adult-adult communication.



2. The Activity

Participants receive a list of sentences. They are supposed to identify which level they were spoken from.

Check which sentences come from a parent or child and which from an adult:



1. I will not do it. I'm putting my foot down. ____
2. You are just a slob. There's no other way to put it. ____
3. You've been getting ready for two hours already and you *still* are not ready. ____
4. Let's go to the cinema today, pretty please. ____
5. You call this clean dishes? You've got to be kidding me. ____
6. Why am I always throwing out the garbage? ____
7. It would be good if one of us called the plumber. ____
8. I will need your help cleaning up. Tell me when you have time. ____

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

To sum-up analyze the examples above.



Exercise 7. Vice Versa

(based on: McKay, Davis, Fanning, 2013)

The goals:

1. To develop effective communication skills.
2. Through this exercise we foster the development of the skill of consciously building a statement form we will from now on use when communicating with others.

Duration 20 minutes



Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Show participants how different the same statement sounds depending on whether we say them from the level of a child, parent or adult.

2. The Activity

The trainer gives out the list of statements.

Fill in the sentences below so that the answers sound as if they were said by: child, parent, adult.



Ann wants Mark to inform her about his plans for the weekend.

- a) Parent
- b) Adult
- c) Child

Rob wants to ask Maggy to refrain from discussing intimate details of their life with her mum.

- a) Parent
- b) Adult
- c) Child



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Discuss with participants any difficulties they experienced when of changing their style. What were the disadvantages and advantages of each style? How did they feel with such a change?

Exercise 8. Let's play a game

The goals:

1. Firstly, to realizing the role of social context, place and accompanying people play in our way of communicating with others. Secondly, to understand how roles and previous experiences influence our communicative behaviours. Thirdly, to realize how strong the communication patterns we've always had with our parents, partners and friends are.
2. Furthermore, through this exercise we go to the games level. This exercise is therefore an introduction to the problem of fixed patterns and communication ruts. Its purpose is to make participants realize the power of patterns. Thanks to swapping their roles, participants can refer to their communication style as a way of functioning they can influence and change if they want to.
3. Building a sense of emotional security.



Duration 40 minutes

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Describe the exercise to participants so they know what they are expected to do. Give them information about how much time they have to practice the role-play. Give each couple 10 minutes to prepare and write a script of their play. The role-play is supposed to be done on the communication level indicated on the sheet.

After the first scenario has been acted out, the next couple takes a seat in the same chairs and tries to transform the role-play into Adult-Adult communication.

The rest of the group helps out.

2. The Activity

Getting into pairs, handing out sheets containing a scenario to be reenacted.

1. If it weren't for you (IWFY) – a role-play on the parent-child level	2. If it weren't for you (IWFY) – a role-play on the parent-parent level	3. If it weren't for you (IWFY) – a role-play on the child-child level
4. Prove you love me – a role-play on the parent-child level	5. Prove you love me – a role-play on the parent-parent level	6. Prove you love me – a role-play on the child-child level
7. Wash the dishes or I will faint – a role-play on the parent-child level	8. Wash the dishes or I will faint – a role-play on the parent-parent level	9. Wash the dishes or I will faint – a role-play on the child-child level
10. If you loved me, you would know – a role-play on the parent-child level	11. If you loved me, you would know – a role-play on the parent-parent level	12. If you loved me, you would know – a role-play on the child-child level



After the roles are played by one couple, another couple presents the scene one more time, but using adult-adult communication.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion


Discuss participants' impressions of roleplaying topics from the sheet. Ask participants about their impressions and feelings they experienced when they were playing their parent and child roles. Then ask each pair what they found difficult (if anything) when they had to change a situation reenacted by another pair into the adult-adult level. Present the negative aspects of all three-communication patterns and the dangers of getting stuck in a communication rut.



TRAINER'S NOTES

It is important to make participants feel at ease with this exercise by creating an atmosphere of playfulness.

It would be great to use a video camera so that



the participants can watch themselves in different roles and also discuss the role-play exercise together. Some couples may experience problems figuring out the role-plays. Let them know the role-plays do not have to derive from their personal life - they can stem from jokes or skits they have seen. If need be, help them come up with a role-play scenario. Some participants may experience difficulties impersonating/playing someone else. If that is the case, do not use the video camera. Try to convince all the participants to act out their scene and fix somebody else's role-play as well.

Recommended reading

- Berne E. (1996), *Games People Play: The Basic Handbook of Transactional Analysis*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Rosenberg B.M. (2003), *Nonviolent Communication: A Language Of Life, 2nd Edition*. Puddle Duncer Press.
- Moore W.C. (2014), *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict, 4th Edition*. New York: Jossey-Bass.

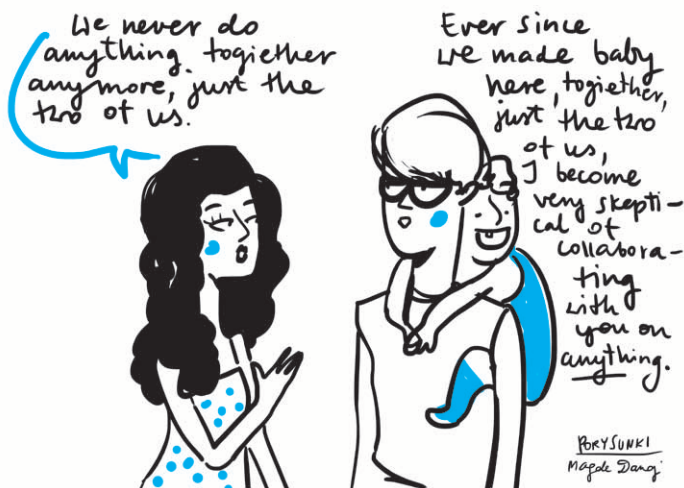
Module 3

A couple in the wash, breaking gender stereotypes

A couple in the wash, breaking gender stereotypes is dedicated to working on run-of-the-mill day-to-day issues in relationships. Couples taking part in the workshop are supposed to read the introduction and the first chapter of *Couple's Navigator* before the workshops or before this meeting.

The goals:

1. To stand back and take a long hard look at ourselves and our partners.
2. To recognise our own interpersonal style in our relationship with our partner.
3. To look at reality from the perspective of other couples.
4. To experience – together as a group – the different phases of a long-term relationship and the changes that take place in a couple over the years.



5. To gain greater relationship awareness.
6. To understand our own and our partner's needs and expectations related to household chores.
7. To achieve greater work-life balance.
8. To break gender stereotypes related to work and household.
9. To learn to communicate about standards of tidiness and cleanliness.
10. To manage time spent at work, at home as well as your spare time.
11. To work out a new division of household chores.

When preparing the workshop you should realise the necessity to change the attitudes and well-worn patterns of communication that people have. De-gendering of household chores and breaking these patterns are needed to work out a new, negotiated system of cooperation, characteristic of a given couple.



In the case of women it refers to:

1. Overcoming the feminine syndrome of "ruling the family" ("at least here I am in control", "at least here I feel needed")
2. Overcoming the feminine syndrome of "I'll do it better anyway" ("I am the best at it and I won't give it up")
3. Overcoming the feminine "sacrifice" syndrome ("I am so tired, I make all these sacrifices for you, and you? You do nothing")
4. Eliminating the belief that it has to be done just so
5. Building awareness that there is another, partnership-driven way of doing things
6. Building the attitude of being ready to follow another way
7. Building an open attitude to cooperation and team work
8. Building an open attitude to new solutions and learning to trust our partner

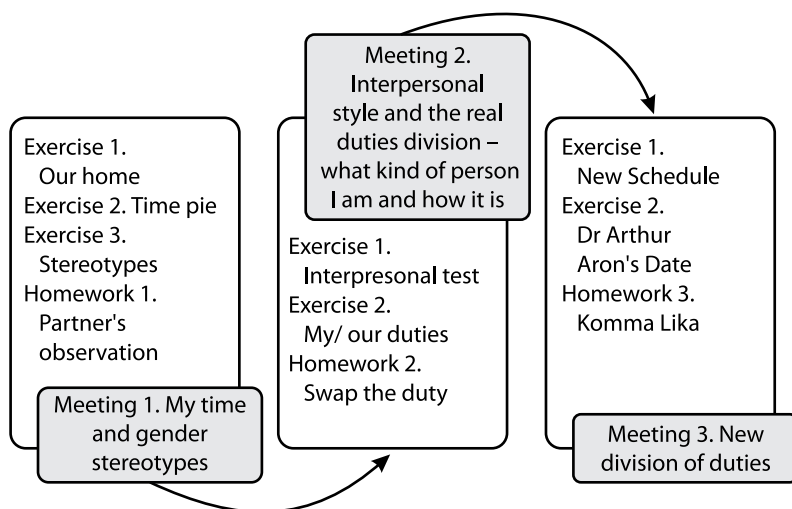


In the case of men it refers to:

1. Eliminating the feeling of being discouraged to involve ourselves in family life
2. Eliminating the feeling of being discouraged to involve ourselves in household duties
3. Changing the "apprentice" attitude to the "responsible executor" of domestic chores attitude.
4. Building a sense of control and agency among men in the aspect of doing household duties

5. Building a sense of control and agency among men in the aspect of taking care of children and dependent persons.
6. Changing men's self-esteem from one built on implementing the sole family breadwinner role towards the "I – a member of a team called family" role

Having in mind the above mentioned gender-congruent schemes it is crucial for the trainer to assist couples in identifying their resources, enhancing effective communication that would allow them to highlight the value and satisfaction from the relationship. Each meeting could be summed up by allowing couple to formulate conclusions concerning couple's future plans for development. Three meetings 135 minutes each are dedicated to topics related to household chores and relations in a couple. The number of couples taking part in them will influence the duration of meetings. In the case of 2–3 couples each meeting can be shortened to 120 minutes.



