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TechGuardians

FOSTERING RESILIENCE AND WELL-BEING THROUGH TECH

2024-2-HR01-KA210-ADU-000274380

SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIP
IN ADULT EDUCATION



Co-funded by
the European Union

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Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.



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Introduction to the "TechGuardians" project

TechGuardians: Fostering Resilience and Well-being Through Tech
(Project No. 2024-2-HR01-KA210-ADU-000274380)

Main aim:

The project aims to empower educators working with adults by integrating digital literacy and mental well-being into their programs. By strengthening the capacities of partner organizations, the project fosters resilience, inclusion, and digital readiness among adult learners, particularly vulnerable groups such as refugees, low-income individuals, and those with disabilities.

Objectives:

- Facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices among partner organizations.
- Strengthen the capacity of partner organizations to integrate digital literacy and mental wellbeing into their programs and work with adults.
- Develop a transnational network of professionals who can continually exchange knowledge and resources.

Activities:

1. Coordination, Evaluation, and Dissemination: ensuring smooth project management and communication among partners.
2. Well-being and Stress & Trauma Training and Experience Exchange: a training focused on trauma-informed practices and mindfulness techniques for educators.
3. Digital Literacy Training and Experience Exchange: this event enhances educators' digital skills and equips them with practical tools for adult education.
4. Resource Development – Digital Brochure: a best-practices guide combining insights from all project activities to support educators working with vulnerable adult populations.

Expected outcomes and results:

- A best-practices resource adaptable across different countries and educational contexts (brochure).
- Increased capability of partner organizations to develop and implement tailored programs for adults integrating digital literacy and mental well-being.
- Establishment of transnational partnerships for ongoing collaboration and professional development.

What is the TechGuardians project?



Why this project matters?

- Digital skills are essential for participation
- Digital pressure increases stress and overload
- Stress directly reduces learning capacity
- Inclusion requires psychological safety

Digital inclusion is not sustainable without attention to mental well-being.

Project partnership

Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma (RCT Zagreb)

Croatia

Project coordinator

The Rehabilitation Center for Stress and Trauma (RCT) is an independent, non-profit civil society organization that provides professional psychological and social inclusion support to people with fewer opportunities and possibilities. RCT provides psychosocial counseling and support services with the aim of empowering people with limited opportunities and possibilities to realize their own potential. In communities with fewer opportunities, RCT develops social services and advocate for improving their accessibility and quality, and for improving policies in the field of social inclusion and the provision of social services.



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TeneLearning

Spain

Partner organisation

TeneLearning is an educational and training centre for adults and youth in Tenerife. It offers engaging courses for professional and personal development, internship placements, corporate trainings, team-buildings, retreats, and tailor-made projects. TeneLearning courses are targeted at all professionals, teachers, educational staff, students, trainers and all leaders. All courses are given in English by certified and experienced multilingual educators in an interactive and health boosting environment.

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Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain

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E-mail: info@tenelearning.com

Web: www.tenelearning.com



Forum for Educational Change (FECH)
North Macedonia
Partner organisation

Forum for Educational Change - FECH is a grassroots Civil Society Organization (CSO) that aims to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of higher education in North Macedonia and to empower students to contribute to the local and international community through their active participation in the decision-making processes. FECH goal is to influence relevant institutions to take the actions necessary to guarantee equitable quality education for all, on a lifelong basis, through the effective and accountable provision of public education.

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**Combining complementary expertise
strengthens adult education practice.**

About this digital brochure

This brochure:

- shares examples of good practice from partner organisations
- translates training insights shared during TechGuardians trainings in Spain and North Macedonia into practical guidance
- supports professionals working with diverse adult learners
- serves as an open educational resource for professionals working with adult learners.

Who is this brochure for?

- Adult education professionals, educators and trainers
- Workers involved in adult learning
- NGO and community staff
- Psychologists, social workers, counsellors...

What it is NOT

- not a therapy manual
- not a diagnostic or clinical tool

Education ≠ therapy.

Support learning and well-being without crossing professional roles.



