

I GOT

POWER

Resource-centered support for young people with  
substance abuse and mental health problems

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**TYYNELÄ**  
VOIMAKAS-PROJEKTI

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# 1. Background for the project

The Voimakas-project (voimakas – Finnish for ‘strong, powerful’) was initiated by different networks working with young people as they were concerned about the wellbeing and the challenges to the wellbeing of young people in Eastern Finland. The causes for concern included problems with substance abuse, mental health and dropping out of school. The key aspect in the discussion was whether the young are able or willing to commit to the services available. In other words, whether the objectives of the young and those of the service providers coincide and whether the contents and timetables of the services are too demanding in view of the personal development of the young. Targets and willingness for change springing from the young themselves are felt to have been given too little space in the guidance mechanism of the existing services.

The Voimakas-project evolved around how the young themselves see their need for change, and the supportive measures around it. The project also leaned on the alignments made in the National Plan for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Work (2009-2015) concerning the development of this work. The plan emphasized strengthening the client’s position, enhancing mental health and substance-free life, as well as developing guidance mechanisms.

The work methods of the project have included outreach youth work, group activities planned and implemented in cooperation with local youth workers, and other close network cooperation. Feedback was collected both from the young themselves as well as the network partners concerning the activities and work methods, and this feedback was drawn upon in the development work. The key aspect of the project was to encounter, hear and support the change from the perspective of the young. Those young people who were ready to cooperate were offered tailored professional support and various group activities with which it was possible for them to review their own situation in life and the changes they wanted to make, as well as to listen to the thoughts and experiences of other young people in the spirit of peer support and participation.

The change processes that enhance wellbeing require time and support. Change is not achieved with a linear process. The building up of willingness to change requires the person in question to experience some sort of discord between the present and the desired situation. The present way of life may feel safer in its familiarity, and the motivation to seek change varies from situation to situation. Young people, who do not yet have the vision brought along with life experience nor confidence in their own coping, are particularly in need of people who can facilitate and support change. An understanding and supportive adult is an irreplaceable asset, but peer support is equally significant in its own way. It is important for young people to see themselves as unique individuals, but at the same time feel that they are accepted by others and “sufficiently similar to everybody else”.

Young people are looking for appreciative encountering and comprehensive support that is easily available. With cooperation and resource-centered activities that spring from the objectives of the young themselves it is possible to strengthen the motivation of the young to work out changes that enhance their wellbeing. As the heading of the interim seminar of the Voimakas-project says: The young have strength – let’s bolster it! We hope that this booklet will provide insight and help in the important work carried out among the young.

## 2. Objectives and work methods of the project

### 2.1. Main objectives

The main objective of the Voimakas-project was to socially strengthen the young people who struggle with substance abuse and mental health problems, and to motivate them to inflict change in their everyday surroundings with the help of resource-centered activities. In addition to this, the project had four specifically defined sub-objectives.

- 1) To develop a counterforce to the social substance abuse culture of the young, in order to activate the young themselves to seek for more active and substance-free life, and to find suitable substance-free social relationships more appropriate for their age and stage of development.
- 2) To increase the participation of the young in the development of activity contents that are directed at them by means of identifying the barriers to motivation and by supporting the factors that enhance motivation.
- 3) To apply and develop the contents and work practices of the Willingness to change -model that works well with adults, and to make them meet the needs of the work carried out among young people.
- 4) To strengthen multidisciplinary and multiprofessional cooperation and to deepen the knowhow within youth work.

The target group of the Voimakas-project were 15-25-year-old young people with substance abuse and/or mental health problems, as well as the network working to help them. The objective was to support the young from a client-oriented perspective, i.e. to identify the needs and find alternative solutions for each young person in order to increase the subjective wellbeing of the young person and to deepen the client-understanding in the network of operators. The project focused on the young people's personal view on their wellbeing or quality of life, in other words on how the young themselves experienced the balance between their needs and resources.

The long term objective was to turn the resource- and youth centered, change-supporting policies developed in the project into permanent policies in municipalities, with respect to the particular needs of each municipality.

### 2.2. Outreach youth work

Outreach youth work meant in practice that the young people were encountered in their own environment, which in addition to home meant e.g. the local café, school, workshop or some other familiar environment. Outreach work also included talking about everyday events and issues and supporting the young in them. For example, the project workers accompanied the young to different services or meetings, supporting and acting as interpreters if necessary. Interpreting here refers to the young person being able to go through the matters discussed in a meeting or presented in documents in the official language of the authorities with the project worker who can make sure that the young person has understood everything. Very often the young felt nervous and uncertain about using the different services or they needed help searching for the right service. At home, the young were offered

help managing their everyday life: how to fill out different kinds of applications, move house or make purchases for the home, how to clean the house and to check their mail and react to the content. The young were given help to find study options and new hobbies, they were shown how to enjoy outdoor activities, and they were taken to visit substance abuse rehabilitation centres.

Outreach work with young people was found to be an effective way of working, and for the most part, the young felt very committed to this work method. By supporting the young in their everyday life, the workers were able to establish good and confidential relationships with them and to support them in reaching their individual goals. When the support was given close at hand, it was easier to see the challenges the young were facing in their day to day life and subsequently find specific means to deal with the individual challenges. The young were very receptive to support when it was given in accordance with the targets they themselves had set and when it was directed in a comprehensive way at the aspects they found important.

The outreach work offered by the project kicked off when one of the workers of the network contacted a project worker after experiencing in the field work that the young have a need to receive close and target-oriented support in their everyday life. The first meeting was held together with the young person and his network worker. In case of a minor, also his or her guardian was included. For the purposes of the cooperation, the young person and the project worker signed an agreement which listed the targets of the young person, the viewpoint of the network worker, and the duties of the project worker. The young person signed a paper authorizing the project worker to cooperate with certain partners. In addition to this, a date was agreed when the same people would get together again to monitor the progress.

A significant factor in the project work was that the project workers didn't give up on the young. If a meeting was cancelled, the project workers would contact the young person e.g. by phone. They didn't just let it go. For some of the young the phone contact was an essential way of getting support. Some of the young felt that the early morning phone call from their project worker encouraged them to keep their appointments within the supportive activities. Receiving support was always voluntary for the young. The whole project focused on the targets of the young and on charting the resources and needs for change of the young. The location and time for the meetings were always set according to the wishes and timetable of the young person. The project workers felt that when the meeting took place in the young person's own environment, he or she was able to talk about the different issues in a more relaxed way.

### **2.3. Group activities**

In cooperation with the young and the network workers, the Voimakas-project developed different kinds of group activities to support the young in living a substance-free life and in activating their social relationships. The group activities were aimed at strengthening the young in their social abilities, as well as motivating them, from a resource-centered viewpoint, to inflict change through activating, functional methods and social relationships. The group activities strengthened the participation of the young, helped them find new social relationships, activated and supported the young with their own targets and in planning a meaningful future, as well as encouraged them to lead a substance-free life.

Different group activities for the young were planned and implemented based on local needs and resources and in cooperation with the local networks. The young who participated in the groups were included in the work to plan the work contents, topics to be dealt with and work methods. The contents tackled in the groups mainly came from the young themselves.

In the groups the young reviewed their own lives, their strengths, needs for change and their own targets, as well as the means to reach them. Furthermore, depending on the group, the participants endeavoured, through different exercises and activities, to strengthen their social skills, group skills or everyday skills such as cooking and managing your own finances. Some groups invited visitors such as mental health workers, social workers, distraint officers, nutritional therapists, employment services experts or work coaches. These expert visits were arranged to give the young more information and also to get the young acquainted with the different local operators.

