

INNER BRIDGE



Erasmus+

PERFORM
FUNDACJA ARTYSTYCZNA



" Inner from Bridge: self awareness

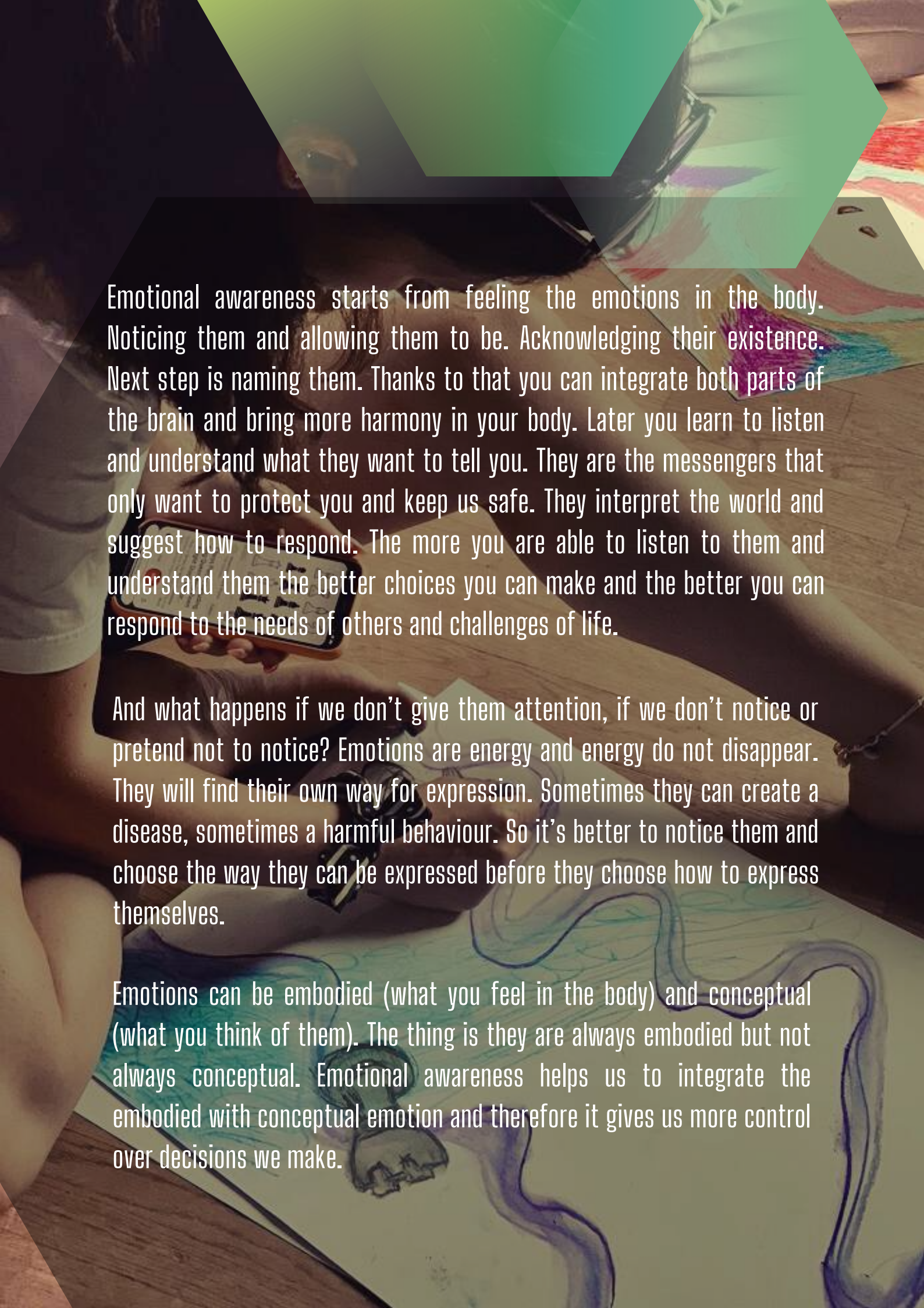
to self expression "

was an international project financed by the European Union organised by PERFORM Artistic Foundation. During six days of a training course the participants were developing their emotional competences through the variety of methods inspired by Dance and Movement Therapy, Art Therapy and Music Therapy. The main aim of the project was to provide youth workers with tools for increasing self-awareness and moving from awareness to authentic expression. In this booklet we share the most appreciated tools and approaches for improving your emotional wellbeing.

Emotion Code

A background image featuring two women with dark face paint around their eyes, looking upwards with expressions of awe or contemplation. The image is partially obscured by a green geometric shape in the top left and a dark grey geometric shape in the bottom right.

Emotional wellbeing is the ability to navigate through your emotions to make the optimal decisions for your life. To achieve that we need to become aware of our emotions and understand their role in our life. It's called emotional awareness and is a part of emotional intelligence.

A person is holding a smartphone over a drawing of a face on a wooden table. The drawing is done with colorful markers. The person's hand is visible, holding the phone. The background is a wooden table with various drawings and a green geometric shape in the top right corner.

Emotional awareness starts from feeling the emotions in the body. Noticing them and allowing them to be. Acknowledging their existence. Next step is naming them. Thanks to that you can integrate both parts of the brain and bring more harmony in your body. Later you learn to listen and understand what they want to tell you. They are the messengers that only want to protect you and keep us safe. They interpret the world and suggest how to respond. The more you are able to listen to them and understand them the better choices you can make and the better you can respond to the needs of others and challenges of life.