MEETING 1. My time and gender stereotypes (135 minutes)

The first meeting is dedicated to time management, Work-Life Balance and gender stereotypes. We do the Time Pie exercise and next we discuss the tidiness standards in a couple's household. Inspired by the talk and a carefully selected movie segment we talk about stereotypes related to feminine and masculine domestic roles.

We refer to Chapter 3 in *Couple's Navigator*.

The purpose of the meeting is to understand who we are and to look closely at the amount of time at our disposal of (Time Pie exercise): what roles do we play at home and where does this arise from.

It is crucial to create a sense of community in participants, not only referring to the space and time of the workshop, but also to emotions associated with the domestic sphere of life, such as: helplessness, anger, frustration, and the feelings of being betrayed and hurt.

For starters, it is a good idea to break the ice first and make sure the group has had time to properly meet and is getting on with each other. We can ask couples to draw their household and give each couple enough time to come up with a common story about their HOME.

During the meeting we draw the Time Pie. We divide the circle according to the amount of time we dedicate to ourselves, our work, our partner and household chores respectively. People who have children also draw a “time with children” area. We discuss the exercise in pairs, women and men separately. Next we talk about the picture “What is it supposed to be like” in couples. We talk about our expectations and our need to change things.

After discussing the issue of time and lack of thereof we pass on to the topic of stereotypes.

Exercise 1. Our Home

The goals:

1. To get to know each other in a group.
2. Integration.



Duration 45 minutes

Materials needed:

Colour markers for everyone, flipcharts.

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Picture your household as a poster in order to let us know who you are.

2. The Activity

Couples draw their own posters.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

The trainer moderates stories about homes to obtain the answers to the following questions: Who are the members of your household? How long have you been a couple? Which couple life phases have you experienced (read the Introduction from *Couple's Navigator* for an explanation) and which are still ahead of you? Do you work? Where? Why are you taking part in this workshop? What are your expectations?



Exercise 2. Time Pie

The goals:

1. To look closely at one's involvement in different spheres of life.
2. To ponder the difference between our current and desired state.
3. To start a discussion about the aspect of time in a relationship.

Duration 45 minutes



Materials needed:

Four coloured crayons for each participant, two sheets of paper.

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

We ask both partners to draw two pies of time. The first one depicts reality and the other one the ideal situation.

2. The Activity

We draw the Time Pie. We divide the circle according to the amount of time we dedicate to ourselves, work, our partner and household chores (consecutively) and colour in each part. People who have children also draw the "time with children" area.

We talk in pairs/ threes. Women and men separately.

Next, using the same colours we draw another circle on a separate piece of paper. Now we picture the proportions: "What is it supposed to be like?"

Demonstrative picture – it is best if participants start drawing their pies individually.

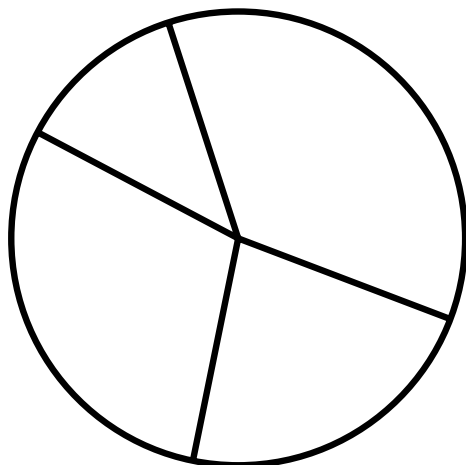


Fig. 2. Time pie – the reality (example of a drawing)

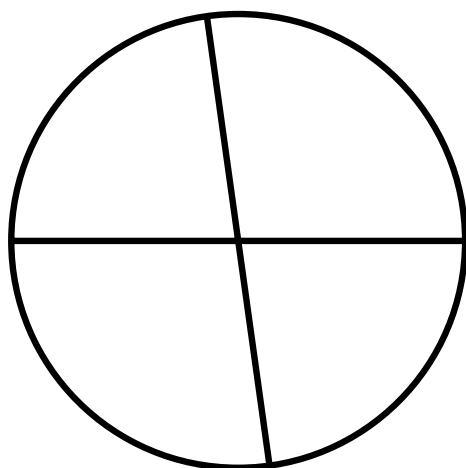


Fig. 3. Time pie – the ideal situation (example of a drawing)



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Together we talk about our expectations and our need for change. Each person presents his/her own area, which he/she wants to change.

TRAINER'S NOTES

The "Time pie" exercise is often used during time management workshops. It is also a perfect fit for Work-Life Balance Analysis. It is worth referring to the introduction in "Couple's Navigator" while discussing the issue to repeat information regarding work-life balance with couples. This exercise should also be done to emphasize the workshop's goals and make sure they are shared within the group - these goals can nevertheless be varied depending on the participants. Pay attention to participants' age, level of experience and the problems they mention.

Exercise 3. Stereotypes

The goals:

1. To recognise gender stereotypes.
2. To discuss the changes caused by women entering the labour market and men's increased involvement in domestic life
3. To bust gender stereotypes concerning gender roles.

Duration 45 minutes

Materials needed:

Film, screen, projector, speakers.



Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

We sit comfortably and watch a carefully selected movie segment.

2. The Activity

We watch a relevant movie segment (we suggest a few to choose from): “I Don’t Know How She Does It” (director: Douglas McGrath, 2011), “Changing sides” (2008, Pascale Pouzadoux), “Modern Family” (TV-series) – up to 10 minutes long. In case you do not have access to a TV/ video player/ computer/ the internet, you can take a closer look at quotes from books and newspapers.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Trainer moderates the discussion about answers to the following questions: What gender stereotypes can we see in a given fragment of the movie? What are the main female character’s needs and expectations? What are the main male character’s needs and expectations? What could they change? Why don’t they change anything? What could they start with? What is it like for you?

TRAINER'S NOTES

Couples' experiences stemming from this exercise

are very interesting. It is worth encouraging couples

to engage in this exercise by telling them this

experience was well liked by other couples.

After the first meeting it is necessary for the couple to do Homework 1 (see below): Observing your partner (unless couples have done it while reading *Couple's Navigator*).



Homework 1. Observing your partner

During the next week or two try to treat your partner as if you have just met. Imagine you have suddenly found yourselves in a new home, as

roommates who do not know each other and have never lived together. Ask for advice, opinions, and remarks, ask about their life. Listen carefully, do not interrupt. Look at your partner closely as if you have just met for the first time – observe his/her face, eyes, hands, the way they move, their clothes. What does she/ he do at home? What is pleasant for him/ her? What does she/ he not like to do? Write down your observations (activity based on: Kohle, Riess 2012, p. 29, 118).

After a week, sit together (arrange this meeting beforehand) and talk about this task honestly. Try to focus on positive things: what did you find fascinating about the other person during this week? What did you like about his/ her lifestyle? Which new thing caught your attention, preferably a thing you had not noticed before? Why do you fancy each other? Give each lots of time to talk through the whole experience.



MEETING 2. A real division of duties (135 minutes)

Each consecutive meeting should be started with homework revision and questions about changes, reflections, comments on domestic reality between meetings.



The purpose of the second meeting is getting to know one's interpersonal style and talking through an existing chores division, indicating the areas where changes are needed as well as areas where conflicts may arise (my/ our duties exercise).

Before the second meeting you need to read the "Tell me how you do the laundry and I will tell you what kind of a couple you are"² and "What do I get from this? Do I invest too much in a relationship?" subchapters from Chapter 4 from *Couple's Navigator*.

After discussing homework and thinking it over we do the test and talk through the results, and next we discuss the tidiness standard in a couple's household.

Next, participants complete the household chores survey, independently. Then we look at the results. We start with a talk about duties they described similarly: do they like such a division, what would they like to change. Afterwards we come to the duties they interpreted differently. We ask them where do the discrepancies come from; we talk about the state of affairs, a division of chores which would satisfy everybody.

² Paraphrase of J.-C. Kaufmann's statement: "Tell me how you wash and I will tell you if you are a couple already" (Kaufmann 1992: 69).



Exercise 1. Interpersonal Test – How do I communicate with others?

To start working together on a new household chores division it is good to take a close look at yourself. Getting to know participants' own preferences referring to role sharing, the amount of spare time, needs, as well as Partner's preferences will be important. We need to know how tidiness standards differ within a couple. In order to know it, first we will examine our interpersonal style.

The goals:

1. Delivering knowledge about your individual interpersonal style and a combination of two styles within your couple.
2. A change in perceiving differences in behaviours, needs and expectations – it turns out they actually have very little to do with your not only personality traits or star sign.
3. Examining and understanding what roles we play at home including the way we approach the issue of household duties.



Duration 90 minutes

Materials needed:

Two pens, two copies of the test – to be uploaded from here: migrationnavigator.org

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

There are 16 rows of entries in the attached form. Each row consists of four main entries, defined by a number of additional words. Choose one of those four main entries, even if there are not any that characterise you precisely enough. Choose the closest one, attributing number “4” to it. Attribute “3” and “2” to notions describing you the second and third best. Attribute number “1” to the notion describing you the least. Try to choose answers that characterise you the best – that is how I am most often, in most situations, in the majority of my interactions with others, while performing most of the tasks I do. Consider additional words (not in bold) and an additional definition of the main word (in bold) when you evaluate your personal style.

4 = From the four options listed, this word describes me the most

3 = From the three options left, this word describes me the most

2 = From the two options left, this word describes me better

1 = From the four options listed, this word describes me the least

Example

3	Artistic nature	4	Technical (resembles me the most)	1	Productive (resembles me the least)	2	Supporting others
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2. The Activity

Fill the test individually.