In general, the groups were semi-closed, i.e. their composition stayed the same, but it was possible to take new members after careful consideration and general consent. Some of the group activities were one-off meetings of some existing youth groups, such as a workshop/ student group or confirmation training group, which meant that the content of the meeting was built around a certain theme/themes such as e.g. attitudes towards intoxicants, coping with your studies or good life. Some of the group activities were limited in their duration, the groups only got together a few times, and the themes for every session had been worked out and agreed in advance. In addition to this, there were long term groups with flexible themes that got together once a week for several hours.

## **2.4 Resource-centered tools**

In cooperation with the young and the different partners, the client work of the project focused on experimenting and developing tools to support the dialogue. All the tools were based on the idea of encountering the young by listening to them, and at the same time emphasizing the resources and facilitating change. In other words, the purpose was to encourage the young to contemplate, together with the project workers and a possible peer group, the resources and needs for change that they had in their life, and in this way to hear and respect the thoughts of the young and to strengthen the active role of the young themselves in inflicting change that would enhance their wellbeing.

The biggest common effort in the project was to create the Resources for Change -tool. The development of the tool started already at the very early stages of the project, and when its different versions were tested in 2013-2014, this work was carried out by operators both in and outside of the project locations. In addition to this, the project workers themselves tested the versions with those young people who had participated in the project. Alongside with the Resources for Change -tool, a guide booklet was compiled in order to give suggestions on how to use the tool.

The tools developed in the project were planned to be simple and straightforward, and easy to use in all kinds of situations. In other words, you are free to print them out and adapt them to suit your own needs. All the tools are meant to be talked through with the young and used as a basis for general discussion. The tools come with the information on the possible sources that lie at the background, while some of the tools spring from the project itself.

## 3. Results and impacts

### 3.1 Evaluation

The results and impacts of the VOIMAKAS-project were quantitatively evaluated by the clients, networks and workers, both with the help of internal and external evaluation. Internally, at the client level, information was collected with the help of Bikva evaluation (Brygerinddragelse i Kvalitetsvurdering, User participation in quality assessment) among the young (n=15) who had participated in the long term group activities. The project workers collected feedback from the young after every systematically implemented group activity. On the network level, the support and development working groups as well as the leader groups were asked to provide feedback twice a year. In the external evaluation process information was collected from both the young people and the networks with the help of questionnaires and interviews.

### 3.2. Benefits and experiences from outreach work

The external evaluation revealed that on the individual level, the lives of the young people who participated in the project had developed positively. The young felt that through the project they had met people who gave them the support they needed, and they also felt that their viewpoints as experts in their own life were duly taken into account. They appreciated the talks with the project workers and found both the talks and the activities rewarding and meaningful. Their hopes and expectations for the future increased and they were able to reach a more balanced stage in their life.

The local networks emphasized the importance of the long-term outreach work. They saw improvement in the life management /daily rhythm of the young clients along with the progress of the outreach project, as the young felt they had been genuinely encountered as individuals. The local networks also appreciated the presence of project workers in various client meetings with different authorities. Some of the young people need support in dealing with the authorities, and they also need to get advice on how to proceed after these meetings. The networks also found it positive that all the meetings with an individual young person were handled by one and the same official who thus had a clear overall picture of the situation of the particular person in question. The general feeling was that with the support from the project, the young were able to move on with their lives.

The additional support from the outreach project meant that the people working in the local networks were provided with a colleague and an additional viewpoint into the everyday life of the young client. The resources available for close support of young adults within municipal services are scarce. Outreach work has proved to be able to bring out results in youth work, and it has gained more ground in the Finnish social and health services during the last few years.

### 3.3. Benefits and experiences from group activities

According to the external evaluation, participation in the group activities provided the young people with new viewpoints and support in their life situation. Some of the young started to make plans about studying, and about half of the participants felt that they had gained confidence to encounter other people, as well as improved their sleep pattern and daily rhythm, and life management in general.

The young people who had participated in the long-term groups described in their Bikva interviews how the participation in the groups had made their future plans and targets clearer and given them hope for the future. Long-term group activities were seen to have a positive impact on the daily rhythm. The young felt that they had got new information on the local availability of different hobbies as well as on



services that they used and needed. One significant impact of the group activities was that the young felt their social contacts had increased and that they had been able to practice their social skills.

The project workers collected feedback from the young (n=18) and this feedback shows that in the short-term groups the young had enjoyed spending time with other young people and they had felt that they had been heard and encountered as experts in their own lives. They have also felt that they can have a say in what kind of questions are brought up, and they have felt that participation in the group has supported their wellbeing. The chance to talk about your own issues was felt to be one of the most important things in the groups. For many, it was an empowering experience to hear other young people open up about their lives.

Some of the young people participating in the groups were going through a very challenging stage in their lives, and they needed network cooperation and personal guidance and support in addition to the group activities. For the group leaders, the groups were one more tool to use in their work among the young. According to the feedback from cooperation partners, the group activities supported the young in many other aspects, too, e.g. by giving them more courage to talk about their problems.

### **3.4. Benefits of the project for the network**

The Voimakas-project worked in practical cooperation with the social services, outreach youth work and educational institutions, in particular, but it also incorporated other operators in the field of youth work. The project workers enhanced multidisciplinary cooperation in the municipalities by organizing different network meetings and by participating in the existing networks. In the network meetings the project workers shared their experiences from working with the young and deepened the common understanding of the life situation and needs of the young.

The survey among the cooperation partners - included in the external evaluation - revealed that as the project was running, it supported the networking of the different operators and increased local cooperation to some extent. The objective of the project was to develop the knowhow of the different operators on how to carry out youth work. Some of the cooperation partners observed that the project workers spread the resource-centered way of thinking within youth work as they worked in close cooperation with different operators. Something that was felt to be particularly effective in promoting network cooperation was organizing breakfasts for the different professionals within youth work, who in this way had a chance to get together and share their views on the situation of the local young people. These breakfasts were organized in several project locations.

Both external and internal evaluation stated that the different cooperation partners felt they had benefitted from the project as it had provided additional resources to support the young. The people working within youth services felt it important that the young clients got the support they needed from the project, if their own job description didn't allow them to help the clients with their everyday life and practical problems. The local networks deemed the project necessary and they felt that the young benefitted from the work carried out in the project. The project made it easier for the young to get help with substance abuse and mental health problems and it found its own place within the service field. For example, long term group activities as a part of rehabilitating services for the young are continued in two project locations, carried out as municipal services now that the project has been completed.

## 4. Conclusion

The versatility of the development project, i.e. trying out different approaches, became evident in many different sectors. When the work is initiated from the targets that the young themselves have set and when the focus is on supporting the resources the young themselves have, it is possible to build a genuine cooperation with them. From this perspective, it is possible to help the young work out their targets, find the factors that enhance or hinder change in young people, and strengthen the motivation and readiness to inflict change that will enhance wellbeing. The project developed different kinds of resource-centered group activities that will hopefully be continued and developed further in the years to come, so that the resource-centered and professionally guided peer group activities as a work method will gain more foothold in youth work in general. The tasks and tools developed within the project are available for everybody and they serve as an inspiration for conducting discussions with the young. The Resources for Change –tool was particularly well received and it was adopted into use in many places.

The work carried out in the project brought up a few clear themes in the lives of the young. The loneliness of the young people came up in many ways and was considered a serious problem. There are many young people who don't have friends, and maybe never have had. During the course of the project it came up that the social network of many young people is very small. The parents may live far away or they may be dead, or their own situation is such that they don't have any resources to support the young person. Many young people didn't have supportive friends. Some of the young had a history of being bullied at school, feeling different, or they had inadequate social skills, all of which make it very difficult to establish human relationships. With many of the young people, the friendships they had managed to make were mainly connected with substance abuse. Because of all this, the young people who participated in the project needed the project worker as a person who would be there for them, who would listen to them and help with the everyday practicalities, and encourage them to reach their targets.