How to use this brochure

Use tools selectively, not all at once.
Adapt methods to your context and learners.
Participation should always be voluntary.
Focus on learning, not personal disclosure.

Digital literacy and mental health in adult education

- Digital skills are essential for learning and participation
- Digital environments increase cognitive and emotional load
- Stress, anxiety, and overload reduce learning capacity

Digital literacy has become a core competence in adult education, affecting how individuals access information, participate in learning, communicate, and engage in society. At the same time, increased digital demands are associated with higher levels of stress, cognitive overload, anxiety, and feelings of exclusion, particularly among vulnerable adult learners.

Adult learners often face multiple pressures simultaneously — work, family responsibilities, financial stress, migration experiences, or past trauma — which directly influence their ability to engage with digital tools and learning platforms.

Mental health, as defined by the World Health Organization, is not merely the absence of mental illness, but a state of well-being in which individuals can realise their abilities, cope with normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community. This understanding is particularly relevant in adult education, where learning is closely intertwined with life circumstances and psychosocial functioning.

Learning is most effective when digital skills and well-being are addressed together.

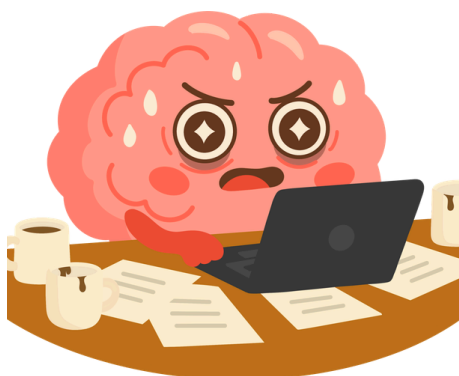
Digital literacy and mental health in adult education

Digital tools can:

- expand access to education and information
- support flexible and self-paced learning
- strengthen communication and community-building
- amplify the visibility and impact of civil society organisations

At the same time, digital environments can:

- increase cognitive load and attentional demands
- contribute to information overload and constant connectivity
- expose learners and educators to online conflict, misinformation, or harassment
- reinforce feelings of inadequacy or exclusion among those with lower digital confidence.



Rapid changes in digital communication, short-form content dominance, and algorithm-driven platforms can intensify pressure on both educators and organisations to remain visible, responsive, and relevant.

The digital literacy training delivered in North Macedonia highlighted how social media platforms, project management tools, and online communication channels can enhance organisational outreach and participation when used strategically and ethically.

Digital literacy and mental health in adult education

Mental health is shaped by the interaction of individual, social, and environmental factors, all of which directly affect learning and digital engagement.

Key influencing factors include:

Individual factors

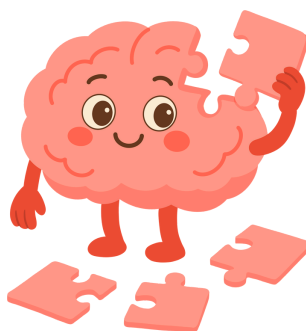
- age and educational background
- existing mental health difficulties
- coping strategies and resilience
- exposure to stress or traumatic events

Social factors

- family and peer support
- sense of belonging and acceptance
- workplace and learning environment
- access to supportive networks

Environmental factors

- socioeconomic conditions
- discrimination and inequality
- access to education and health services
- digital infrastructure and accessibility



Understanding these factors helps educators recognise that difficulties with digital tools are not solely technical, but often reflect broader psychosocial realities.

Stress, trauma, and crisis are states rather than events. Individuals enter these states following stressful or traumatic experiences, and their capacity to learn (especially in cognitively demanding digital environments) can be significantly affected.