Now sum up the score. Count the points for the letters A, E, O and H separately

Sum A	Sum E	Total = 160 points
Sum O	Sum H	

Interpretation of the outcome to be presented to couples.

Mark your scores from the questionnaire on the diagram below:

Acting								
Ordering								
Harmony								
Expression								
	20	30	40	50	60			



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Generally speaking, scores over 40 points indicate a strong tendency to act in a given way, and scores below 35 points show you prefer to avoid such actions. If you scored between 35 and 40 points, you are likely to act in a given way less often. It can also indicate you perform this style half-heartedly.

Most people score two bigger numbers / over 40 / and two smaller. Some have only one high score, and the other three below 35 points. There are people who have three scores over 40 points and one very low score.

Four interpersonal styles lie on two axes: the axis of dominance (low/ high) and the axis of expression (low/ high).

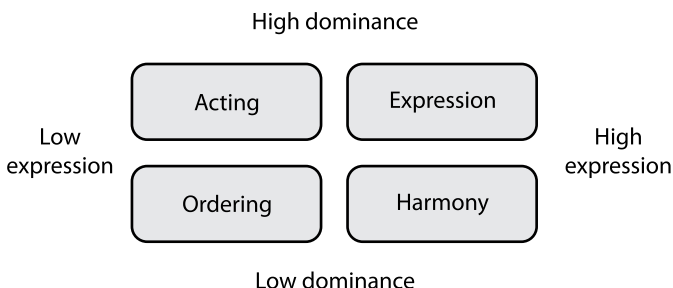


Fig. 4. Communication styles

Table 2. 4 types of communication style – attitude to household duties and tidiness standard (interpreted by Magdalena Żadkowska)

Acting	Expression
<p>As far as household duties are concerned an Acting Person likes cleaning instead of talking. A mess needs to be cleared up. He/ she does not like to postpone. The way he/ she does the tasks is the one and only way it should be done, it is the best way.</p> <p>An Acting Woman will do everything herself, if others do not submit to her vision of tidiness, her standards and schedules, she will do everything her way.</p> <p>Of course she will not let housemates forget they did not help out and did not perform household chores. An Acting Man will do everything fast, when he feels like doing it. He will do it his way. He will throw things out without consulting anyone, book a house renovation team, and employ a cleaner.</p> <p>He will start doing household chores and leave things to be finished by the rest of his housemates.</p> <p>An Acting Person has his/ her own, unquestionable tidiness standard.</p> <p>It is hard to teach and persuade an Acting Person to perform new duties.</p>	<p>Regarding household duties, an Expressive Person “talks more, does less”. On the one hand he/she has the ability to motivate others to work, she/ he concocts prizes, establishes a schedule. On the other hand, he/she tends to exaggerate the efforts he/ she has to make in order to perform household duties – it is not adequate to the actual amount of work he/she put in. If an Expressive Person will clean and do other household duties, she/ he will take credit, she/ he will mention what feelings he/she felt while doing the job. If he/ she will give instructions, one will not find any order, attention to details, tasks or work division there. She/ he will gladly take credit for a beautiful house or a magnificent kitchen, and when she/ he encounters criticism, he/ she will shift the responsibility onto others.</p> <p>It is not hard to teach and persuade an Expressive Person to perform new duties, but it is difficult to extort constant involvement.</p>
Ordering	Harmony
<p>Of all the housemates, an Ordering Person is most interested in keeping their home clean. It is he/ she who says: “I love to rest in an armchair, legs up, when everything is cleared up – otherwise I cannot rest.” Unfortunately she/ he really cannot rest if the house is not tidy and she/ he often feels bad in his/ her own home. Her/ his tidiness standards are quite high. If others do not help, he/ she begins to tide away herself/ himself, but feels she/he is being exploited.</p> <p>An Ordering Woman will take all household chores on herself. An Ordering Man has very high standards. He manages his own issues, e.g. A car. He severely judges the quality of others performance on duties. Thus, it really is best if he does them himself.</p> <p>It is hard to teach and persuade an Ordering Person to perform new duties.</p>	<p>A Harmony Person likes to clear up a mess in a group, TOGETHER, the best way possible. He/ she like to get tired doing it but with others, they enjoy a laugh while they are at it, and usually sweep to the rhythm of a favourite song. He/she is sorry if others have different plans and do not want to tidy up, because, obviously, it is better to live in a clean house than in a dirty one. She/ he can be persuaded to postpone tidying, but when it is delayed over and over again she/ he is disappointed and clears up her/ himself.</p> <p>He/ she feels bad in a place others do not care about, and that is how she/ he understands lack of involvement in clearing up together.</p> <p>If someone charges her/ him with some household chores she/ he will surely do them, though not always on time. The possibility to spend time together is more important for her/ him than a deadline.</p> <p>It is not hard to teach and persuade a Harmony Person to perform new duties.</p>



Discussion and summing up should be focused on scores obtained within couples. After a traditional discussion about the test, the trainer tries to make couples see their partners through the lens of 4 categories, using the chart: "4 interpersonal types – attitudes to household duties and tidiness standards". They should present examples where the inconsistency of expectations relating to tidiness standards or household duties division results from different interpersonal styles.

TRAINER'S NOTES

Couples usually like to take this test and learn about the differences between themselves and their partners. Participants of communication workshops very often ask for a copy of the test to give to their partner at home. It is good to present examples of behaviours characteristic of each type to Participants, e.g. short movie segments, political debates, TV shows or family TV series. It is also important that partners give each other feedback – e.g. about what they value the most in their communication style.

Exercise 2. My/our duties

The goals:

1. To look closely at the existing household duties division at our home.
2. To walk in the other person's shoes – how much does he/ she think I do.



Materials needed:

Two pens, two copies of the questionnaire per couple – you can photocopy them or use questionnaires included in the manuals for couples.

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Each person fills in the questionnaire by him/ herself.

2. The Activity

Filling in the questionnaire.

Table 3. Household duties questionnaire



Household duties questionnaire***	percentage	percentage	percentage	percentage	percentage
Name:	yours	partner's	other's	other's *	other's *
1. Taking out the rubbish					
2. Preparing meals					
3. Washing the dishes					
4. Tidying up the house everyday					
5. Thorough house cleaning					
6. Doing the laundry					
7. Ironing					
8. Everyday shopping					
9. Buying long-lasting household items					
10. Doing homework with children**					
11. Plumbing repairs					
12. Caring for ill family members					
13. Contracting repair person					
14. Dealing with administration issues					

Household duties questionnaire***	percentage	percentage	percentage	percentage	percentage
Name:	yours	partner's	other's	other's *	other's *
15. Changing infant's diapers**					
16. Bathing infant child **					
17. Feeding infant child**					
18. Reading to children**					
19. Painting the walls					
20. Cleaning windows					
21. Dusting					
22. Wallpapering					
23. Cleaning floors					
24. Caring for animals**					
25. Repairing electric devices					
26. Taking the child to and from facilities**					
27. Repairing electric installation					
28. Cleaning the bathroom					
29. Changing light bulbs					
30. Caring for plants					
31. Paying the bills					
32. Getting up at night to soothe children**					

* Define Other (mother, mother-in-law, father, father-in-law, maid, nanny, aunt...) And add the necessary number of columns). You can also include older children.

** Skip or mark how it was before if does not apply to you

*** The list of household duties comes from "Mężczyzna polski psychospołeczne czynniki pełnienia ról zawodowych i rodzinnych" (Polish man. Psycho-social factors of performing professional and family roles) by Anna Kwiatkowska and Agnieszka Nowakowska, 2006



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

We talk about the division of chores, about our (partners') feelings regarding this division and his/her involvement in the

house and in the process of children rearing (if it applies). During the second meeting we should take a look at two issues: first of all, what am I like and what is my Partner like. Second of all: what is it like at our place. Only seeing the whole picture can help us make a change.

TRAINER'S NOTES

This is a difficult part of the workshop. "How come?"

It seems only 2% for you?" - one can hear people

saying that. On the other hand chores are

a charming topic - we all have a problem with them.

It is good to relieve the inevitable tension with hearty

laughter. If the trainer shares some difficult situations

regarding household chores from his/her own life it

also helps to relieve tension.

After this meeting we suggest that the couples did Homework 2.

Homework 2. A new chore



Try to totally change the division of one domestic chore in your house – in other words, swap chores for one week. For instance: the person responsible for doing the laundry should hand it over to his/her partner for a whole week. Write down all the barriers/ losses/ profits/ emotions this change evoked in you.

At the end of the week talk about it: how it went, what you learnt, what the obstacles were and what helped you learn how to perform the chore correctly. Determine whether you want to go back to the previous division of chores or whether you would rather keep up the swap for a longer period of time.



MEETING 3. We establish a new division of duties (135 minutes)

Each consecutive meeting should start off with homework revision and questions about changes, reflections, and comments on the domestic reality between meetings.

Before the meeting we read the remaining part of Chapter 3 in *Couple's Navigator* about learning new competences (p. 71–85). The purpose of the meeting is to create and implement a new division of household duties using a fridge calendar or a schedule.

The result of the third meeting, and the whole section about household duties, is the creation of a new household duties division plan. We also recommend you stay open to a discussion about the children's part in this division – both as people involved in doing household duties and creators of family duties. Perhaps we can invent some new ways of doing them?

We recommend to set up a “date” at the end of the third meeting. Couples are supposed to talk to each other using the 36-question set by dr Arthur Aron. This talk is all about careful listening to one another, as well as asking and answering consecutive questions.

Exercise 1. New Schedule

The goals:

1. To create a new duties division in a relationship.
2. To allocate time during the week to leisure – time spent alone and as a couple.