We all need to feel that we belong to some group, but some of these young people had never had the feeling of belonging. With many young people it was clearly visible that problems had accumulated and they were carried over from previous generations. Certain patterns of behaviour are learned in early childhood, regarding e.g. substance abuse and violence, which is why focusing on early stage family work is very important preventive work as far as the young are concerned.

Even those young people who have come of age may have a real need for support in their life, something that came up in the project as the need for professional support officers in the everyday life became evident. The young people need a safe and reliable adult with whom they can discuss their life in general. The young hope that the professional people who work with them would genuinely appreciate and encounter the young irrespective of differences in age, experience and status. In addition to the knowhow and advice of these professionals, the young consider it very important that they have the ability to listen and to encounter another person as an individual. In order to create a confidential and transparent atmosphere, the young need to feel that they are accepted the way they are, irrespective of their past blunders or their uncertainty. This is particularly important if the young find it difficult to appreciate themselves or to come to terms with themselves.

Fruitful cooperation is based on mutual respect and partnership. For the young to have the courage and ability to enter this kind of cooperation, they must be able to feel that they are partners in this, that they

are experts and representatives of their own lives. Only the young themselves can tell how they feel, what they have experienced and what they hope for or fear. Telling this takes courage, and the workers need to have the courage to ask, to hear and to act. Understanding is the target and result of a genuine encounter. Of course it is not possible or even necessary to accept everything, but it is always possible to see things from the perspective of the young. When you understand another person, you don't judge them.

When the work is initiated from the targets that the young themselves have set and when the focus is on supporting the resources of the young, it is possible to build a genuine cooperation with them. When the work starts from this perspective, it is possible to help the young to work out their targets, find the factors that enhance or hinder change in the young, and to strengthen the motivation and readiness to inflict change that will enhance wellbeing. Change is a journey that proceeds at its own pace and needs a companion who will walk alongside you and give you support.

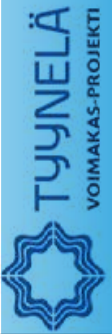
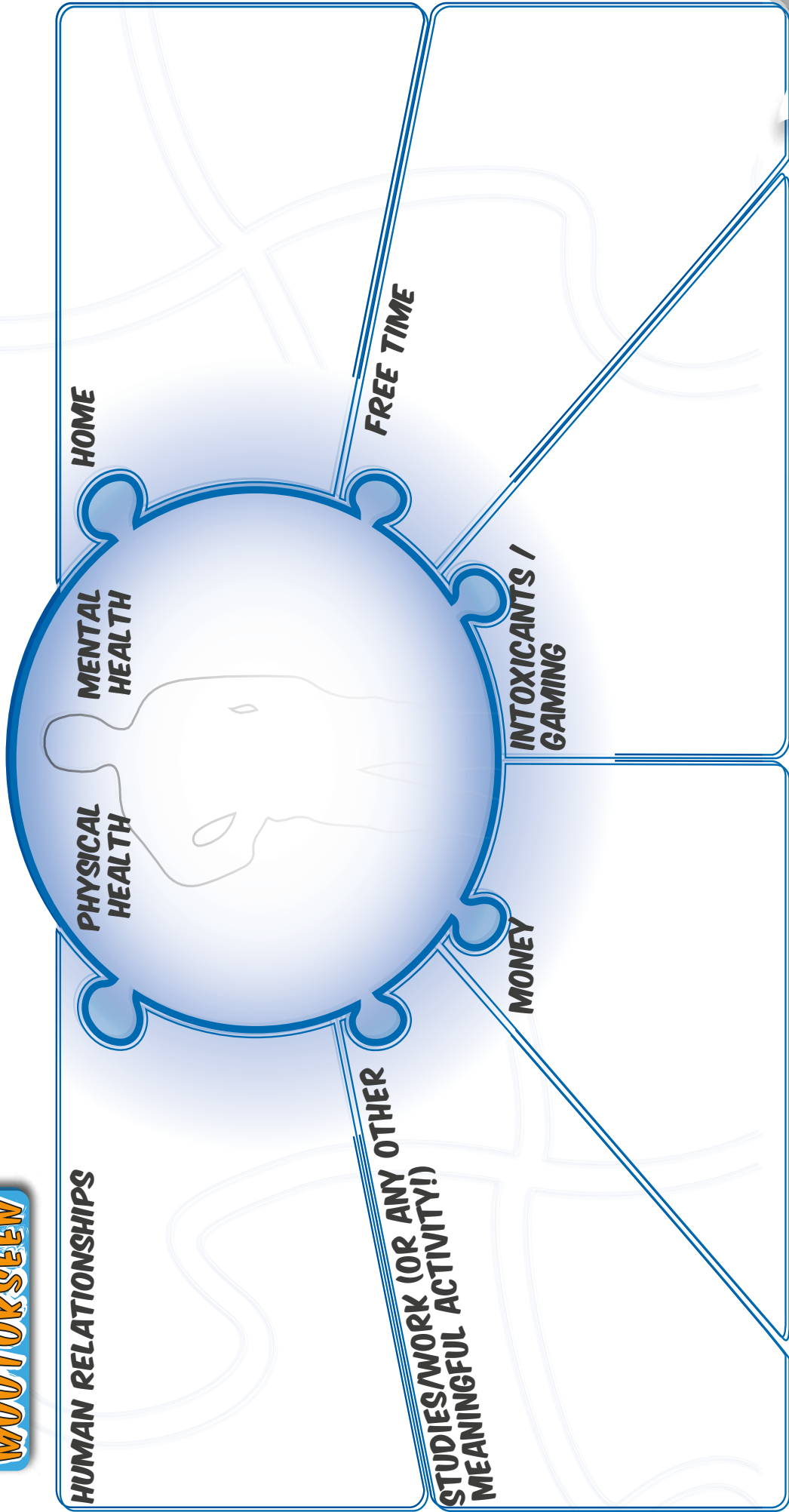
**POWER TO**

**CHANGE**

**THIS TOOL IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU REVIEW YOUR OWN LIFE, AND THE RESOURCES AND DESIRES YOU HAVE. DO THE TASKS IN THE GIVEN ORDER AND WRITE DOWN THE DATE SO THAT YOU CAN COME BACK TO THE QUESTIONS LATER.**

