

# Youth Club Young Volunteer Handbook

## Skill Development



# Stress Busting

*This resource may be used free of charge by local authorities and community groups for the benefit of young People; its use for commercial gain is prohibited without the prior consent of Somerset County Council.*



# Training Plan

**Aim:** To familiarise the group with a few relaxation methods

**Learning Outcomes:** By the end of the session the participants will:

- have experienced breathing and meditation exercises and hand massage
- have listed and shared other types of relaxation

**Time:** 1 hour

**Group size:** 4 - 6

**Venue:** Medium sized room with chairs

**Materials:**

- Prepared flipchart
- Flip chart and pens
- Relaxation Exercise
- Meditation Exercise
- Music (optional)
- Massage lotion

TIME	WHAT	WITH
5 mins	<b>Introduction:</b> Outline what's happening this evening and briefly go over ground rules about listening and respect.	Prepared flipchart
5 mins	<b>Why relaxation is important?</b> Whole group to brainstorm the reasons, note on flipchart.	Flip chart and pens
10 mins	<b>Relaxation Exercise:</b> Breathing and muscle relaxation. Head to toe. Ask the young people to get comfy!	Relaxation Exercise
5 mins	<b>Meditation:</b> Whole group to brainstorm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasons why meditation can be useful</li> <li>• Different forms of meditation</li> </ul>	Flip chart and pens Optional
15 mins	<b>Meditation Exercise:</b> Meditation – The Spring Path	Meditation Exercise
10 mins	<b>Hand massage:</b> Tell the group this can be very relaxing. Check skin conditions and allergies. Split the group into pairs. Explain that they are going to give each other a hand massage. Ask for a volunteer and demonstrate the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put a little massage lotion on your hands and rub over (not in)</li> <li>• Rub this into your partner's hands, starting with one of their hands and rubbing it between both of yours (this helps get the lotion distributed too)</li> <li>• Go along each digit, gently grasping in your whole hand and massaging.</li> <li>• You then do the next hand.</li> </ul> Tell the group to have a go themselves.	Music optional. Ready mixed massage lotion.

TIME	WHAT	WITH
5 mins	<b>Other ways to manage stress:</b> Give out post-it notes and pens. Ask each young person to identify practical steps to manage stress and be in control (i.e. stress balls, keep a diary, diet, relax, pamper, friends, meditate, fun etc.). Ask them to stick their post-its on the flip-chart and let everyone read them. Discuss any that are original, unclear or interesting.	Post-its, flip chart paper, pens.
5 mins	<b>Evaluation:</b> Ask the group to identify what they have gained from the session and how it can be put into practice in relation to their Young Volunteer's role. Give young people copies of exercises.	Copies of exercises

# Relaxation exercise

We're going to relax you from the top of your head to your toes. For this to work you need to be calm and concentrate. This isn't just about letting go – ***you've got to work it!***

Get comfortable on your chair or on the floor. Leave plenty of space between each other.

Close your eyes if you can and breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose. Hold it for 4 seconds and then out through your mouth – slowly and steadily until all the air has gone. Do this one more time.

You need to continue to breathe like that throughout the exercise.

Check you are still comfortable. If not adjust your position now, calmly and quietly and continue to breathe as before.

OK now think about the very top of your head. You may feel your scalp tingle. Concentrate and breathe in deeply through your nose to the count of 4...and out to the count of 4. As you do this imagine the top of your head feels heavy and it's 'giving in' to gravity.

Now think about your whole head and face. Think for a moment about tension in your forehead, the back of your eyes, around your nose, cheeks and especially your jaw and teeth. Let it go! Breathe in 1, 2, 3, 4 and as you breathe out it all becomes very heavy and loose. Out 1, 2, 3, 4.

Next, you need to think about your neck. Feel it sink along with your head when you've breathed in and then out to the count of 4. Repeat and feel your neck and head sink even further.

Move down to your shoulders. These may need more work but try to allow them to sink together, joining the sensation in your neck and head.

Continue through:

- chest
- upper back
- lower back
- abdomen
- buttocks
- thighs
- knees
- calves and shins
- ankles
- feet
- toes

If you feel you need one more breathing count (because you've tensed or lose concentration) go back to the body part and do it again. It's important not to lose 'part' of you.

