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PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR WELL-BEING
DIDACTIC GUIDE

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-PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR WELL-BEING-

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction	15
➤ Taking care of yourself is not a luxury, it is a necessity	16
➤ Objectives	17
➤ Structure	18
➤ The beginning of a possible change	19
2. Brief introduction to the topics of the course	20
3. Methodology	21
4. Setting Standards and Expectations	22

MY INNER WORLD

MODULE 1: Understanding Emotions and Emotional Intelligence (The Heart)

1. Introduction: What are emotions?	26
➤ Key characteristics of emotions	27
➤ Purpose of emotions	27
2. How they work	28
➤ Stages of the emotion cycle	28
• Stimulus perception	29
• Evaluation (cognitive or automatic)	30
• Emotional response	30
• Expression or action	30
• Regulation	30
• Resolution or integration	30
➤ Importance of the cycle of emotions	31
3. Emotional intelligence. How I manage emotions:	31
➤ Strategy for managing emotions in 4 stages	31
• Identification of the emotion	32
• Regulation of emotional intensity	32
• Analysis of the information provided by the emotion	32
• Making decisions on how to act	33
4. When Emotions Become Maladaptive: Warning Signs and Pathways to Well-Being	33
5. Synthesis	35

MY INNER WORLD

MODULE 2: Understanding thoughts and beliefs (The mind)

1. Introduction_____	38
2. Thoughts, moulders of our reality_____	38
➤ Cognitive distortions_____	39
• Types of cognitive distortions_____	39
♦ All-or-nothing thinking_____	39
♦ Overgeneralisation_____	40
♦ Mental Filtering_____	40
♦ Disqualification of the Positive_____	40
♦ Mind Reading_____	40
♦ Catastrophising_____	41
♦ Emotional Reasoning_____	41
♦ "Should" Statements_____	41
♦ Labelling_____	41
♦ Personalisation_____	42
3. Beliefs What are they and what is their origin?_____	42
➤ Maladaptive beliefs_____	42
➤ Limiting vs. empowering_____	43
4. Management of maladaptive thoughts and beliefs_____	44
➤ Identification of maladaptive thoughts and beliefs_____	44
➤ Cognitive restructuring to transform negative thoughts and beliefs_____	44
➤ Promoting healthy and empowering beliefs_____	46
5. Synthesis_____	47

MY INNER WORLD

MODULE 3: Self-care and personal wellbeing (The Body)

1. <i>Body</i>	50
➤ Importance of physical care in the emotional state	50
➤ Listening to the body: signs of wellbeing and exhaustion	51
2. <i>Exercise and movement</i>	52
➤ Benefits of exercise on mental and emotional health	52
➤ Strategies for moving more in everyday life	53
• What exercise is best for you?	54
• Tools and strategies for incorporating exercise into your life	54
3. <i>Food and rest</i>	56
➤ Nourish your body, nourish your mood	56
➤ Importance of sleep. Healthy sleep habits and their impact on the mind	59
4. <i>Relaxation and connecting with the present</i>	60
➤ My time and space	60
➤ Breathing techniques	61
➤ Mindfulness	62
➤ Meditation and stress management	62
5. <i>Synthesis</i>	63

MY INNER WORLD

MODULE 4: Self-knowledge

1. Introduction	66
2. Self-knowledge	67
➤ Self-concept and self-esteem: Who am I and how much am I worth?	67
➤ Distorted self-concept and how it influences self-esteem	68
• Rigid self-concept	68
• An overly restrictive self-concept	68
• Generalised negative self-concept	68
• Fragmented self-concept	69
• A self-concept based on the opinion of others	69
• Self-demanding or perfectionistic self-concept	69
• Inflated self-concept	69
➤ How to build a more realistic and balanced self-concept	70
• Identify your limiting beliefs	70
• Question these beliefs with critical thinking	71
• Reframe these beliefs	71
• Reinforce your new self-concept with action	71
• Be patient and consistent	72
3. Triangle emotional self-management as a personal tool	73
➤ How does the triangle work?	73
• How to intervene in thoughts	74
• How to intervene on emotions	75
• How to intervene in behaviour	75
➤ Why is triangular emotional self-management so useful?	76
4. Synthesis	76