# A. WHAT ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH?

VOIMAVAROJA  
**MUUTOKSEEN**



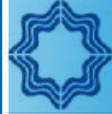
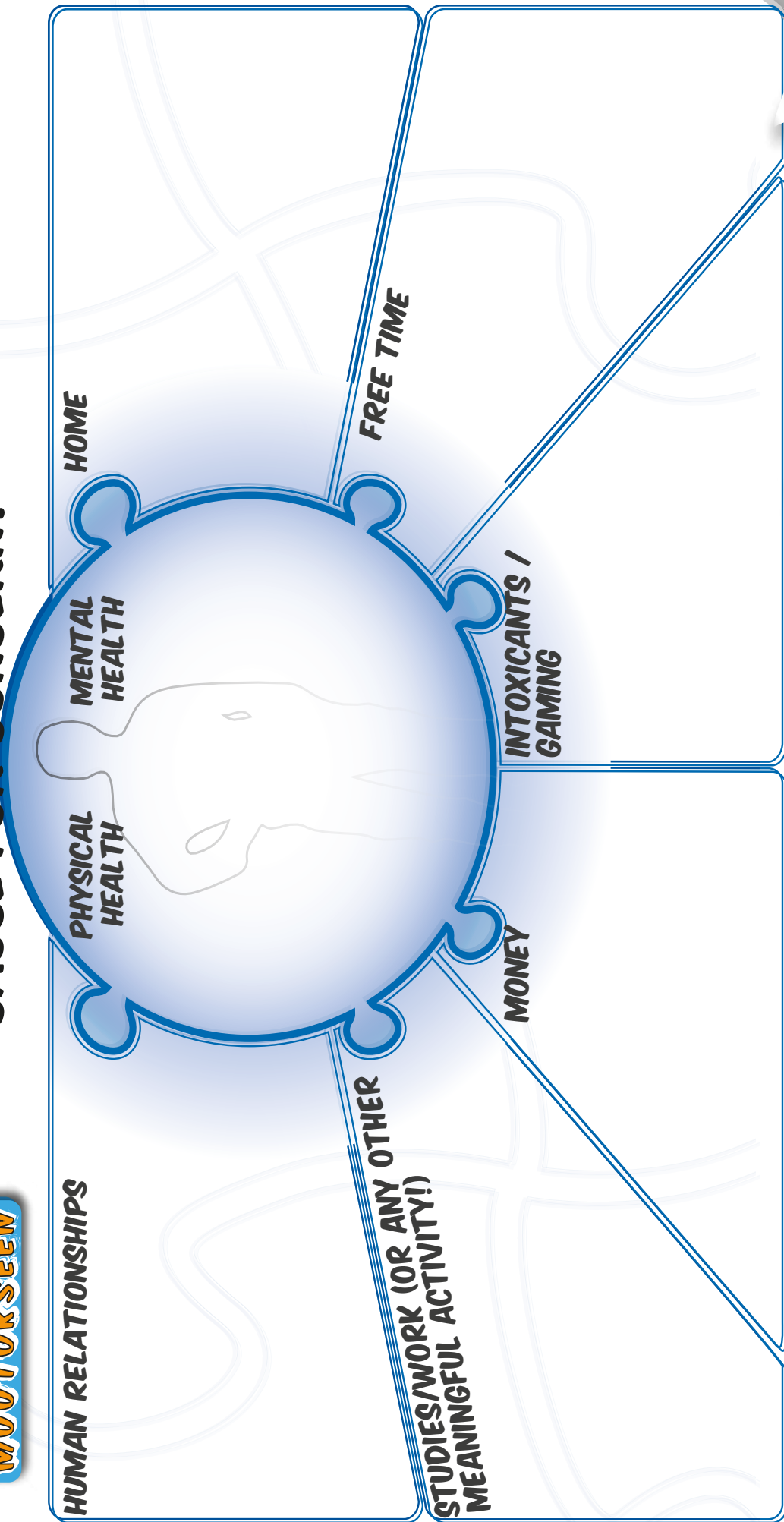
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VOIMAVAROJA

**MUUTOKSEEN**

# B. WHAT WORRIES YOU OR GIVES YOU CAUSE FOR CONCERN?



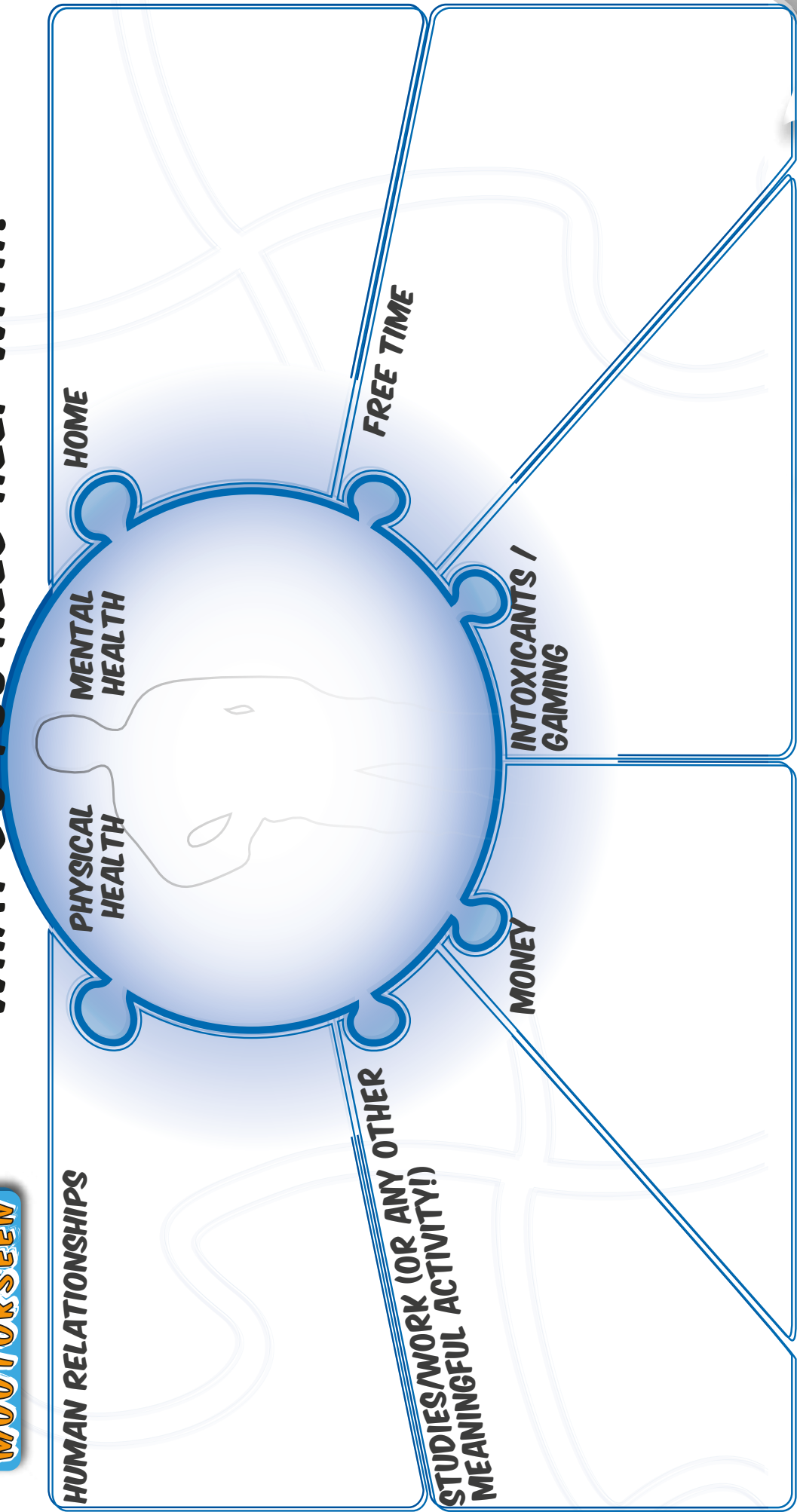
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# C. WHAT COULD YOU DO YOURSELF AND WHAT DO YOU NEED HELP WITH?