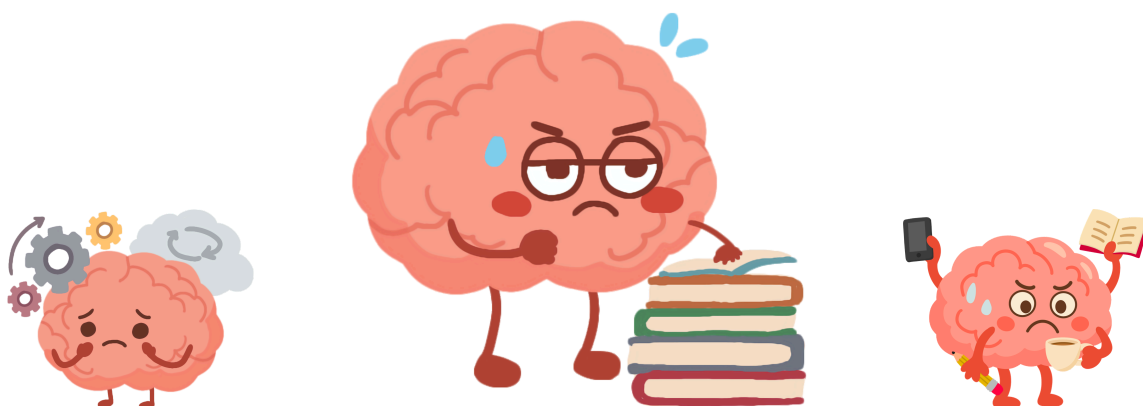
Digital literacy and mental health in adult education

Stressful experiences may lead to:

- reduced concentration and memory
- emotional reactivity or withdrawal
- physical symptoms such as fatigue or tension
- avoidance of challenging tasks, including digital learning activities.

Traumatic experiences can further disrupt:

- sense of safety and control
- trust in others and institutions
- ability to process information and sustain attention.



Importantly, most people demonstrate resilience, and recovery (rather than pathology) is the most common outcome following adversity.

Adult education settings can play a important role in supporting resilience when they are structured in psychologically informed and inclusive ways.

Digital literacy and mental health in adult education

An integrated approach to digital literacy and mental health requires adult education professionals to:

- recognise signs of stress and overload in learning environments
- design digital activities that are clear, paced, and flexible
- avoid unnecessary complexity or constant urgency
- create spaces where learners can ask for support without stigma
- model healthy digital boundaries and self-regulation.

Also, educators' own well-being is very important factor too. When educators are overwhelmed or digitally overstretched, this is often mirrored in learners' experiences.



Supporting staff well-being is a prerequisite for effective digital inclusion.

Inclusive digital learning strategies

Inclusive digital learning means designing digital environments and activities so that all adult learners can participate meaningfully, regardless of their digital skills, mental health status, language proficiency, or life circumstances.

Reduce unnecessary complexity.

Use clear instructions and predictable structure (consistent layouts). Avoid frequent platform changes. Provide step-by-step instructions.

Offer flexibility in pace and offer different participation formats (text, audio, video).

Recognize different starting points.

Create safe learning spaces.

Use inclusive language and be mindful of cultural and linguistic diversity. Acknowledge external stressors affecting participation.

Encourage support-seeking.

Explicitly state that asking for help is expected and welcomed. Many adult learners internalise digital difficulties as personal failure. Normalising support reduces shame and disengagement.

Inclusive digital learning strategies – key principles



- ✓ Keep learning pace realistic
- ✓ Reduce unnecessary digital complexity
- ✓ Normalise asking for help



- ✗ Avoid constant urgency
- ✗ Avoid information overload
- ✗ Penalise slower progress
- ✗ Assume prior digital knowledge

For learners experiencing stress, trauma, or social exclusion:

- break tasks into smaller steps
- avoid time pressure where possible
- offer reassurance and constructive feedback
- provide alternatives to public performance or exposure

These strategies emphasise safety, trust, and empowerment in learning environments.

Understanding stress and trauma responses allows educators to interpret learning difficulties more accurately and respond in ways that support resilience rather than reinforce distress.

Well-being and Mindfulness techniques for educators

Educators' well-being directly influences quality of teaching and facilitation, emotional climate of learning spaces, and learners' sense of safety and engagement.

Mindfulness is defined as intentionally paying attention to the present moment without judgment, a definition widely used in psychological and educational research.