And what happens if we don't give them attention, if we don't notice or pretend not to notice? Emotions are energy and energy do not disappear. They will find their own way for expression. Sometimes they can create a disease, sometimes a harmful behaviour. So it's better to notice them and choose the way they can be expressed before they choose how to express themselves.

Emotions can be embodied (what you feel in the body) and conceptual (what you think of them). The thing is they are always embodied but not always conceptual. Emotional awareness helps us to integrate the embodied with conceptual emotion and therefore it gives us more control over decisions we make.

YOU

What can
do to become more
emotionally aware?



Body Awareness

Make space in your life for listening to your body. Notice any sensations and try to name them. Develop your own vocabulary for different sensations you feel. When you feel a strong emotion, focus your attention on your body, try to locate the emotion in a place and try to describe it in your own words.



Body Scan

To be more aware of your emotions it's essential to develop mindfulness around your body. The body scan is a meditation where you examine your body and its physical sensations in a systematic way, part by part. You can start from your feet, and then slowly go up till your head, always trying to notice anything you feel in the parts you are examining. This activity takes about 5 minutes. Focusing on the physical sensations of an emotion, rather than the idea of it, will allow you to spot that emotion faster in real life.




Breathing

Experiment with breathing. Observe how different breathing influences your body and your mood. Everyone knows the phrase “Take a deep breath” to calm down. In fact, this helps but what is even better is to slow down your breath and make it smooth so your heart gets the message that everything is fine and sends a message to your body that there is nothing to worry about.

Emotional Vocabulary

Tame it by name it. If you can identify the emotion you are feeling (name it) then you won't allow it to take over your life (tame it). Noticing and naming emotions gives us the chance to take a step back and make choices about what to do with them.. By naming them we integrate both parts of the brain which reduces the intensity of emotion.





Emotions love metaphors and abstraction. Sometimes they can be very complex or even completely new for you and therefore they are not easy to put in words. Help them to express themselves by metaphors or simply let them speak through colours, shapes and symbols. Intuitive painting is a great way to express your emotional landscape through artistic expression. To start with you can just take some paper and crayons and think of each emotion that is present in your life and express it by shapes and colours. Maybe it can reveal to you some message, surely it can open the door to become noticed and valid.

Expressive ARTS

Creative Writing

Emotional awareness is all about perception and understanding. This makes writing a great practice for gaining insight into how you feel. Try writing down your thoughts and feelings and see where it will lead you. You can get a lot of insights about where they come from or what they want to tell you. You can also try a method developed by Julia Cameron “Morning Pages”. It’s a way of stream of consciousness writing done first thing in the morning. It helps to get rid of the clutter and subconscious thoughts leaving your mind more relaxed.

A group of people are in a yoga studio, performing a movement. A large, semi-transparent green hexagon is overlaid on the image, containing the word 'Movement' in a bold, brown, sans-serif font. The background shows a person in a white t-shirt with the number '10' on the back, and another person in a blue tank top. The studio has a wooden lattice wall and a wooden floor.

Movement

Emotions are energy in motion. Every emotional state corresponds to a small movement in your body, sometimes only muscular contraction. So movement could be the primary language of emotions. Surely it can be a great way to let them express themselves and let them be noticed. Movement can be also used to regulate emotion or to transform it. Through movement we can release the emotional blocks that are stored in our body. Any kind of movement will be helpful for your emotional well-being because it will help the energy to flow and unstuck any parts that are blocked. However you can also try to make some positions and observe how they affect you. You can simply try Yoga or any kind of stretching. You can also just improvise with movement to different kinds of music.

Relaxation

Find a space when no one can disturb you and find a comfortable position for your body. Try to focus on the present moment. To relax your mind you can try to focus on different senses and sensations in your body. You can just observe your breath. Relaxing your mind by simply directing your attention on something calm or pleasant is like having a shower leaving your mind and body clean and refreshed.

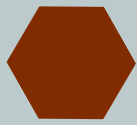


Step by Step to connect with your emotions : GUIDE

Obviously, when you are taken by strong emotions, which is called “emotional hijack” it’s hard to take some space for having a dialogue with your emotions. Probably, the best you can do is to focus on leveling the breath to make the emotion less intense. The key is to allow your feelings to come and go like visitors: welcome them, get to know them, then let them go. It's important to keep your feelings flowing constantly because emotions are energy in motion and they don't like to stay too long in one place. According to Harvard brain scientist Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, ninety seconds is all it takes to identify an emotion and allow it to dissolve while you simply notice it.

Just noticing and naming emotion is often all you need to improve your emotional well-being. However emotional awareness is much more than that. Awareness allows you to have insights into your needs, values and desires. Understanding the emotion can help you to change behaviours and make better choices in the future.

However, emotional awareness is not built on the spot. What you can do is go back to the moment of intense emotion and go through the experience once again. Here are some tips on how to have a conversation with emotion.



Welcome them. Allow them to be. Recall the experience and invite them to your body. Notice how they affect you and what kind of sensations they create.



Validate them and acknowledge them. If possible, give them the name.



Stay curious about them! What triggered them? What was the need behind it? What is the story you hear? What is the message?

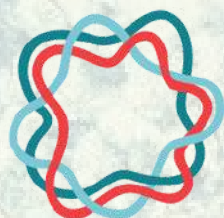


Think how you can express that emotion for your benefit.



Imagine that the situation repeats, how would you like to feel differently?

The training course “Inner Bridge”
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