VOIMAVAROJA  
**MUUTOKSEEN**

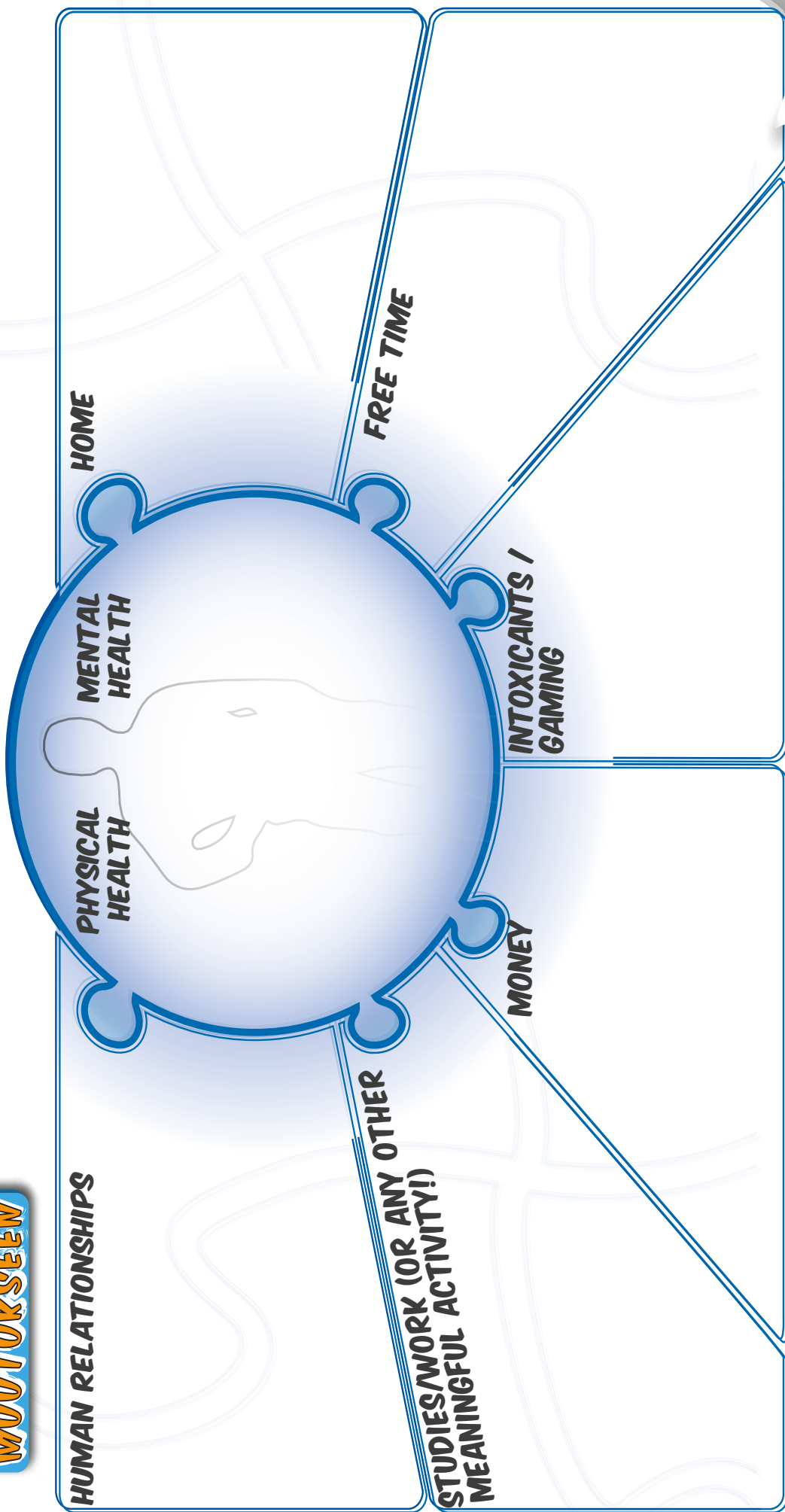


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# D. HOW TO MOVE ON FROM HERE?

VOIMAVAROJA  
**MUUTOKSEEN**



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Date \_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_ . 20 \_\_\_\_



## Resources for Change

### Ideas for using the tool

The Resources for Change –tool is designed to be used in youth work to help young people perceive their own strengths and resources, as well as issues that are a cause of concern. At the core of the work are the thoughts of the young person and discussions springing from them. When the work springs from the issues the young themselves have worked out, it will support their identity development as active operators in their own life. This will also strengthen the motivation for change and encourage the young to commit themselves to the kind of cooperation that strengthens their wellbeing. The role of the project worker is to encourage and support the young. At the same time the worker will get valuable information on what the young people are feeling and thinking, and how they themselves perceive their life and possibilities. The different sections of the tool proceed from resources to concerns, and to the young person's and his or her support network's actions in trying to inflict change. Finally, a plan is devised on how to proceed from here. Going through the entire tool usually takes a couple of meetings with the young person, as it is necessary to reflect on and discuss matters with deliberation and concentration. On the other hand, it can sometimes be a good idea to go through the sections quicker and less thoroughly. Before moving on to the next section it is advisable to carry along the results of the discussions on the previous section. The sections can also be used to help monitor and evaluate change, in which case every section can be referred to later on as the cooperation continues. For this reason it is advisable to write down the date when the section in question has been dealt with. Registering the results can be the task of the young themselves, or the project worker, whichever is appropriate. The tool contains two pages for thoughts/ideas that have arisen from the discussions with the young person. In the tool, the life of the young person is presented as an entity consisting of four interconnected areas. In the center there is the young person him/herself (physical/mental health), surrounded by the environment (human relationships, study/work, money, intoxicants/gaming, free time and home). The same way to look on life is repeated in every set of questions, so the purpose is that the young person will look at the different aspects of his or her life from many different perspectives. They can start by looking at themselves first, or by looking at the surrounding aspects, whichever feels more natural. The tool is well adapted for use at the stage of getting to know the young person, but it is also useful with someone who has been along for a longer time when there is a need to find a new way to look on the life of the young person. The project worker will have the possibility to use the tool creatively depending on the young person and the type of cooperation in question. Some ideas will be given on how to use the different sections.

**We hope you will have rewarding discussions with the young!**

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## A WHAT ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH?

In the first section the young reflect on and put into words the things that they are satisfied with in themselves and in their life. If they have difficulties in finding positive things, they can be asked to think about something that is at least reasonably alright or that gives them strength/feelings of wellbeing. If the young have difficulties to do even that, the project worker can ask them first to think about a certain aspect of life, e.g. human relationships. The young person is encouraged to find something positive, no matter how small, in every aspect of their life and in themselves. However, it is up to the young themselves to define what they are satisfied with. In the section intoxicants/gaming you can talk about both of these issues, or only one of them in case the young person is not involved in intoxicants or gaming. The young can also reflect on a general level on their thoughts and attitudes concerning intoxicants and gaming, even if neither one of these are present in their life. The positive perspective serves to build/strengthen the cooperation with the young and to avoid problem-centered thinking and looking at everything from the project worker's point of view. This does not mean that problems would be shied away or that they wouldn't be dealt with. In section B the young will put into words the things that they are concerned or annoyed about, and that they want to change.

Here are some examples of clarifying questions that can be asked to facilitate discussion. You don't have to use them, but they may give you ideas on how to open up the discussion.

## Physical and mental health

- How are you? What are you satisfied with in your physical/mental health? (e.g. sleeping, eating, spontaneous physical activities, mood, memory)
- When do you feel particularly well physically? What have you been doing in such a case?
- How do you take care of your health (both physical and mental)?
- When do you feel particularly good and balanced? What things are particularly alright in such a situation? Where do you get happiness/hope/strength from?
- What things make you feel safe?
- What is the best way for you to relax?
- What do you like about in your looks? What things in your looks have brought positive feedback from others?
- Human relationships
- Who are the closest / most important people in your life?
- Who do you like being with? Who do you trust?
- Which relationship are you particularly happy about?

- What things do you appreciate in those that are closest to you? What do they appreciate in you?
- What kind of support do you get from those that are closest to you?
- What does an intimate relationship mean to you? What is good in your intimate relationship?

## Studies/work (or any other meaningful activity!)

- What schools have you gone to? How do/did you do at school?
- What things do/did you like about school? What is/was interesting to you? What is/was easy?
- Who supports/supports you if you needed help with your studies?
- Tell something about your study/work ambitions. What is the best thing about your dream profession? What strengths would you have in your dream profession?
- What kind of experiences do you have in work life?
- What are the things that you can do really well? What is or would be something meaningful for you to do?
- What more would you like to learn? What aspects in yourself would you like to develop?