Duration 60–90 minutes

Materials needed:

Two pens, printed week diagram/calendar

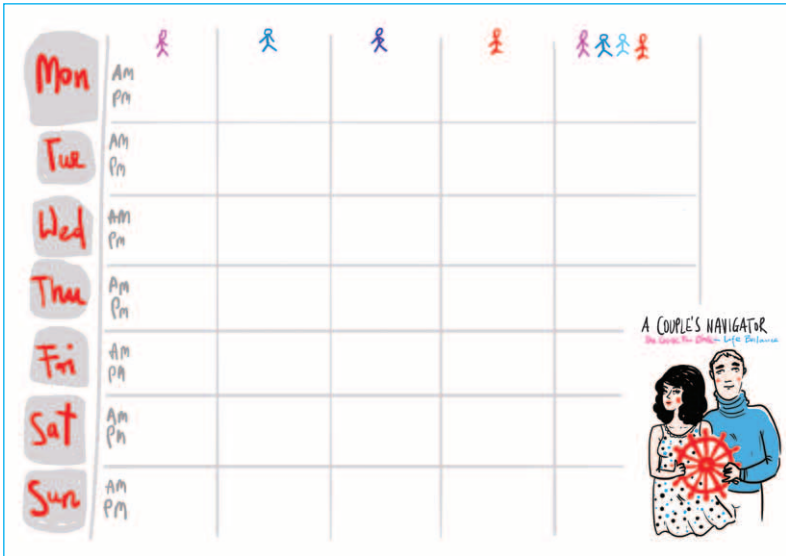
Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

We create a rota regarding household duties division at a couple's household

2. The Activity

Couples create their own schedule. We sign it. We hang it on the fridge. Hand out gift calendars to stick to a fridge.



Mon AM PM

Tue AM PM

Wed AM PM

Thu AM PM

Fri AM PM

Sat AM PM

Sun AM PM

A COUPLE'S NAVIGATOR
The Couple's Gift Calendar

TRAINER'S NOTES

It is good to inform couples that all "fridge tools" have a high "short term" factor. Couples admit they do not last long, similarly to New Year's resolutions. That is why it is important to lay down some ground rules: how long, what is the prize system, do we introduce the punishment/ consequences system, how do we give feedback about breaking the rules.

Exercise 2. 36 Questions to Love Dr. Arthura Arona's Date³

The goals:

1. To gain an opportunity to get to know your Partner anew.
2. To spend some quality time together as a couple.



Duration 90 minutes

Materials needed:

Printed/ photocopied questions for all, a comfortable couch or table with candles and chairs – an intimate space, a cosy atmosphere, tea

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

During ca. 90 minutes answer each other the following questions. Stay focused. Then look into each other's eyes for 4 minutes. Three sets of questions should be asked in the order from 1st to 36th.

2. The Activity

Partners sit side by side, on the couch, just the two of them and they are given 3 sets of questions (consecutively).

Set I

1. Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?
2. Would you like to be famous? In what way?
3. Before making a phone call, do you ever rehearse what you're going to say? Why?
4. What would constitute a perfect day for you?
5. When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?
6. If you were able to live to the age of 90 and retain either the mind or body of a 30-year old for the last 60 years of your life, which would you choose?



³ In 1997 Arthur Aron together with a team of scientists from State University of New York developed 36 questions intended to gradually shorten the distance between two people. Experiment was carried out clinically with volunteers who did not know each other before. They were supposed to answer the questions for 90 minutes and then look into one another's eyes for 4 minutes in silence. The results surprised the researchers. The feeling of intimacy contributed to feeling in love.

7. Do you have a secret hunch about how you will die?
8. Name three things you and your partner appear to have in common.
9. For what in your life do you feel most grateful?
10. If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
11. Take four minutes and tell you partner your life story in as much detail as possible.
12. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained one quality or ability, what would it be?

Set II


13. If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future or anything else, what would you want to know?
14. Is there something that you've dreamt of doing for a long time? Why haven't you done it?
15. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
16. What do you value most in a friendship?
17. What is your most treasured memory?
18. What is your most terrible memory?
19. If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living? Why?
20. What does friendship mean to you?
21. What roles do love and affection play in your life?
22. Alternate sharing something you consider a positive characteristic of your partner. Share a total of five items.
23. How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people's?
24. How do you feel about your relationship with your mother?


Set III


25. Make three true "we" statements each. For instance, "we are both in this room feeling..."
26. Complete this sentence "I wish I had someone with whom I could share..."
27. If you were going to become a close friend with your partner, please share what would be important for him or her to know.
28. Tell your partner what you like about them: be honest this time, saying things that you might not say to someone you've just met.
29. Share with your partner an embarrassing moment in your life.


30. When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?
31. Tell your partner something that you like about them already.
32. What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?
33. If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you most regret not having told someone? Why haven't you told them yet?
34. Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire. After saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to safely make a final dash to save any one item. What would it be? Why?
35. Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing? Why?
36. Share a personal problem and ask your partner's advice on how he or she might handle it. Also, ask your partner to reflect back to you, how you seem to be feeling about the problem you have chosen.


After this meeting we suggest distributing Homework 3.

 TRAINER'S NOTES

 Usually there are a lot of emotions here. There may

 be not enough time, it is good if they can stay as

 long as they need to finish the questionnaire. It is

 important to create a "chamber/ date" atmosphere.



Homework 3. Komma Lika⁴

Prepare triangles cut out from sticky or magnetic paper. They can be of different sizes. Each person chooses a colour (you can do this exercise with children – if you decide to do so add extra colours) and a certain number of triangles of different sizes – e.g. 5 very large, 15 medium and 25 little triangles. The rules of the game are very simple – when you per-

⁴ www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokieobcasy/1,80530,14515896,_Komma_Lika____zagraj_w_rownouprawienie__Kazdy_chce.html (accessed: 15.12.2015) or see: <http://kommalika.se>.

form a household chore you stick one triangle on the door of the fridge – its size should correspond to the effort you put in the chore and the time it took you to complete it. Gradually you and your partner (or family) will compose a colourful picture together. If there are not enough triangles, cut out new ones. The colours represent the involvement of each person in household chores. Introduce competition to your daily life and remember to reward yourself and others with good prizes.

Questions to ponder and talk over with your partner: What should you do to have as many of your own triangles on the fridge as possible? Why do the disparities seem to appear? What could you do to even out the number of colours in the picture?

Recommended reading

Larsson L. (2011), *Relationships – Freedom without Distance, Belonging without* (Org title: *Relationbesiktning, frihet utan distans, gemenskap utan kontroll*), Friare Liv Konsult, Svensbyn.

Kaufmann J.-C. (2009), *Gripes: The Little Quarrels of Couples*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Kaufmann J.-C. (1993) *Sociologie du Couple*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.

Kohle A.-B., Reiz S. (2009), *Das Dalai-Lapa-Prinzip für Paare: Wie achtsame Liebe gelingt*, Verlagsgruppe Random House GmbH, München.

Szuchman P., Anderson J. (2012), *Spousonomics: How to Minimize Conflict and Maximize Happiness in Your Relationship*, Random House Trade Paperbacks.

Module 4

Coupling couple – overcoming mental barriers

Module *Coupling couple – overcoming mental barriers* is dedicated to the development of intimacy between partners.

Module goals:

1. To look at sexuality from a distance
2. To tighten bonds and intimacy between partners
3. To gain greater relationship awareness
4. To understand our own and our partner's needs and expectations concerning the sexual sphere

Sexuality is a very important part of life, unfortunately very often neglected by all kinds of health specialists. Most of them do not touch on the issue assuming it is too difficult for their patients (Wincze and Weisberg, 2015). Meanwhile, it could be that their own restrictions regarding



their ability to comfortably talk about the issue cause them to refrain from discussing this issue with their patients. The group of people enrolled in the workshop are here, among other reasons, because they want to explore the issue of sexuality in their relationships. The more open you are to this topic, the easier it is to talk about it. Remember to practice a non-judgemental attitude: participants may bring up an issue which could embarrass you, so as long as their sexual activity does not hurt others, try to be open to their sexuality.

Before taking on this workshop it is worth pondering which thoughts and beliefs relate to you.

When I think of sex:

.....
.....

When I think of talking about sexuality with other people:

.....
.....

Is there anything particularly difficult in the above sentences? If yes, what could be helpful?

.....
.....

One 180 minutes long meeting is dedicated to the issue of sexuality . It is possible to divide the workshop into smaller parts, but, as the meeting is based on intimacy built gradually, it is better to have one long meeting rather than two shorter ones.

Before the workshop: ask participants to wear comfortable clothes, which do not restrict movements. They should also read the appropriate chapter from *Couple's Navigator*.

Before the workshop read the chapter concerning sexuality from *Couple's Navigator*. Go through the exercises from the manual if possible.

Prepare the room. All activities should take place on the floor, on comfortable mats. If possible, provide cushions or other things that allow people to sit comfortably. Ask partners to sit side by side. Participants can take their places in the room freely. Provide relaxation music or soothing sounds of nature, which should be present throughout the

whole workshop, to make participants feel they are really in a place where they can open to experiences.

Before you begin the workshop about sexuality, remind all the participants that you want them to feel safe, that the time of this workshop is dedicated to them – and that is why it is important that they report to you if they feel uncomfortable at any time during the meeting. Participants' experiences from the past may vary much, and it is hard to predict what will move them. That is why exercises in this part of the course should not be considered obligatory; still, if someone does not want to participate, it is worth talking through the reasons with him/her and encouraging her/ him to join in. Start off with this piece of information – the exercises have various levels of intimacy. Some of them will refer to the sphere of sexuality directly, but the most intimate ones will be assigned to be done at home. The intimacy of participants will not be breached during the workshop in any way. Participants may have various fears concerning this part, it is good to dispel them right at the beginning to reduce discomfort.