MY EXTERNAL WORLD

MODULE 5: Social skills for healthy relationships

1. <i>Introduction: The importance of social support</i>	80
2. <i>Social skills and the three response styles</i>	81
➤ <i>Passive style</i>	81
➤ <i>Aggressive style</i>	81
➤ <i>Assertive style</i>	81
3. <i>Assertiveness</i>	83
➤ <i>What is assertiveness and its fundamental pillars</i>	83
➤ <i>How to structure an assertive message</i>	84
➤ <i>Practical techniques to develop assertiveness</i>	85
➤ <i>Most common situations in which to apply assertiveness</i>	88
4. <i>Toxic relationships</i>	90
➤ <i>What they are, their impact on emotional well-being and how to identify them</i>	90
➤ <i>Identifying toxic relationships: common patterns</i>	91
5. <i>Conflict identification and resolution</i>	92
➤ <i>Strategies for conflict identification</i>	92
➤ <i>Strategies for conflict resolution</i>	93
6. <i>Synthesis</i>	95

MY EXTERNAL WORLD

MODULE 6: Managing everyday problems

1. Introduction	98
2. Stress: understanding, regulating and preventing it	98
➤ Recognising the signs of stress	99
➤ Strategies to regulate everyday stress	99
3. Problem solving	100
➤ The six-step model for problem solving	100
➤ The role of emotional intelligence in problem solving	102
➤ Adaptability: the key to solving real-life problems	102
4. Decision-making	102
➤ Combined decision-making technique	103
• Step 1: Reflection on your values and goals	103
• Step 2: Analysis of available options	103
• Step 3: Consideration of emotions and uncertainty	103
5. The art of coping with challenges	104
➤ Resilience and positive coping	104
➤ How to strengthen resilience and positive coping	105
6. Time management	107
➤ Time management techniques	108
• Eisenhower matrix	108
• Pomodoro technique	109
• Two-minute rule	109
➤ Identification of time thieves	109
➤ Procrastination and its impact	110
7. Synthesis	110

INTEGRATION OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WORLDS

MODULE 7: Competences of expression and connection with nature

-Feeling and expressing through art and nature-

1. Introduction	116
2. Nature and emotional state	117
➤ Relationship and influence of contact with nature with the emotional state	117
• The healing power of nature: harmony with the environment and emotional balance	118
➤ How to promote an approach to nature with benefits for emotional health	119
• Identification of the relationship with the surrounding environment and detection of unbalancing factors on an emotional level	120
• Proposal of realistic and affordable alternatives linked to a change or opening of the environment related to a direct approach to nature	120
• Planning and execution of this approach	121
3. Planning and execution of this approach	121
➤ Art and its practice as a tool and emotional instrument	121
• The healing power of art: introductory approach to the link between art and emotions and emotional state	121
• Art and emotion: an ancestral alliance	122
• Art as a safe space without judgement	122
➤ The artistic experience as a tool for emotional intervention	124
• Visual arts and emotions	125
• Music and emotional state	125
• Literature and emotions	125
• Performing arts and emotions	126
4. Synthesis	126

INTEGRATION OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WORLDS

MODULE 8: Integration and practice

1. <i>The meaning of integrating. What does it mean to integrate learning?</i>	130
2. <i>Well-being as a compass</i>	131
3. <i>The cycle of sustainable change</i>	132
➤ <i>Stages in the process of personal transformation</i>	132
• <i>Awareness</i>	132
• <i>Reflection and learning</i>	132
• <i>Initial action</i>	133
• <i>Repetition and adjustment</i>	133
• <i>Maintenance</i>	133
• <i>Relapses as part of the process</i>	133
4. <i>Tools to accompany and sustain change</i>	133
• <i>Emotional anchors or personal reminders</i>	133
• <i>Periodic review of progress</i>	134
• <i>Compassionate self-evaluation</i>	134
• <i>Symbolic routines of closing and opening</i>	134
• <i>Community and connection</i>	134
5. <i>The role of habits in psychological change</i>	135
➤ <i>How habits are formed and why they are so difficult to change</i>	135
➤ <i>Habits, identity and well-being</i>	135
➤ <i>How habits are formed (and why it is difficult to change them)</i>	136
➤ <i>Strategies for building new habits from what we have learned</i>	136
➤ <i>Repetition, environment and small changes with big impact</i>	137
6. <i>How to identify and manage "internal saboteurs" in the process of change</i>	138
7. <i>Synthesis</i>	139

APPENDIX

<i>APPENDIX 1: Main physiological reactions that manifest emotions</i>	145
<i>APPENDIX 2: Dictionary of emotions</i>	146
<i>APPENDIX 3: Some basic strategies for managing intense emotions</i>	162
<i>APPENDIX 4: Cognitive Distortions</i>	165
<i>APPENDIX 5: Most common erroneous statements that distort self-concept</i>	173
<i>APPENDIX 6: Assertive rights</i>	177
<i>APPENDIX 7: Manipulative strategies in toxic relationships</i>	179
<i>APPENDIX 8: A practical guide to organising a balanced diet</i>	183



INTRODUCTION TO THE PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR WELL-BEING COURSE.