## Money

- What is your financial situation? Where do you get money from? What do you spend money on?
- Do you feel that your money matters are under control? Do you make ends meet? Can you manage to save any money?
- For what purpose do you save money / would you like to save money?
- Do you pay your bills on time? Do you have debts or unpaid fines, debt collection? Have you been convicted, have you had / do you have lawsuits?

## Intoxicants / gaming

- Do you use intoxicants? What intoxicants do you use? What is an intoxicant in your opinion? Do you use intoxicants on your own or in company? Who do you use intoxicants with? Has there been any change in your intoxicant use? What does intoxicant use give you?
- Do you play games? How much? Which games? Do you gamble? Who do you play with? Has there been any change in your gaming? What does gaming give you?
- What do intoxicants/gaming mean to you? What things do you like about intoxicants/gaming? What feelings/sensations do you get from intoxicants/gaming?

### Free time

- What do you do on your free time? Who do you spend your free time with?
- What kind of hobbies do you have or have you had before? Would you like to take up a (new) hobby?
- What kind of activities make you feel good? What kind of activities interest you?
- Do you have any pets? What is your favourite place to spend time?
- Do you celebrate special days? How do you celebrate and who with?

### Home

- Tell something about your home; where do you live, who with, how would you describe your home?
- Do you feel alright at home? What is good/best about your home?
- What sort of daily routines do you have? E.g. what time do you wake up and go to bed, what housework do you do (cleaning, washing up, laundry, groceries), what do you eat / what food can you make, do you open your mail etc. What chores can you do particularly well at home?

### B WHAT WORRIES YOU OR GIVES YOU CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

The second section encourages the young to think about what gives them cause for concern or annoys them in the different areas of life. The essential thing is that the young themselves put these things into words instead of the project worker or someone else giving them their opinions about the concerns they have observed. When the young themselves come up with issues, there might be new and surprising thoughts or needs that can be looked at and worked out together. If a young person has no worries or concerns, it is possible to go back to section A with the theme of satisfaction, and ask whether the young person in question is satisfied with his or her present situation in life. If, however, the young person has in other discussions expressed dissatisfaction or problems with something, the project worker can refer to this and ask him or her to consider the question again from that point of view. It is equally important to hear and accept it if the young don't bring up any worries or annoyances. The young can be asked to think about their future from this perspective, e.g. what could be done to keep things this way so that they would be equally satisfied in the future.

### C WHAT COULD YOU DO YOURSELF AND WHAT DO YOU NEED HELP WITH?

The third section is based on the worries or concerns that the young themselves have stated to have in different areas of life. The objective is to think about whether the young want to change these things and if they do, what could they do themselves and what do they need help with. If the objectives have been discussed with the young person at

some earlier point, he or she can be asked to reflect on what kind of changes would be necessary to reach the objective. The objective must be set by the young themselves, not given to them by somebody else. Below are some examples of auxiliary questions to facilitate discussion, but obviously the questions will depend on the particular causes of concern that the young have:

### Physical and mental health

- What else/more could you do for your physical and mental health?
- What would increase your physical and mental health or your satisfaction over your physical and mental health? What could you do about them?
- What helps/has helped you to carry on when you have had problems with your mood/felt bad? How can you make yourself feel better?
- Do you get/have you ever got any support, treatment or medication for your physical and mental health?
- What would be the smallest possible sign for things going for the better?
- How could you stop things from getting worse?

### Human relationships

- What kind of support do you hope to get from those that are closest to you? Would you like to have more contact with them? Do you have relatives or friends who you have very little or no contact with?
- Would you like to have more friends? Is it easy for you to make friends? Where can you get to know new people?
- How could you improve or maintain a good intimate relationship?

### Studies / work

- What would it take to get into your dream profession? Where can you study the field that interests you? What help would you need to reach your dream profession? Do you need support in finding/applying for a study place?
- If everything is alright after five years, what will your life be like then?
- If your studies don't proceed according to plan, is there something else you could do to improve the situation, what kind of support do you need and who could help you?

### Money

- Could you spend your money somehow differently? How could you make ends meet?
- When could you say that you are satisfied with your financial situation? What would need to change and how would things be then?

- What kind of support would you need to improve your financial situation? Who could help you with this (family, friends, authorities)?

### **Intoxicants/Gaming**

- Would you like to decrease your use of intoxicants or your gaming?
- Would you be able to do this by yourself or do you need help with it?
- What could you do instead of using intoxicants /gaming?

### **Free time**

- In your opinion, do you have enough/too much/too little free time? How can you tell? How could you spend free time in a way that satisfies you?
- How would you like to spend your free time? What new would you like to take up during your free time? Do you know where that would be possible? Do you know someone who could do this hobby with you?

### **Home**

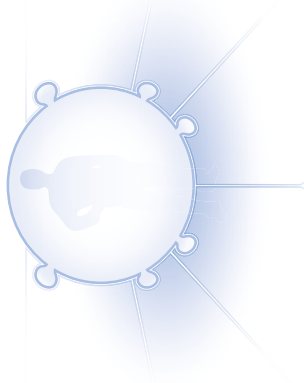
- What things should be different to make you feel happier at home? How could you make your home more inviting for yourself?
- What kind of support would you need at home / with matters connected to home? Who could help you with this (family, friends, authorities)?

## **D HOW TO MOVE ON FROM HERE?**

In the last section, a plan is devised together with the young person on how to proceed with the concerns and needs for change that he or she has brought up. The plan should be as concrete as possible and proceed with sufficiently small steps, but it can also contain long-term objectives. The different sections of the plan are talked through with the young to establish

- what they want to change in this area,
- who could help them, and what could they do themselves,
- what would be the best way to start working for change, i.e. listing the means for this

On the page marked "Thoughts/ideas" the young can write e.g. how they know that change has started to take place, when will the plan be revisited, will some instances be contacted to get support and who will do this. The important thing is that the plan is initiated and devised by the young person him/herself so that he or she can commit to it fully.



POWER TO

CHANGE



# Appendices

## Long term group activities, structure of the day

## Appendix 1

**Gist of the group:** To activate young people at the age of 17-25 who don't have a study or work place. Additionally, the group will provide support in life management, substance-free life and planning your own life.

**Objective of the group:** To support and encourage young people to set goals that they themselves feel important and supportive of their own wellbeing. To reflect on studies and work life as options for the future. In addition to this, the group aims to strengthen the social and everyday skills of the young, offer new experiences and feelings of succeeding, as well as to provide opportunities to establish social relationships with other young people at the same age.

**Group sessions:** The group gets together once a week for 3-4 hours, with a small break for coffee and food. The group decides together whether everybody brings their own snacks or whether, if possible, the food is prepared together. The group consists of 4-8 young people. The group sessions are continued for three months, after which the situation of each young person is re-evaluated.

A group session always commences with a round for catching up with what the group members and group leaders have been up to that week, and what their feeling is. This will steer the young people to tell about the essential events in their everyday life and to share their thoughts with others. Every group session ends up with a feedback round where group members can share their feelings and give feedback on the session.

### An example of a group session

- 9.00 Morning coffee and catching up
- 9.30 Dealing with the theme of the day
- 11.00 Making the lunch and having it, cleaning up
- 12.30 Theme of the day continued
- 13.45 Ending the session
- 14.00 Going home

During the progress of the work, it is possible to have little breaks e.g. after each activity which makes it easier for the group members to concentrate on the task at hand. It is a good idea to spread the activities evenly both before and after lunch, and to reserve enough time for each one of them, as the idea is that all the activities will be carried out thoroughly and with thought. Time should also be reserved for discussions that spring up from the activities. Participation of the group leaders in the activities will strengthen the confidence and team spirit in the group and it will give the young a model on how to carry out the activities, thus encouraging them to participate.