Mindfulness is a practical, accessible skill that supports:

- emotional regulation
- focus and attention
- stress reduction
- awareness of personal limits.

Educators are encouraged to:

- start with short, simple practices
- use tools voluntarily and flexibly
- model self-care without forcing participation
- adapt practices to cultural and contextual needs.



**Well-being is not an extra.
It is a foundation for sustainable
adult education practice .**

Well- being and Mindfulness techniques for educators

Breathing techniques

Simple breathing exercises can be used before sessions, during breaks and/or after emotionally demanding interactions.

Examples shared include:

- deep breathing
- 4–7–8 breathing
- box breathing
- abdominal (deep) breathing

Purpose: calming the nervous system and reducing acute stress.



Tip:

*Start small.
Short, repeatable
practices work best.*

PHYSICAL RELAXATION: BREATHING TECHNIQUES

Deep Breathing

This technique focuses on deep, controlled breathing to enhance lung capacity and reduce stress. It reduces muscle tension, promoting a sense of calm and relaxation.

How-To:

- Inhale slowly through your nose, filling the lower part of your chest, then the middle, and finally the upper part.
- Exhale slowly through parted lips, emptying your lungs from top to bottom.
- Pause briefly before the next breath and repeat for several minutes.

4-7-8 Breathing:

Inhale for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and exhale for 8 seconds. Repeat this cycle 3-4 times.

Box Breathing:

Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, and hold for 4 seconds. Visualize a box with each breath.

Abdominal Breathing:

Inhale for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and exhale for 8 seconds. Repeat this cycle 3-4 times.



Well- being and Mindfulness techniques for educators

Life Scan

The Life Scan tool enables a quick self-reflection across life domains such as time and energy, physical activity, social connections, meaning and purpose, sleep. It supports early identification of imbalance and overload. It is intended for personal awareness, not evaluation.

Instructions for use

For each category, give yourself a score from 0 to 10:

- 0 = very dissatisfied / very low
- 10 = fully satisfied / very balanced

Rate based on your current situation, not how you think it "should" be.

Supporting arguments: Briefly explain why you gave that score. Include concrete examples or reasons from your current situation.

Ask yourself: Which areas feel strong? / Which need attention? / Are some areas connected? The goal is awareness, not self-criticism.

Optional: Select one manageable change you can try this week.

Life Scan works best when followed by small, realistic steps, not major life changes.

Important notes for facilitators:

- Participation should always be voluntary.
- Do not require sharing of scores.
- Avoid comparison between participants.
- Use it as a reflection tool, not assessment.



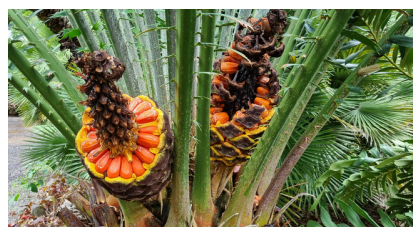
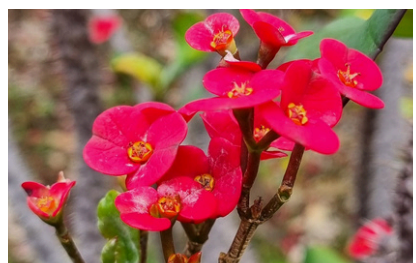
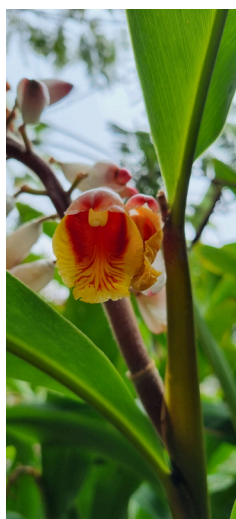
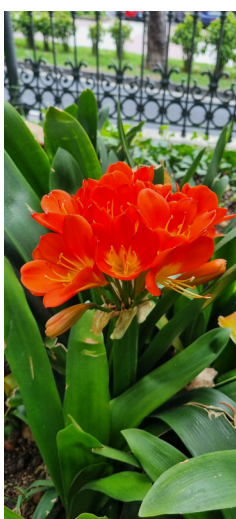
LIFE SCAN

Category	Grade (0-10)	Supporting Arguments
Time		
Energy		
Physical Activity		
Social Network		
Fun & Joy		
Nutrition		
Meaning and Purpose		
Sleep		

Well- being and Mindfulness techniques for educators

Mindful walks (Botanical garden journal)

Experiential approaches that supports grounding and sensory awareness, reduces cognitive fatigue and enhances emotional connection and presence. Especially effective in non-formal adult education contexts.