Exercise 1. What disturbs me?
Exercise 2. Mindfulness in a relationship I
Exercise 3. Mindfulness in a relationship II
Exercise 4. My body
Exercise 5. Touch and communication I
Exercise 6. Sex: easier to lose than to find
Exercise 7. Touch and communication II
Exercise 8. Sexual meditation

Meeting 1.
Sexuality

Description of exercises

Exercise 1. What disturbs me?

The goals:

1. To reduce participants' tension regarding publicly discussing sexual issues
2. To get used to difficult words
3. To break the ice, soothe tension

Duration 15–20 minutes



Materials needed:

Flipchart, markers

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Each of you knows some words related to sexuality, which are associated with some negative emotions, e.g. Shame, anger. Ask participants to list sex-related words, which embarrass them (e.g. Penis, dick, pussy, fuck). Write them on the board.

2. The Activity

Together with participants, in chorus, start to repeat the first word on the board, e.g. "penis, penis, penis, penis, penis, penis, penis."

Before the workshop practise saying these couple of words in order to sound naturally and give them certain dynamics and melody.

Do not hurry, let every word be spoken long enough to "dissolve" the meaning. The repeated word, if we repeat it long enough, stops expressing certain meaning and becomes just an agglomeration of sounds. That is why it is important to practice it at home before the workshop, so later you would be able to say the words dynamically (shout them out) and long enough to achieve the expected diffusion effect (separating the word from its meaning).

Then proceed with the next word, and the next, until you get to the very last one. Continue with the exercise as long as you say out loud all the words written on the board. It is better to say a given word a bit longer than shorter. End this part with applause.

Next, ask the participants if something was difficult for them, what where their impressions. It is also a good time to ask participants about their expectations regarding this workshop. Their answers will help you understand the group better. Try to talk with them for a while about their thoughts about sexuality, their fears, the convictions they think are still lingering in culture. This is the time to establish relations with a group. Notice participants' emotions. Now is the best time to recognise if someone felt disgusted or afraid, if some difficult emotions occurred. It is good to dedicate a while to talk it over before you proceed with the next exercises.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

The subject of sexuality may evoke various emotions, from amusement and excitement to shame and fear. Only by opening up to these emotions, whatever they may be, can we realise our goal – intimacy with a partner. That is why, using common or even vulgar words we “break the spell” over the heaviness of the issue we want to work with, we help participants to step back and gain some freedom.



TRAINER'S NOTES

This exercise may embarrass or disgust some very shy/ prudish people. The trainer should lead the narrative and build an atmosphere in which doing this exercise is funny and enthusiasm-instilling.

Exercise 2. Mindfulness in a relationship I

The goals:

1. To stop at a specific moment
2. To spend quality time together

Duration 5 minutes

Materials needed:

A stop-watch

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

It often happens that we do not have time to really pay attention to each other. In return it can be felt in sexuality: attention deficit makes it harder to open up to partner's needs.





2. The Activity

Ask partners to sit facing each other cross-legged and to look each other in the eyes. They are supposed to stay like that for one minute. When the time is up inform the participants and ask them to stop looking into each other's eyes. Ask participants, what was difficult or surprising for them in this exercise.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Sometimes it is very difficult to stand intense eye contact with another person, in silence, even if you are emotionally close with someone. We can feel embarrassed or experience some other negative emotions during the course.

TRAINER'S NOTES

This exercise may evoke tension in participants, manifesting itself with, among other behaviours, laughter. If any couple finds itself in such a situation, the trainer may approach them and suggest they take a deep, peaceful breath. This exercise is an introduction to the next one, so we do not want to relax couples too much. A slight feeling of discomfort is expected in this exercise. Taking time out to calm down is recommended only to those whose level of discomfort is so great that they are unable to do the exercise. Congratulate participants for the attention they paid to each other.

Exercise 3. Mindfulness in a relationship II

The goals:

1. To stop at a specific moment
2. To pay attention to each other

Duration 10 minutes



Materials needed:

A stop-watch

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

It often happens that we do not have time to pay attention to each other. In return it can be felt in sexuality: attention deficit makes it harder to open to partner's needs.

2. The Activity

Ask partners to sit facing each other cross-legged, to look each other in the eyes and to hold each other's hands. They are supposed to stay like that for one minute. At the same time guide their breathing by saying in a calm, soothing manner: breathe in and breathe out slowly. You want partners to breathe at the same pace and depth. When you notice the participants' breathing becomes calm, ask them to maintain this shared pace of breathing and leave them in silence for one minute.

Again ask about their impressions and mood. Was there something difficult in the exercise?

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

It is sometimes very difficult to stand intense contact with another person in silence, even if you are emotionally close. We can feel embarrassed or some other negative emotions during the course. However, when we establish physical contact and synchronise breathing, the feeling of bond tightens and a deeper feeling of closeness appears. Synchronising breaths is one of the tantric practices which helps us experience feelings more intensely and enhances closeness during intercourse.





TRAINER'S NOTES



This exercise may evoke tension. After the participants finish it, congratulate them on their ability to synchronise their breaths and therefore open to another person.



Exercise 4. My body

The goals:

1. To strengthen self-esteem
2. To increase trust in one's own body



Duration 15–20 minutes

Materials needed:

Sheets of paper, something to write with

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

We do not have the time to think about our bodies in positive way on an everyday basis, we are not used to doing it. Especially women are exposed to negative thoughts about their bodies, they tend to pay attention to what is imperfect in them. This exercise aims to change this proportion and encourage participants to pay attention to what is precious in their bodies.

2. The Activity

Hand out sheets of paper and pens. Ask each participant to write down 5 things they are grateful to their bodies for (not their partner's body) regarding sexuality, e.g. For my lips – because thanks to them I can kiss and be kissed. They should also write down the reasons why are they grateful for these body parts. Take a few minutes to do this exercise. Next ask the participants to write down what are they grateful to the partner's body for regarding sexuality, e.g. For his/ her touch, penis, breasts etc. And why is it important to them. When they finish writing, ask them to swap their papers

and talk it over together. You can turn up the volume of the background music to drown out what other couples are saying.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Sometimes we are so obsessed with our body's supposed imperfections that we forget that our bodies may be a source of pleasure, closeness and joy to us and our partners.



TRAINERS NOTES

This exercise may also evoke tension; some people are not accustomed to thinking about their bodies in a positive way. Congratulate the participants for being able to find the positives in themselves, especially those who had difficulties at the beginning. Pay attention to the fact that after the exercise the mood improves - it indicates how nice and important it is to pay each other compliments.

Exercise 5. Touch and communication I

The goals:

1. To practice expressing our emotions
2. To practice listening about partner's needs

Duration 15–20 minutes



Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Some people may find expressing emotions difficult, not only in the sexual sphere but also beyond it. Some may feel embarrassment, experience thoughts which make it harder to say what

they want. It is worth training this skill, starting with easier situations, and proceeding to the more difficult ones.

2. The Activity

The partners' task is to massage each other's shoulders. First the man massages the woman's shoulders for 5 minutes, then they swap roles. The person being massaged closes his/her eyes and opens up to experiences coming from the body; giving feedback is also his/ her task: telling if she/ he needs stronger or a more delicate touch, what sensations from the body does she/ he feel, does she/ he need faster or slower touch etc. Also non-verbal communication is possible in the form of e.g. murmuring. After they finish the exercise ask them if it was easy to know what was the influence of their touch on the person they massaged.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Good sex requires mutual communication: expressing one's needs and listening to our partner's needs. It is not always easy, because the ability to communicate is only one dimension here – another one is the taboo on sex, which makes it difficult for some people to open up and talk about their needs. Sometimes listening is also hard: our partner may have utterly different needs, which can be difficult for us to understand.

TRAINER'S NOTES

Participants may not want to engage themselves in this exercise very much. Try to encourage them to. Congratulate them on the time they dedicated to each other, strengthen their awareness of the need to relax and to be mindful with each other. Expressing one's needs (which requires us to be aware of them in the first place) is a part of it.

Exercise 6. Sex: easier to lose than to find

The goal:

To help participants feel more comfortable and confident initiating sex

Duration 20–40 minutes



Materials needed:

Board, marker; switch off the ambient music for this exercise

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Although very pleasant for most people, sex requires some effort, and it just so happens that partners resign from making it. It is partly the result of having lots of duties, but on the other hand, at the end of the day it is mostly the result of avoiding sexual intimacy. It is worth to better understand our avoidance-related reactions to be able to fully involve ourselves in activities important to us, despite the thoughts and emotions holding us back from doing them.

2. The Activity

The trainer draws a chart on the board. It is the chart included in *Couple's Navigator*. The trainer asks participants to give more examples, if the couples remain silent the trainer can give the couples of examples from his/her own life or encourage them to develop the ones they have already been given, e.g. Sometimes being tired makes it impossible to be sexually close even if we want to, you just don't have the strength; the children are right behind the wall, sometimes difficult living conditions may not foster sexuality etc.

Table 4. Thoughts and events, which make intimacy difficult

Factors	How does this factor make living together difficult?	What can I do to stop this factor holding me down?
tiredness		
stress		
children		
partner's behaviour		
how I perceive my body		
.....		
.....		



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Our thoughts influence our sexuality. They are the result of how we were brought up, what culture we grew up in, what our previous sexual experiences were like. When it comes to sex in a long-term relationship, one cannot underestimate the influence of thoughts and behaviour patterns which result from the couple's unique dynamics. Every person has thoughts, which make joyful sex harder to achieve. Also, couples often have some behavioural scripts, which make it possible for one partner to start avoiding sex altogether, usually because of a specific thing that happened between the partners. This may not necessarily have direct influence on their sex life but is associated with sexuality for them on the level of schemes.

This exercise may trigger lots of negative emotions. It is a good time to practice effective and constructive communication skills that participants have already learnt as not to let a conflict spurred by this exercise escalate. If this happens, it is good to remind participants that the purpose of the workshop is to deepen the bond between them, and finish off the workshop with a mindfulness exercise, e.g. Exercise 3 from this chapter is a good choice.