1. Introduction.

- Taking care of yourself is not a luxury, it is a necessity.
- Aims and objectives.
- Structure.
- The beginning of a possible change.

2. Brief introduction to the topics of the course.

3. Methodology.

4. Setting Standards and Expectations.

1. INTRODUCTION.

Remembering how to calculate the area of a trapezoid but having no idea what to do with the anxiety that invades you on a Monday morning at 8 am, knowing how to perfectly analyse a sentence syntactically but not knowing how to manage an anger without exploding, knowing the periodic table by heart but not knowing how to set limits without feeling guilty? We have been taught to solve complex equations, but not to identify what we feel; to memorise the capitals of the world, but not to detect when our thoughts are sabotaging us; to write impeccable essays, but not to communicate assertively? Something doesn't add up, does it? From an early age, the education system has filled our heads with formulas, historical dates and concepts that, without detracting from the value of the learning itself, in many cases, we never use again. Thus, skills that we need every day to live with greater well-being, such as the ability to manage our feelings, understand our emotions or take care of our mental health, have been left out. This is not to criticise academic learning, of course it has its value, but what about the human aspect? What about those tools that would help us to manage stress, relate better or simply be good with ourselves?



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➤ *Taking care of yourself is not a luxury, it is a necessity.*

Sometimes we think that working on ourselves or developing our emotional wellbeing is something that only makes sense when "we are bad". As if we have to wait for something to break before we start looking inwards. But what if we change our perspective? We don't need to be in crisis to grow, but to grow to avoid reaching crisis. Just as we exercise to take care of our bodies or eat well to stay healthy, we also need to train and take care of our minds. And no, that doesn't mean being in permanent therapy or reading all the self-help books, sometimes it is simply a matter of making time for ourselves, reviewing what we take for granted and changing small things that do us good. Practising self-awareness, reflecting on our habits, attachments and emotions and, in short, becoming more aware and taking control of our life, deciding where we want to direct it should not be the exception, but a natural part of a healthy lifestyle.





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➤ *Objectives.*

The PEEAAR course is born with the purpose of offering you a clear, accessible and close space where you can start to know yourself better, understand your inner world and strengthen your emotional health. An invitation to stop the autopilot and look inside with curiosity, without judgement. To build a more conscious and kind relationship with yourself. To discover that yes, it is possible to live with more clarity, balance and meaning.

This proposal is based on emotional psychoeducation, an approach that seeks to provide you with essential knowledge about how we function on a psychological level, so that you can better understand yourself and learn to manage your emotional world in a healthier way. This course aims to be a first contact with the inner world we all carry inside. A basic map, a compass to begin to orient yourself if you are on the road to exploring your emotional wellbeing. Along the way, you will come to understand your emotions, thoughts and physical sensations, as well as the way you relate to yourself and others. You will receive practical tools to manage your feelings, take better care of yourself and build a more coherent, authentic and balanced life.

Our objectives are clear: to establish a solid base of knowledge in integral emotional management, to raise awareness of the importance of working on oneself, to promote self-knowledge and self-understanding, and to encourage personal growth through reflection and action. We want to help you translate theory into real, tangible and useful experiences, improve your emotional skills, teach you coping tools and develop strategies to accompany you in your personal process. Here you will find resources, key concepts and reflections that will allow you to start building a healthier relationship with yourself, your emotions and those around you because, as we have already said, taking care of your mental health is not a luxury or a sign of weakness, but an act of responsibility and self-care.

➤ Structure.

This is the beginning of a journey. A journey designed to help each person to get to know themselves better and to take care of themselves from a holistic approach. The course follows a logic that goes from the internal to the external, to end up integrating both dimensions: the personal and the relational.

The first block focuses on the inner world: emotions, thoughts, body and identity. Fundamental aspects that directly influence the way we perceive and face life. This module invites you to pause, get out of autopilot and start looking inwards with curiosity and without judgement, developing greater emotional clarity and building a healthier relationship with yourself.

The focus then shifts to the environment. In this second block, relationships, communication, boundaries, conflict management and other aspects linked to the relational world are addressed. Because what happens on the inside is reflected on the outside, and a large part of well-being also depends on the quality of relationships and the way in which we go about our day-to-day lives.