BOTANICAL GARDEN JOURNAL

PAUSE

You're standing in a beautiful botanical garden. You feel **safe and happy** here.

Use the trees to write down something you can...

Touch

See

Hear

Smell

Taste

BE PLAYFUL

Playing can reduce stress, boost brainpower, spark creativity, improve relationships, and increase energy. Embracing playfulness can also help us connect with the natural world.

EXPLORE YOUR IMAGINATION

Stop now and listen.



What sounds do you hear?

What might be causing those sounds?

Are the trees and their leaves moving?

Does it remind you of dancing?

How are other things moving?

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO LET YOURSELF JUST PLAY WITH YOUR IMAGINATION?

Trauma-Informed practices for adult education

A trauma-informed approach in adult education means understanding how stress and trauma can affect learning, behaviour, and participation, and adapting educational practices accordingly.

It does not mean providing therapy. Educators are not expected to diagnose, treat, or process trauma. Their role is to create learning environments that minimise harm and support psychological safety. When signs of significant distress emerge, the educator's role is to refer, not to treat.

Trauma-informed education: what it is:

- Understanding how stress affects learning
- Creating safe and predictable learning spaces
- Focusing on strengths and resources

What it is NOT:

- ✗ Therapy
- ✗ Diagnosis
- ✗ Trauma processing

Trauma-informed adult education is based on the following principles:

- **Safety** – emotional and psychological safety in learning spaces
- **Trust and transparency** – clear expectations and boundaries
- **Choice and autonomy** – voluntary participation and flexibility
- **Empowerment** – focusing on strengths rather than deficits
- **Cultural sensitivity** – awareness of diverse backgrounds and experiences.

**Educators support learning —
they do not provide treatment.**

Trauma-Informed practices for adult education

Stress is a state (not event) a person enters after experiencing a stressful event.

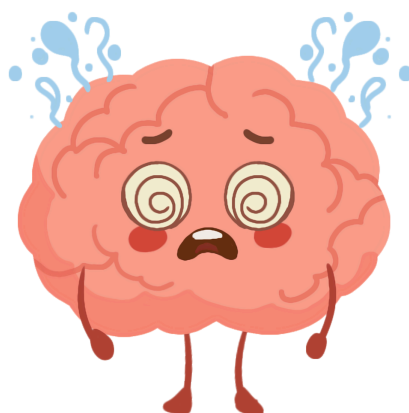
Stressful events (stressors, sources of stress) are events that we assess, interpret, or experience as threatening, harmful, or dangerous — either for ourselves or for someone we care about. They vary in duration, complexity, content, predictability, form (daily hassles / major life events). The same event can be experienced as more or less stressful depending on individual interpretation.

Traumatic events are events that are extremely disturbing for almost everyone, going beyond the limits of ordinary human experience, involve death, violence, or threat to life or physical integrity, cause signs of distress in most or all people and are rare in occurrence.

Key implications for learning:

- reduced concentration and memory
- increased emotional reactivity or withdrawal
- avoidance of demanding tasks
- fatigue and cognitive overload

Educators should interpret such responses as signals of overload, not lack of motivation.



Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) tools as educational strategies

Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) is a strength-based approach to psychotherapy that focuses on solution-building rather than problem-solving. The overall goal is to guide clients toward arriving at their own solutions for problems.

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) offers tools that can be used in education as educational communication techniques.

Used in education, these tools help focus on strengths and resources, support motivation and goal orientation and encourage reflection without emotional excavation.