TRAINER'S NOTES

It is worth encouraging both genders to take part, but if one of them starts to dominate, ask the other one how they perceive the problem. It is good to go from more obvious things, as the ones mentioned above, to the more complex ones.

Trainer: How can your partner's behaviour influence you?

Man: I've got the feeling that my partner never wants it.

Woman: How come?

M: You always refuse, I asked you straight up recently and you said no.

W: I was busy taking care of the children, the timing could not have been worse.

M: When is the timing right then?

W: When we are together and I am not doing some household stuff, or you can help me out with household chores, and then I will have more time for you.

In this situation, the trainer may write down obstructive factors in a chart: 1. Being burdened with household chores, 2. Reading partner's mind ("She does not want me"), and, as a solution, 1. a different division of duties, 2. Working on better communication - not assuming our partner's bad will without picking their brain about it. In this exercise we focus more on searching for solutions - the participants may tend to talk over the most difficult things - it is natural, but when we already know what the problem is, we should redirect their attention to ways to solve it and be on the look out for the silver lining.

Woman: I'm still waiting for you to show interest in me, to win me over, seduce me, I feel I'm transparent to you

Man: If you don't tell me, how am I supposed to know you want me?

Trainer can record "partner expects the other to be a mind reader" on the woman's side and "little sensitivity to non-verbal signals" on the man's side as obstructive factors. The solution in this case will be communication - expressing one's needs more openly and clearly and mindfulness. This might lead to increased awareness of the meaning conveyed by non-verbal communication and may make a person ask a question about the meaning of the non-verbal message (instead of ignoring the message) ("What are you trying to tell me?"). Whenever you observe the partners communicating their needs and finding solutions reinforce such behaviour. Encourage the couple to touch hands during the exercise or to express affection in other ways - this might enhance their willingness to solve the problem instead of expressing their sorrow and staying in the negative emotions.

Exercise 7. Touch and communication II

The goals:

- 1. To practice expressing our emotions
- 2. To practice listening about partner's needs

Duration 15–20 minutes



Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

The previous exercise could have potentially caused partners to feel anxiety and negative emotions. Participants' goal is to feel comfortable with another while being massaged, following partners' expressed needs and preferences. It is important that they allow themselves to be "here and now", to practice mindfulness (see Module 1 and Chapter 1 from *Couple's Navigator*), focus on the body cues, and then turn the negative emotions off.

2. The Activity

Here we basically repeat exercise 5 but this time partners do the massage in silence as they already received feedback. The partners' task is to massage each other's shoulders. First the man massages the woman's shoulders for 5 minutes, then they swap roles. The person being massaged closes his/her eyes and opens up to experiences coming from the body. After the exercise ask participants about their feelings during the massage in comparison with the first version of this exercise.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

As soon as the partner finds out about our needs and we know they can be fulfilled we can be more open to our body sensations and profit more from the pleasure of being touched. The masseur/masseuse also find it easier to do the massage as we know what kind of touch is most pleasurable for our partner.



●

TRAINER'S NOTES

●

●

It is possible that the participants might show little

●

involvement in this exercise. After they have finished

- make sure you thank them for the time they gifted
- each other with. You might also want to emphasize
- that you have yourself observed improvement
- in comparison with the previous exercise.

Exercise 8. Sexual meditation

(based on *Om meditation* by N. Deadone)

The goals:

1. To achieve closeness,
2. To better understand our body,
3. To improve sexual communication,
4. To experience pleasure



Duration 20–40 minutes (the workshop part), about 20 minutes to be done at home

Materials needed:

Instruction for each participant given after the exercise is talked over

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

You will find a comprehensive instruction on how to do this exercise below. Achieving orgasm is not the purpose of this exercise but there is a big chance you will come. If a woman struggles to achieve orgasm this exercise may be a good way to change this. Couples may be tempted to look for things to spice-up their sex life like dildos, fancy dresses or kinky sex toys when they encounter difficulties in their sexual life. If their current sexual life is satisfying there are no reasons not to look for new sexually arousing ways to spice up their sex life, but these workshops refer to the basics – if these do not work, it will be difficult to build something off of them.

2. The Activity

The aim for both partners' is to relax and be caressed by their partner. When the exercise is done for the first time you can in-

struct your partner whether a given touch is pleasant to you, but, if possible, the exercise should be done in silence. The exercise is not supposed to be a form of foreplay; neither partner should expect intercourse to follow. This exercise serves to deepen understanding of one's body, increase our sensitivity to touch, deepen closeness between partners and allow us to practice relaxation techniques and mindfulness. Read the instructions. Ask participants if it is clear to them, talk through the ambiguities and resolve any doubts.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

As the exercise will be done at home it is difficult to sum it up, but it is good to ask participants what they expect from the exercise, what they think may turn out to be difficult. If they do point out some potential difficulties, suggest that maybe during the course of the workshops they have learnt something that could help them resolve the problem if it does indeed occur? It is good to end the exercise on a positive note: what positive effects do the participants expect and what can help them achieve them .



●	TRAINER'S NOTES
●	
●	This exercise calls for great intimacy between partners
●	- thereby, couples in conflict should not do it. That
●	being said, it usually evokes great enthusiasm in partners.
●	It is often hard to explain what position the partners
●	are supposed to take in relation to each other, so it is
●	better to demonstrate it within the workshop setting so
●	that they have no problem with that issue. It is also
●	necessary to explain to them that this exercise will be
●	assigned as homework before we even begin to explain

what the exercise involves participants may fear it is too intimate to do in a group setting – therefore, it is good to clarify this will not be the case as soon as possible to ease participants' discomfort, so that they can focus on the meaning of the exercise and not be distracted by anxiety.

At the end of the workshop thank all the participants for their time and ask them to thank each other, in pairs, for the time they dedicated to each other.



An exercise for couples to be done at home

Below we present a sexual exercise you can do when you are alone together. It is an intimate massage. Before you start:



1. Plan it. Do not do it “ad hoc” but set aside time for it; you need 15–35 minutes depending on whether just one of you or both of you will do it.
2. Make sure no one can disturb you.
3. Frame this exercise: do not do it on your bed in the bedroom; this exercise is sexual but is not supposed to lead to intercourse, so it is good to prepare some specific place for it, e.g. A comfortable mat and pillows on the floor of your bedroom
4. The person who is supposed to relax takes his/ her clothes off from the waist down; it may be necessary to cover the feet for greater comfort, as cold feet can make it harder to relax, especially for women
5. Decide who is to massage first and who is to be massaged first. Both partners do not have to be massaged on the same day, but it is important that each of you has a chance to be both a masseur/masseuse and the person who is massaged.
6. Do not expect sex, this exercise is not foreplay, it is valuable as it is as a stand alone exercise; it serves to strengthen the bond between the two of you, allow you to better understand your bodies, to enhance communication; the exercise may end with one

of you climaxing but it is not expecting orgasm that is crucial – it is not the purpose of the exercise, and the person being massaged should not pursue it; nevertheless it will be an additional value of the exercise one of your orgasms

7. The masseur/masseuse times the exercise, it should last 15 minutes – the time factor is important. The masseur/masseuse may become tired, but because he/ she knows how much time is left, she/ he can better prepare for the effort. The person who is massaged knows these 15 minutes are for him/ her, and does not have to feel any remorse for that, he/ she can fully use this time for him/ herself; the moment the time frames becomes unclear, thoughts may appear such as: “this is taking forever”, which can hinder relaxation.

The woman as the person who is being massaged



1. Take off your clothes from the waist-down, you can also be totally naked if you prefer. Lie down comfortably on your back on the mat, use cushions for greater comfort if needed. Make sure you are not cold; you can cover your feet if they feel cold.
2. Bend your knees and spread your legs; it can be comfortable if your feet touch each other, now your genitals are exposed and accessible to your partner.
3. Relax and focus on your body. You will be massaged for the next 15 minutes; orgasm is not your goal although it may come; take joy and pleasure from the bodily sensations you experience
4. If you are doing this exercise for the very first time it is possible for you to instruct your partner and you should be the person who initiates such a talk; if some kind of touch is especially pleasant to you, you can tell to your partner it feels nice to be touched this way; if something makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your partner, what kind of touch would be more pleasant. Remember, it is your time
5. During this exercise you may notice that tightening your thigh muscles and buttocks increases your ability to reach orgasm – it is up to you whether you want to tighten them or to remain relaxed and draw pleasure from the touch of your partner without climaxing; if some kind of touch is pleasant to you and you feel you are about to climax, try to refrain from asking your partner to intensify the way he caresses your body, let it flow in the same pace
6. When the time of exercise is up, thank your partner for giving you his time.



The man as the masseur

1. Sit comfortably next to your partner near her hips, turning your back towards her (if you do not see her, it is easier for her to relax), and facing her genitals and feet
2. Set the timer for 15 minutes, ideally it should signal that the time is up with a gentle sound
3. Put your hand in the proximity of your partner's clitoris; most clitorises are more sensitive on the right side so if you sit to the left of your partner it will be easy to reach her clitoris with your right hand; if your partner is more sensitive on the left side, sit right of her; if you are doing this exercise for the first time it is good to determine which side is more sensitive.
4. Find the clitoris, put your index and middle finger on the area around it, a little right (a little left) of the clitoris; most women do not like it when their clitoris is touched directly, it is too intense an experience for them, therefore massage the whole area with delicate movements up-down (head-feet). Be gentle, this area of the female body is rich in nerve endings, wait until your partner gives you some feedback, if she asks you to change the way you touch her follow her instructions
5. If it is necessary, use water-based lubricants, so that your touch is a pleasant sensation for your partner
6. Do not ask your partner if you are touching her well, give her time to feel your touch and tell you what she wants; it is her who initiates verbal interaction, if she says nothing, you can assume that what you are doing is pleasant for her; every time you say anything it knocks her out of her rhythm, so let her lay in silence unless she wishes otherwise
7. Unless your partner asks you, do not change anything in your touch
8. Observe and learn about your partner's body, watch as she reacts to your touch; try not to establish eye contact, this exercise is for her pleasure, let her totally relax and not care about what she looks to you.
9. If your partner reaches orgasm before the 15 minutes have passed, hug each other and stay like this for a while; whether your partner has reached orgasm or not, thank her for letting you get so close to her and opening up to you so much; the purpose of this exercise is not to reach orgasm, so do not expect her to climax.