Examples of session themes:

1. Session: getting to know the group, making the group rules, letter to yourself (your situation in life, hopes for the future, a concrete target for yourself)
2. Session: group formation, functional activities
3. Session: reflection on substance abuse, hopes and dreams
4. Session: feelings and recognizing your feelings
5. Session: wellbeing and health, importance of close human relationships for you wellbeing
6. Session: hobbies: hobby as a resource and an alternative to intoxicants
7. Session: personal finances
8. Session: self-knowledge, what am I good at
9. Session: sketching the future
10. Session: cv and applying for a job or study place
11. Session: feedback on the group, handing out the letters written during the first meeting, discussion
12. Session: hanging around together, having a good time

**Objective of the group:** In the project, the group consisted of students, but the idea is applicable to any kind of group of young people. The objective of the meeting was to challenge the young to reflect on their own attitudes towards intoxicants as well as on what risks substance abuse will present in view of studies and work life. Another objective is to encourage the young to talk about their attitudes towards intoxicants, and to think about how the issue should be addressed and how they could find substance-free ways to relax and spend time together. According to the feedback, the young found both the theme and the way it was dealt with very interesting, and they found the general discussion and exchange of opinions very rewarding. The participants felt the meeting had provided them with new information and given them something to think about.

**Group session:** The duration of the session is 90 min. At the end of the session anonymous feedback can be collected on what intoxicant-related issues the participants would like to get more information about or discuss in more depth.

### 1. Intoxicant culture, what all does it mean?

Discussion on what kind of features within the contemporary intoxicant culture come across to the young. Is it possible to see some general features of this in the local intoxicant culture?

### 2. Your own intoxicant use, why do you do it, why don't you?

Reflection and discussion in small groups on the different reasons for substance abuse, research data on substance abuse. Summarizing.

### 3. Advantages and disadvantages of intoxicant use?

Reflection and discussion in small groups on advantages and disadvantages of intoxicant use as experienced by the participants. Recapping information on e.g. dangerous levels of alcohol consumption.

### 4. Spending your free time while studying or at work?

General discussion on whether spending your free time is different for students and those in work life. What are the differences and why? Symptoms of hangover, absences?

### 5. Intoxicants and work life?

Extracts from a degree work: Substance abuse among nurses. Blomqvist, Sanna. Tampere University of Applied Sciences 2014. Discussion and thoughts on e.g. why people working in health care are at risk for substance abuse.

Points: drug testing of employees, narcotics Act, penal code, statistics from Valvira (National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health), alcohol as a cause of death, perceived substance abuse among students ...As a colleague, how can you interfere?

### 6. Rules for intoxicant use in a student community?

Has the community agreed on the rules for intoxicant use, could/should they? What should be done about substance abuse and how would you react if somebody brought it up with you? What kind of leisure activities could the student community provide in order to encourage spending time together without intoxicants and coping with studies?

## Other contents/themes of group sessions

## Appendix 3

### Catching up

Using postcards/pictures/ objects. Each young person chooses 1-3 of these and tells the group how the picture/object in question reflects their present mood or something that has happened to them recently. You can also choose the pictures so that one of them tells about how you feel, and another one about what your expectations are. Group leaders participate alongside with the young.

House of Wellbeing (Appendix 5) and condition inspection of your own “house”

### Me and the others

The relationship you have with yourself as the most important human relationship and as a basis for all other relationships. What are the characteristics of a good friend? Am I a good friend to myself and others? How can I make friends? My own support network / map of support network.

### Self-esteem and self-image

What is self-esteem? Different roles in a group. Giving positive feedback to others.

### Stress and stress-management

What is stress? Research data on stress. How to relieve stress? Stress clouds activity (Appendix 6)

### Values

What matters to me? What makes me happy? How do we use our time? Are these something that money can buy? Have you ever had to give up something that is important to you, how did you feel about it?

### Everyday rhythm and wellbeing

Sleeping and sleep/daily rhythm, nutrition, treats, regular meals



## FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

**Rescuing the cuddly toy:** Place the cuddly toys (1-2) about 10 meters away from the starting point. The task of the group is to reach the toys by building a bridge with empty soda crates and pieces of wood. If there are no soda crates, pieces of wood will do just fine. It is not necessary to have 10 meters of wood, as the group is expected to work so that they build the bridge as they go along. The task has been completed when the whole group has reached the cuddly toys and returned back to the starting point with them. If somebody falls off the bridge, the whole group will have to go back and start from the start. Working together can be strengthened by giving the group members different kinds of “disabilities”; broken arm, broken leg (you are allowed to use one arm/leg only), blind, mute. Alternatively, the disabilities can be handed out as punishments for falling off the bridge, in which case the group doesn’t have to go back to the start.

**Nature Olympics:** Two teams compete against each other. They go out into the nature and compete e.g. in the following events: Stone Hammer, Bear Hunt and Leech. The rules of each event are disclosed prior to the start of the event.

1. Stone Hammer: Every member of the team get their turn to throw the stone. The lengths of the throws are added up to find the “winning” team.

2. Bear Hunt: The other team is given one minute to somehow get as many members of the team as possible up in a tree as bears. Every bear that the members of the other team can’t reach from the ground brings one point to the team. After this, the teams change roles.

3. Leech: The teams fall in line behind the start line so that the members lie on the ground face down and hold on to the ankles of the person in front of them. When the start signal is given, the last person in the line jumps up and runs to the front of the line throwing him/herself on the ground. After this, the person who is now the last will do the same. The objective is to reach the finish line before the other team.

## Reflection on how satisfied you are with your situation, and on needs for change

date: \_\_\_\_\_ Appendix 4

(Check the situation e.g after three months / six months / a year)

How satisfied are you with the following. 0 completely dissatisfied - 10 totally satisfied

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Physical health											
Mental health											
Studies/work											
Friendships											
Family relationships											
Intoxicant use											
Finances											
Housing											
Free time											

Change: I want to change something in the following aspects of my life

	Yes	No
Physical health		
Mental health		
Studies/work		
Friendships		
Family relationships		
Intoxicant use		
Finances		
Housing		
Free time		