Scaling questions

A helpful way to track progress toward goals and monitor change.

- "On a scale from 1 to 10, how confident do you feel about using this tool today?"

On a scale between 1 and 10,
how are you doing?



IF YOU ARE BETWEEN 1 AND 5:

What would move you up a number or two?

What is helping you to cope and get through these tougher times?

When things are going better, what will you notice is different?

IF YOU ARE BETWEEN 6 AND 10:

What is helping you to be here?

What can you do more of to stay here or move up?

What does being at this number tell you that you need?

Exception questions

Questions oriented on finding times when the problem wasn't so much of a problem. By exploring how these exceptions happened, educators can empower learners to find a solution.

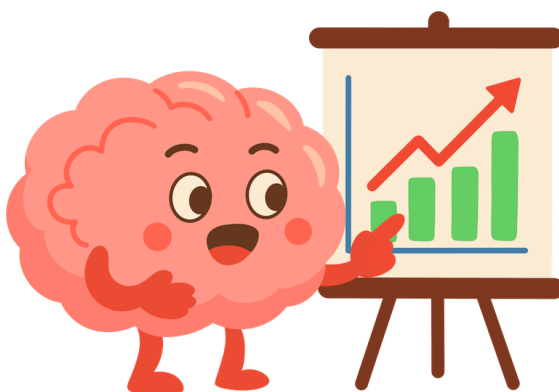
Exception questions focus on what already works, highlight existing strengths, reduce self-criticism and support realistic change.

- *Can you think of a time when this task felt easier? What was different then?*
- *Was there a moment when you felt more confident online? What helped?*
- *Can you recall a moment when you participated more actively? What made that possible?*

Future-oriented questions

Future-oriented questions invite a person to imagine a preferred future and identify small, realistic signs of progress. They shift attention from current problems to possible improvements, achievable next steps and concrete indicators of change. In educational settings, these questions help learners and educators focus on what could work better, rather than analysing difficulties.

- *What would tell you that you've made progress with this skill?*
- *If you felt more confident using digital tools next month, what would you be doing differently?*
- *Imagine that stress during learning is lower in the future — what would you notice about yourself?*



Trauma-Informed practices for adult education

Educators can:

- ✓ Keep structure clear and predictable
- ✓ Break tasks into smaller steps
- ✓ Allow pauses, breaks, and flexible pacing
- ✓ Validate effort, not personal stories
- ✓ offer alternatives to public exposure or performance.

What educators should not do / should avoid:

- ✗ asking learners to disclose traumatic experiences
- ✗ interpreting symptoms or assigning labels
- ✗ acting beyond their role
- ✗ facilitating emotional processing of trauma.

Learning environments can support resilience when they are respectful, predictable, and empowering. Adult education can therefore play a protective and supportive role, even without therapeutic intervention.



Integrating digital skills and well-being in adult education programs

Digital skills and well-being should be planned together, because stress, overload, and low psychological safety directly reduce adults' ability to learn, retain, and apply digital competences.

How to integrate digital skills & well-being

Before the programme

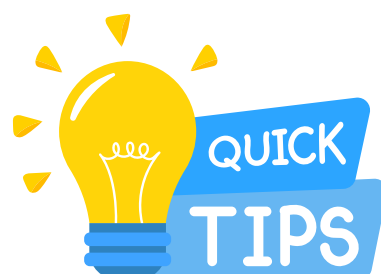
- Assess readiness
 - Use short, non-invasive tools to understand the starting point.
- Check digital confidence and stress levels
- Adjust expectations

During learning

- | | |
|--|--|
| ✓ Start with a clear agenda | ✗ Avoid multitasking expectations |
| ✓ Explain why a tool is useful | ✗ Avoid public "performance" pressure |
| ✓ Avoid introducing multiple platforms at once | ✗ Avoid technical jargon without explanation |
| ✓ Focus on fewer tools, more practice | |
| ✓ Use real-life tasks | |
| ✓ Regular pauses and predictable schedules | |
| ✓ Demonstrate step by step | |
| ✓ Allow silent practice time | |
| ✓ Normalise mistakes and questions | |

After sessions

- Short reflection prompts
- Encourage transfer to real life



Integrating digital skills and well-being in adult education programs

Check often possible signs of overload:

- withdrawal or silence
- irritability or frustration
- repeated avoidance of tasks
- cognitive confusion

If this occurs, you can:

- slow down the pace
- offer alternative formats
- check understanding without pressure
- refer to support if distress persists

Digital literacy includes ethical awareness, especially when working with vulnerable groups.