The man as the person being massaged



1. Take off your clothes from your waist down, you can also be totally naked if you prefer. Lie down comfortably on your back on the mat, use cushions for greater comfort if needed
2. Bend your knees and spread your legs; it can be comfortable if your feet touch each other, now your genitals are exposed and accessible to your partner
3. Relax and focus on your body. You will be massaged for the next 15 minutes; orgasm is not your goal although it may come; take joy and pleasure from the bodily sensations you experience
4. If you are doing the exercise for the first time it is possible for you to instruct your partner and it is you who should initiate any verbal interaction; if some kind of touch is especially pleasant to you, you can tell your partner it feels good to be touched this way; if something makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your partner, what kind of touch would be more pleasant to you. Remember, it is your time.
5. During this exercise you may notice that tightening muscles of thighs and buttocks increases your ability to reach orgasm – it is up to you whether you want to tighten them or to remain relaxed and draw pleasure from being touched by your partner without climaxing; perhaps you will get an erection at the very thought of this exercise, or it will not come before your partner starts massaging you, still try not to think about whether you have an erection, or what your penis looks like during the exercise but instead focus on your partner's touch; if you do not get an erection, focus on the touch even more, on what is pleasant about it – it may just happen that you will not get an erection at any point of this exercise
6. Perhaps it will be easy for you to reach orgasm during the course of this exercise, if it happens so, try to breathe calmly and deeply and relax your muscles; notice if it changes anything in your perception; perhaps it makes you less likely to orgasm, but thanks to this you can enjoy being caressed longer; if you asked your partner to intensify the pace of her movements and add more pressure to her hand strokes along your penis, you would probably climax in no time – nevertheless, try to restrain from that request and rather let her caress you in a more gentle way
7. When the time of exercise is up, thank your partner for giving you her time.



The woman as a masseuse

1. Sit comfortably next to your partner near his hips, turn your back towards him (if you cannot see him, it is easier for him to relax), and facing his genitals and feet
2. Set the timer for 15 minutes, ideally the time is up signal should be a gentle sound
3. Grip your partner's penis and move your hand slowly up and down its shaft (ceiling-floor), use lubricants if needed
4. Observe the changes in your partner's body and how he reacts to your touch; be open to his suggestions; try not to speed up your initial pace and refrain from adding more pressure unless your partner directly asks you to do so.
5. If your partner reaches orgasm before the 15 minutes have passed, hug each other and stay like this for a while; whether your partner has reached orgasm or not, thank him for letting you get so close to him and for opening up to you so much; the purpose of this exercise is not to reach orgasm, so do not expect it at any point of the exercise.

Recommended reading

- Daedone N. (2012), *Slow Sex: The Art and Craft of the Female Orgasm*, Grand Central Life & Style, Boston.
- Leiblum S.R. (ed.) (2007), *Principles and Practice of Sex Therapy*, The Guildford Press, Cambridge.
- Walser R.D., Westrup D. (2009), *The Mindful Couple. How Acceptance and Mindfulness Can Lead You to the Love You Want*, New Habringer Publications, Inc., Oakland.
- Wincze J.P., Weisberg R.B. (2015), *Sexual Dysfunction. A guide for Assessment and Treatment*, ed. 3, The Guildford Press, New York.

Module 5

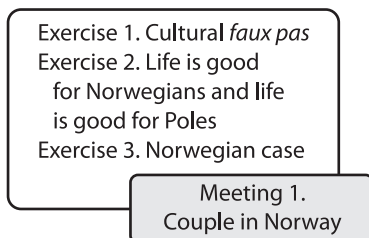
Couple in Norway – or a few words about intercultural communication and living in a different culture

The purpose of this module is to equip the couple in basic knowledge regarding the country they are going to live in (for a longer or shorter period of time). Because the manual we present is based on the research done with Polish and Norwegian couples, both in Poland and in Norway, the presented module enables work within workshops at the intersection of these two cultures. Still the scheme we propose and the structure of the meeting can be used to work with couples, which migrate to countries other than Norway.



Polish and Norwegian culture differs greatly – this refers both to values and attitudes to many issues. We describe these differences in more detail in our *Couple's Navigator*. It is important that both the trainers and participants of the meeting get to know its content before this workshop meeting.

It is crucial that a trainer who knows the peculiarities of both cultures and is able to explain any unclear behaviour runs this workshop. It would be also great if Norwegian couples took part in the workshop. It would enable participants to get to know each other's culture better.



Description of exercises

Exercise 1. Cultural *faux pas*

The goals:

1. To make the group realise that the culture they live in influences their behaviour and the way they perceive the world.
2. To show participants just how often we use easily available, cultural patterns in an automatic and therefore thoughtless manner.
3. To illustrate the some differences between Polish and Norwegian culture



Duration 45–60 minutes

Materials needed:

Flipchart, markers, descriptions of critical incidents

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

The trainer shows a short segment of the movie “Fear and Trembling”, a film based on the novel of the same title penned by Belgian author, Amélie Nothomb. Nothomb was born in Belgium but her family relocated to Japan when she was two years old.

The book describes her experiences at work in a typical Japanese company. The scene we show to the group depicts Amélie as the “Coffee Maker” – her duty is to make personalised coffee for people in the company and to bring that coffee to business meetings. Amélie brings coffee to the meeting and puts one cup in front of each participant, saying in perfect Japanese: ‘Here’s your coffee’. Then she leaves. After some time the meeting ends, the men (because only men took part in the meeting) leave and his infuriated boss calls Amélie’s boss on the carpet. Amélie, who apparently did something wrong, is finally called in.

The group answers two questions about this scene in the movie: What happened? Why did it happen?

Answer: Amélie was not supposed to say anything during the business meeting – women from the lower rungs of an organisation are supposed to be invisible, so the fact that she had said anything, in Japanese make matters worse, means that she had breached the boundaries of femininity, which is a cultural faux-pas in this situation.

The question is: why did she act in line with European culture norms although she knew the rules of women’s behaviour in the Japanese culture? Because European culture – which happened to be her native culture – automatically, unbeknown to her, influenced her thoughts and behavior .

In this exercise we will thus examine how Polish culture shapes our thinking and perception. We will perform this analysis with the help of “intercultural sensitizers”.

2. The Activity

The trainer hands out examples of intercultural sensitizers which are supposed to be resolved by groups of a maximum of four people. The group is supposed to decide which is the most probable answer – first for a Pole, then for a Norwegian – and why.

1. You run into a colleague on the street . They greet you with Hi, hello, Good morning, how are you? Etc. How are you most likely to respond?:
 - a) Hi! I am fine.
 - b) And what about your family?
 - c) Oh, well, you know, so-so...
 - d) A smile and a hug...



Poland: answer b) – because we avoid boasting around in Poland.
Norway: answer a) is the most probable, because it is generally accepted that people are fine.

2. A team of employees worked on some very important engineering project and they did a really good job, especially thanks to two members of the team, who often did overtime (the company does not pay for it) to finish some important details. The employees are right to that:
- a) The supervisors will appreciate the workers and they will receive some financial gratification
 - b) They will be mentioned in a monthly bulletin
 - c) The whole team will be recognised as the fathers of success and there will be no special thanks to the two workers
 - d) Only the leader of the team will receive recognition and/or a financial bonus for motivating the team to work hard and effectively...

Poland: answer a) – because individual efforts should be rewarded.
Norway: answer c) is the most probable because what is important is teamwork and not individual success or showing off who is better.

3. An employee has just finished an important report. The deadline is up in a few days. A data report made by a co-worker from another department is needed to finish off the whole project. It just so happens that this particular co-worker is on leave and there is no one else who could hand over the data needed to finish the report. It is not possible to finish the project without it. What will the employee probably do in this situation?
- a) He/she will persuade someone from the co-workers department to acquire this person's private number and then she/he will call to obtain the missing data
 - b) He/she will inform the principals that the project will not be finished on time
 - c) She/he will do nothing – she/ he will wait until the co-worker comes back from his/her leave
 - d) Despite the fact that some vital information is missing he/she will finish the project and present the report, hoping that no one will notice the missing information

Poland: answer a) – you can skip fixed procedures in Poland in order to achieve an important goal.

Norway: b) is the most probable answer because leave is an important thing and no one is allowed to disturb an employee on leave – difficulties finishing the task signal that something is wrong with the work system and principals must be informed⁵.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

It is important to look for the causes of a given behaviour in Poles and Norwegians when summing up this exercise, because when we understand other people's behaviour behaviours in our social environment, we can also predict them better. It would be great if the trainer referred to the *Couple's Navigator* when summing up this activity.



Exercise 2. Life is good for Norwegians and life is good for Poles

The goal:

To examine both the benefits and losses of migration

Duration 45–60 minutes



Materials needed:

Flipchart, markers

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Divide the group into 4 teams and hand out one sheet of flip-chart paper to each team. On the basis of the previous discussion each team is supposed to write down answers to the following question:

Team 1: What can Norwegian culture give us?

Team 2: What can Norwegian culture deprive us of?

Team 3: What does Polish culture give us?

Team 4: What does Polish culture deprive us of?