# Meditation exercise

## **Guided Meditation – a version of ‘The Spring Path’**

Ask the group to find a relaxed position for the next 10 minutes. Take a deep breath in through the nose counting to 4, and out again through the nose to the count of 4. Repeat together.

**Now ask the group to close their eyes and listen...**

*Imagine yourself actually being the central character in the tale.*

*It's a beautiful spring morning. The sky is blue. The sun is shining. It's warm, but not yet hot, although the day promises much. There's a gentle spring breeze which you can feel on your face and on your hair. You're walking barefoot over fresh green fields. There are spring flowers all around and their scent rises as you step through them. The ground beneath your feet is cooling, soft and gentle. High above you a few birds fly and you hear them calling to one another. The land beneath your feet begins to rise in a gentle slope and ahead of you is a small wood, a cluster of trees dense enough so that you cannot see the other side but not a forest.*

*It looks a magical place with shafts of sunlight dividing the cool shade into a magical enticing place. You let your steps take you towards the trees, some are old but many seem quite young. There are so many types of trees – Oak, Ash, Hazel, Rowan, Yew and Elm. There's also Holly – even a lone Willow. All are wearing the fresh green growth, making this truly a magical place. As you approach you see the wood forms a crown on the top of the hill and in front of you, you see a pathway between the trees. You follow this path, noticing that although the shade is cooler, it is still warm. The tops of the trees rustle in the light breeze, filling the air with whispers, and the song of the birds adds a music of its own. The scents are now those of woodland plants and warm, moist soil. The path is clothed in green moss, which feels soft and springy beneath your feet. There are ferns which brush against your legs, like the gentle caress of loving fingers. As your eyes become accustomed to the change in light you can see the flowers of the wood, small bright sparks of white, yellow and blue. You pause for a moment appreciating the wonders of the season.*

*As you start walking again you notice that the ground begins to slope downwards a little and you follow it. Ahead of you, the trees thin and there is a small clearing. Here the sun shines through the break in the trees above, lighting a circular glade with a smooth grassy floor. Stepping into the glade you feel a deep sense of peace and contentment. All is quiet, even the sound of the wind in the trees seems still. In the centre sits a grey boulder, about waist height. The rock is obviously very old, with moss and lichens growing on its surface. As you get closer you can hear the sound of running water.*

*Looking closely at the stone you see several markings etched into its surface and one of these is spiral. You trace the spiral with your finger and as you do you become aware of being watched from the edge of the trees. Looking up you see a young doe deer, only feet away from you. She stands still, quite unafraid, before turning and walking back between the trees.*

*Walking around the stone you find a small spring bubbling from its base. The water from this forms a small pool which is lined with small rounded stones of many colours. Kneeling, you dip your fingers into the water and feel a tingling sensation as the icy water touches your skin. As you do this, a feeling comes to you that these waters are important and you cup your hands and drink from the water. Although cold, it is the freshest, most wonderful thing you have ever tasted. As you swallow you feel it pass into your body, bringing a sense of being cleansed and restored. It washes away all the doubt and anxiety, all the care and worry, leaving you feeling completely at peace with yourself and the world. You are thankful.*

*Rising to your feet you notice that the sun is now high in the sky. The morning has passed and it is now the middle of the day. You become aware that once again you can hear the sounds of birds in the trees and the sounds of other creatures moving in the undergrowth. You also become aware that the scents of the morning have now changed to those of the warm afternoon, they are richer and you can detect the warm dark smell of heated earth. Looking around the clearing you fix sights, sounds and smells in your mind, for this is a place you feel sure you will wish to return to.*

*Now you retrace your steps, walking around the stone and once more you step onto the path between the trees. You walk back up the gentle slope, feeling more energetic than you did on your incoming journey. Stepping out from behind the trees you look down over the fields, now in the full heat of the sun. There are bees and other insects taking nectar from the flowers as you make your way down the slope. As you release the third breath you return to the here and now.*

*Open your eyes, sit up and rub your arms and legs to ground yourself.*

Guided meditation can lead you to experience things which aren't part of the story – sights, sounds, scents, characters etc.

Ask if this happened for anyone and consider:

- They may have some meaning for you and/or relate to something in your daily life
- Has anything been on your mind?
- You could write your thoughts down to look at them reflect on again later. Re-reading your notes and understanding them could help you solve problems or dilemmas.