- Respect privacy and data protection.
- Do not share personal stories online without consent.
- Use inclusive, non-stigmatising language.
- Model healthy digital boundaries.

Integrate reflection and learning transfer

Reflection supports both learning and well-being.

- "What felt easiest today?"
- "What challenged me?"
- "What is one thing I can already apply?"

At organisational level, integration means:

- aligning digital strategies with staff capacity
- recognising emotional labour in digital work
- supporting educators' own well-being.

**Organisations
that care for
staff well-
being deliver
more
sustainable
education
outcomes.**

Examples of best practices from partner organizations

Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma

Examples of good practice:

- Stress & trauma psychoeducation
- SFBT-informed questions for learning contexts
- Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises (TRE) – partners were introduced to TRE as a body-based self-regulation approach through a demonstration. The method was presented for informational and experiential learning purposes.
- Art-based methods for group connection (group introduction, connection, and trust-building in adult education settings).
 - Creative methods can support group cohesion and engagement without requiring personal disclosure or therapeutic processing.



Examples of best practices from partner organizations

TeneLearning

Adult education with strong experiential and outdoor learning components. Teaching adults how to cultivate positive emotions, explore time management, practice mindfulness, and enjoy physical activities.

Examples of good practice:

- Breathing techniques
- Life Scan
- Mindful Botanical Walk
- Pilates



Examples of best practices from partner organizations

Forum for Educational Change (FECH)

Civil society organisations and adult learners needing practical digital skills for communication and advocacy.

Examples of good practice:

- Short-form video strategies (TikTok)
- How to use Canva to promote work
- Content planning and goal setting
- Responsible engagement and moderation
- Organisational tools (e.g., project management basics - Monday.com)



Examples of best practices from partner organizations

The Well-being and Stress & Trauma training and experience exchange was held on May 25–29, 2025, in Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, Spain. The training was delivered by the Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma (RCT Zagreb) and TeneLearning.

Read more about this exchange here:

<https://rctzg.hr/wellbeing-trauma-informed-practice-training-and-exchange-may-25-29-2025-tenerife-spain/>

The Digital literacy training and experience exchange was held in Ohrid from September 24–26, 2025. The training was led by the Forum for Educational Change (FECH), with RCT Zagreb and FECH participating on site, while TeneLearning joined online.

Read more about this exchange here:

<https://rctzg.hr/techguardians-digital-literacy-training-and-experience-exchange-in-ohrid-north-macedonia/>

Resources and tools for further learning

- Bannink, F. (2008). 1001 solution-focused questions: Handbook for solution-focused interviewing. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? *American Psychologist*, 59(1), 20–28. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.59.1.20>
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- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bpg016>
- UNESCO. (2018). A global framework of reference on digital literacy skills for indicator 4.4.2. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265403>
- World Health Organization. (n.d.). Mental health: Strengthening our response. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>

Ethical note

The tools, exercises, and approaches presented in this brochure are intended for educational, preventive, and supportive purposes within adult education. They do not replace professional mental health treatment, diagnosis, or psychotherapy.

Educators are encouraged to apply all methods in a trauma-sensitive, voluntary, and culturally responsive manner, respecting participants' boundaries and referring individuals to appropriate professional support services when needed.

- Tools are for educational and supportive use. They do not replace mental health treatment.
- Respect consent, boundaries, and cultural context.
- Support learning and well-being without crossing professional roles.



Help us improve this resource – 2-minute feedback:





RCT
Zagreb

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TechGuardians

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