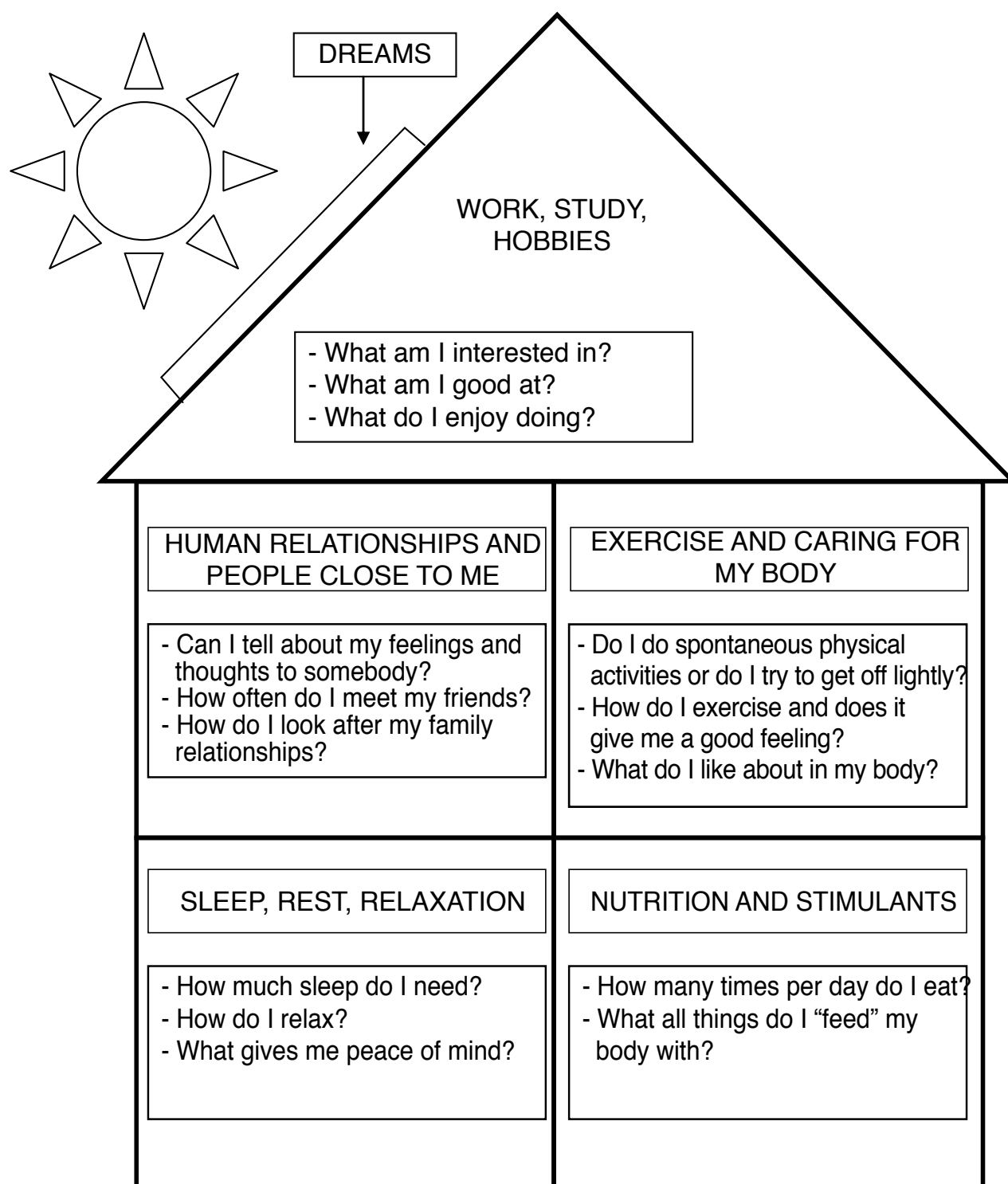
\*What things make you happy at the moment, or give you strength? What things could make you happy?

\* What could you yourself do right now to reach those things?

\*What things could support or help you if you wanted to work for your happiness / good everyday life?  
What things could hamper this?

\*What would be the smallest possible change to make you realize that things are going for the better?

This is one way to discern how the basis of your own wellbeing is structured and what kind of factors have an impact on it. Which parts of your house of wellbeing are in particularly good condition? Is there something that you could do up? The content follows the lines set by the Healthy Schoolkid material from the Finnish Association for Mental Health.



## CONDITION SURVEY OF THE HOUSE OF WELLBEING

1/2

### GOOD AND WELL-FUNCTIONING

Things I'm satisfied with.

### IN NEED OF REPAIR

What needs to be changed/ what could I do differently

### SLEEP, REST, RELAXATION

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### NUTRITION AND STIMULANTS

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### HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AND PEOPLE CLOSE TO ME

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**GOOD AND WELL-FUNCTIONING**

Things I'm satisfied with.

**IN NEED OF REPAIR**

What needs to be changed/ what could I do differently

**EXERCISE AND CARING FOR MY BODY**

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**WORK, STUDIES, HOBBIES**

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**DESIRES AND DREAMS**

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## STRESS AND PRESSURES Appendix 6

2. Then think about where these pressures come from, can you track and name the source of these pressures or demands?

1. Think of three things that cause you the most stress or pressure at this stage of your life.

3. Then think about what you normally do to deal with these issues. Does it work? Can you think of anything else worth trying?

The form consists of three identical rows. Each row is designed for a student to write down a stressor, its source, and a coping strategy. The structure of each row is as follows: a downward-pointing arrow on the left side, a large, empty, cloud-shaped box in the center for writing, and another downward-pointing arrow on the right side.

What benefits and disadvantages have you experienced in your intoxicant use /could you experience in your intoxicant use with respect to the following:

## BENEFITS

## DISADVANTAGES

Family / relatives

--	--

Friends

--	--

Study / work

--	--

### Hobbies

--	--

### Wellbeing / mood

--	--

### Money / personal finances

--	--

- 1. What kind of observations can you make concerning your answers? Were you surprised by something?**
- 2. If you found more benefits in your intoxicant use, is there a risk that you might increase your use of intoxicants? How could you get the same benefits by other means, without intoxicants?**
- 3. If you found more disadvantages in your intoxicant use, what could you do to cut down on your use of intoxicants and the subsequent disadvantages?**

Adapted from the form of City of Helsinki Department of Social Services and Health Care  
[www.socca.fi/files/266/hhaitat.doc](http://www.socca.fi/files/266/hhaitat.doc)



## WHAT AM I LIKE?

## Appendix 8

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. With the help of the following pairs of words, describe how you normally feel yourself. Write an X on the axis to place yourself.

- happy \_\_\_\_\_ sad
- cheerful \_\_\_\_\_ irritated
- satisfied \_\_\_\_\_ dissatisfied
- hard-working \_\_\_\_\_ lazy
- enthusiastic \_\_\_\_\_ unenthusiastic
- energetic \_\_\_\_\_ tired
- calm \_\_\_\_\_ restless
- sensible \_\_\_\_\_ eckless
- reflective \_\_\_\_\_ rash
- sociable \_\_\_\_\_ shy
- open \_\_\_\_\_ withdrawn
- independent \_\_\_\_\_ dependent
- self-confident \_\_\_\_\_ uncertain
- interested \_\_\_\_\_ indifferent
- accepted \_\_\_\_\_ excluded
- courageous \_\_\_\_\_ timid
- strong \_\_\_\_\_ weak
- emotional \_\_\_\_\_ cold

Conduct the evaluation again later and compare the results.

1. Pick out three words from the list above that describe your feelings at this very moment:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Pick out three words from the list that describe where you would like to see yourself develop:

\_\_\_\_\_

<http://www.socca.fi/kehittaminen/lastensuojelu/tyokalupakki/lomakkeita>

## I'M THE STAR OF MY OWN LIFE

Write your name in the center of the star

Think about how you would continue the following sentences, and write it into each point of the star. You will think of something! Write down the date and keep the star so that you can go back to it and remind yourself how wonderful you are.

**1. A positive characteristic in me is...**

**2. The good thing about my body is...**

**3. The good thing about my looks is...**

**4. I am very good at...**

**5. Other people appreciate my....**

## CHECKLIST FOR WELLBEING

## Appendix 10

- I can manage my everyday life without any greater anxiety  
**YES** **NO**
- I feel I'm satisfied with my life and I feel happy whenever I succeed  
**YES** **NO**
- I'm usually quite happy to go to school/work  
**YES** **NO**
- I sleep and eat well.  
**YES** **NO**
- I can operate in a group  
**YES** **NO**
- I have a friend/friends and I am able to make friends  
**YES** **NO**
- I take other people's feelings into account and stand up for them if necessary.  
**YES** **NO**
- I believe in my abilities and in myself  
**YES** **NO**
- I have the courage to be myself, I don't have to put on an act.  
**YES** **NO**
- I have the courage to show my feelings (positive and negative) in a safe way.  
**YES** **NO**

Source: Cacciatore, Raisa & Korteniemi-Poikea, Erja & Huovinen, Maarit 2008. Miten tuen lapsen ja nuoren itsetuntoa. (How to support the self-esteem of children and young people) Helsinki: WSOY