2. The Activity

The teams have 15 minutes to accomplish this task. Next we hang the sheets of paper on the wall and discuss the results.

⁵ Based on the results of PAR Migration Navigator project.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

This exercise is supposed to highlight the benefits of migration and to evaluate the losses which will also be a part of any couples' experience. Next, each couple is to set 3 goals for themselves – they have to plan how to best use the benefits of migration they have written down and plan how to minimise or reduce the scope of their potential losses.

Exercise 3. Norwegian case⁶

The goals:

1. To take a look at life in a different country/ system from the perspective of a world family (mixed couple).
2. To make couples consider a change in their attitudes and habits.



Duration 20–30 minutes

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

As the group to sit in a circle and make themselves comfortable. Tell the group to focus and read the story of one migrant couple and think about the questions which will be read aloud at the end.

2. The Activity

We read the CASE:

A Couple in Norway

Magda and Borge live in Stavanger. Their daughter, Britta, was born 18 months ago. First Magda took her parental leave. She used 12 weeks of the leave. She works as a researcher in an oil company. After she went back to work, she started working on an important project. Borge took his leave then. Britta was a demanding baby; sometimes she fell asleep as late as four in the morning. After 7 weeks of parental leave Borge had to go back to work for his company. He is an engineer, a drilling specialist; it was necessary for him to go back to work on the oilrig he works for. Then Magda took another 5 weeks of the leave. Finally, Britta's father spent the last 5 weeks with her. When they decided to send Britta to kindergarten it was too late; there was no place for



⁶ Based on the results obtained within PAR Migration Navigator project.

her in the first quarter of the year. They received municipal funds so that they could hire a nanny. Magda hired her mother, who moved to Norway from Poland, as her nanny.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

We have a discussion about the case study. Some questions to start off with: Could this situation happen in Poland? What would have made things easier? What obstacles did the parents encounter? How can the story of Magda and Borge evolve? How would it evolve in Poland? What role can the girl's grandma play in the story? How such solutions influence couple's quality of life?



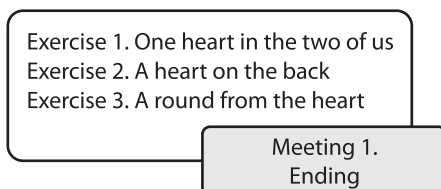
●	TRAINER'S NOTES
●	
●	Couples like to read about the experiences of other
●	couples. If there is some time left you can talk about
●	the example of Mary and Michael from
●	the Chapter 5 (in "Couple's Navigator").

It is great idea to invite people from the local centre for migrant support to this meeting to let them present some vital information which will make it easier for Polish couples to assimilate in their new country of residence. These local officials can also provide couples with some useful information on how to deal with the local public institutions.

Module X

Ending

It necessary to sum up the whole course to wrap up the work we did together. Therefore it is crucial to secure time for this last module which crowns the whole series of workshops, no matter how many of them took place, giving the group a sense of closure in their development process.



The goals of the module:

1. To sum up of the whole set of modules or a chosen part of it.
2. To provide closure to the group process and processes within couples.
3. To set developmental goals for the future.

Duration: 1 meeting – 135 minutes



Requirements: a cosy space, hammocks, bean bag chairs, you can rent a separate space in a cosy cafe

Description of exercises

Exercise 1. One heart in the two of us

The goals:

1. To sum up the “couple’s workshop trophies”
2. To verbalise experiences, emotions and thoughts
3. To boost participants’ self-esteem



Duration 45 minutes

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Draw a heart on a piece of paper (you can hand out a sheet of paper with a heart printed on it) and fill it with statements and pictures encapsulating your resources, your resources as a couple. What is great about you that others do not have? What is it that you do not have separately? What is special about you in comparison to others? What would you like to care about most? You will only share the resources you want to share with the group.

2. The Activity

Couples draw hearts and fill them in. Then they hang it on the display. Each couple chooses 2–3 statements or pictures to talk about and share with the group. Some statements/ pictures are not supposed to be shared and discussed.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Discussion is a part of the exercise itself. But after each “heart” we ask different couples to comment on what they have heard if they want to. Couples take their hearts home, to hang on the fridge or in the bedroom.



TRAINER'S NOTES



Involvement in the workshop and insight into our self should be on such a level that the exercise is done in a nice and touching atmosphere. Participants should not feel embarrassed or uncomfortable anymore.

Exercise 2. A heart on the back

The goals:

1. To provide closure to the group process.
2. To boost participants' self-esteem.

Duration 45 minutes



Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

Pin or stick a HEART on your back (you can draw it or have heart-shaped printouts ready). Write a short comment to each participant about what are you grateful to her/ him for – what you learnt from her/ him, what he/ she gave you during this workshop.

2. The Activity

Participants walk around the room and write on each other's backs. Hearts can also circulate the room – it facilitates writing longer statements. When each participant has already written something about every one, we encourage participants to sit and read their hearts in silence. The trainer also takes part in the exercise.

3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

Discussion per se is not necessary. We encourage participants to take their hearts home and to have them around in times of trouble or crises. They are also useful if we want to relax and please ourselves.



TRAINER'S NOTES

This exercise is widely known as e.g. "backs" among professional trainers. It always plays its part well.

It always evokes lots of emotions and boosts participants' self-esteem and that's it :)

Exercise 3. A round from the heart

The goals:

1. To provide closure to the group process. .
2. To end the workshops.



Duration 45 minutes

Procedure, step by step

1. The Introduction

We sit in a circle. In a moment, each participant will answer the questions: What do I feel? What are my thoughts at the end of the workshop? What changes am I going to implement in my life in the near future? Think about it for a while. Start speaking, when you feel ready.

2. The Activity

Make sure there is order: when one person speaks, the rest of the group sits in silence. After a whole cycle of meetings this should not be a problem, everybody should be used to listening to others carefully but when this exercise is used as an ending for first meetings or modules it is necessary for the Trainer's to maintain order in the group.



3. Summing up the exercise and encouraging group discussion

We thank the group, hand out certificates acknowledging their participation in the course to all the participants and say good bye.



TRAINER'S NOTES



This is the traditional way of beginning and ending any workshop. We recommend using it at the end of each meeting, and at the end of each module and cycle.

GOOD LUCK!

Authors

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Graphic artist, cartoonist and illustrator for media, books and advertising. Author of famous Porysunki (porysunki.com) – short comic forms, viraling in the web for last 10 years. Works for “Przekrój”, “Bluszcz”, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, Wirtualna Polska, LGBT Festiwal, “Bliza”, Nasiono Records.

Magdalena Gajewska

She works at the University of Gdańsk, Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Journalism, Division of Sociology of Culture. She studies family dynamics and bond building among couples that are expecting or have just had a baby. She analyses how culture influences the experience of childbirth. She is also interested in magic and witchcraft, not just scientifically. To achieve greater balance in her life she is currently studying psychology and communication in sport. She is a mother to Ola; enjoys horse riding.

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Has a PhD in Psychology and works as an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cross-Cultural Psychology and Psychology of Gender at the University of Gdańsk (Poland). She coordinates the courses within curriculum related to cross-cultural psychology. Her main area of research is cross-cultural psychology of gender and her special interests are social change and cultural cues fostering gender equality within societies across the world. She also has an expertise on diversity management in organizations. She is an organizational trainer and consultant working with multicultural groups. She is Principal Investigator in international consortium PAR Migration Navigator. She is also an active member of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) and European Association of Social Psychology (EASP). Since 2006 she has co-organized annual conference Woman in Culture, held on International Women's Day at University of Gdansk. The conference attracts both Polish and international academics and practitioners working in the field of gender equality. In her private life she is happily married to Maciek :) They have two sons together: Franek and Mikołaj. They travel together; they love cycling and trekking.

Marta Znaniecka

She is a mindfulness and stress reduction trainer (based on MBSR – Mindful Based Stress Reduction). She studies categories of spirituality in Early Education. She is interested in the idea of school where the child's/ pupil's/ student's inner life is perceived as important and significant. She is married to Łukasz, they have three daughters together: Jagna (7), Róża (5) and Inka (1). She enjoys both the clamour of family life and the peace and quiet of spending time on her own. She likes to unwind outdoors, whether travelling, working in the garden or reading books. She loves learning about life from wise people.

Agnieszka Wroczyńska

Cognitive-behavioural psychotherapist, sexologist. She works at CBT clinic in Gdynia, where she practices individual and couple therapy. When analysing her patient's problems she notices how similar we are all are. That is why it is so important to open up our minds and hearts to our significant others. She supports acceptance and empathy as ways to building a more complete and joyful relationship. She loves to travel and share her life with Michał, her partner of ten years.

Magdalena Żadkowska

She is an academic teacher and senior researcher at the University of Gdańsk at the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Journalism, Division of Sociology of Culture. She conducts qualitative analyses of the domestic and professional lives of couples: those in Poland and those who have emigrated abroad. She studies the division of chores and the negotiation of work-life balance in couples. She reminds people about equality and diversity issues when strongly involved in dissemination projects. She is a business coach, media expert, and social project creator. She has been married for 20 years to Marcin. They have a 19 year old son Staś and a 15 year old daughter Marysia. Magda loves skiing and kitesurfing.

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"The whole of research paper was interesting for both of us, and even enriching (despite the level of our psychological knowledge which is quite high). The manual is based on solid psychological knowledge and one can notice practical experiences of authors.

Authours write beautifully about empathy, building cooperation in everyday life, practicing mindfulness, resolving problems and work proposals in the area of cultural taboo – sex. (...) The whole project (*Manual for couples* and *Manual for trainers*) is an innovative, reasonable act. It is worth building trainers' team around it, to let them master the methodics."

Excerpt from editorial review by Jacek Jakubowski and Dorota Szczepan-Jakubowska