Finally, the course proposes an integration between the internal and the external. It is not only about knowing oneself better or improving relationships, but also about aligning both dimensions in order to live in a more coherent, balanced and authentic way. This integration is the key to consolidating a more conscious lifestyle, which allows us to feel at peace with ourselves and in harmony with our environment.





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➤ *The beginning of a possible change.*

This course does not have all the answers, but it can help us to start asking the right questions. Because emotional knowledge not only improves our personal wellbeing, it also transforms the way we relate to each other, make decisions and face the challenges of everyday life. Committing to emotional education means committing to a more balanced, authentic and conscious life.

We all have the capacity to change, grow and build new ways of being with ourselves and with the world. This process is not intended to offer us magical solutions, but to give us tools to understand ourselves better and move more clearly in our daily lives. The idea is that we can take the reins of our own path, with greater autonomy and from a proactive, realistic and respectful approach to our times because, in the end, living well is not a destination, but a practice, for which this can be a great starting point.





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2. BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE THEMES.

➤ MY INNER WORLD.

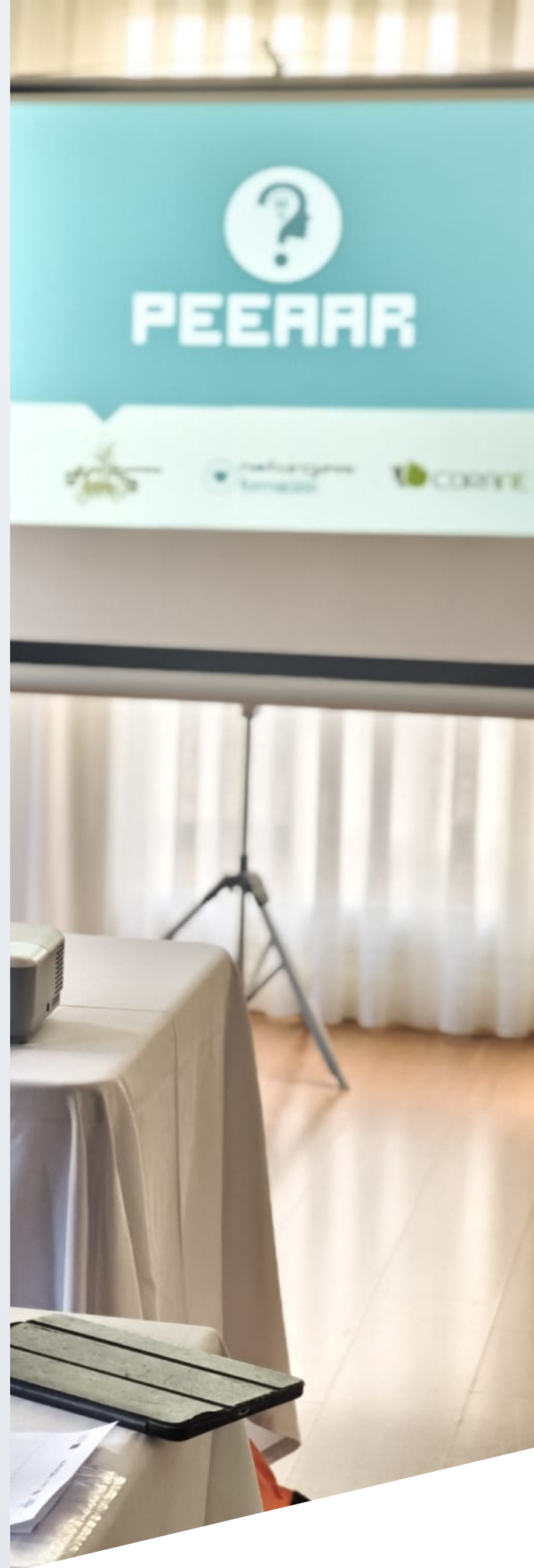
- MODULE 1: Understanding emotions and Emotional intelligence (The heart).
- MODULE 2: Understanding thoughts and beliefs (The mind).
- MODULE 3: Self-care and personal wellbeing (The body).
- MODULE 4: Self-knowledge (Me and my tools).

➤ MY EXTERNAL WORLD.

- MODULE 5: Social skills for healthy relationships.
- MODULE 6: Managing everyday problems.

➤ INTEGRATION OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WORLDS.

- MODULE 7: Interaction with the natural environment and human expression.
- MODULE 8: Integration and practice.





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3. METHODOLOGY.

The course is designed in a modular way, dividing the content into independent units that address the most relevant topics in a clear and accessible way. Each module focuses on a key area of emotional psychoeducation, beginning with a theoretical introduction that explains the fundamental concepts of the topic in question. This provides a solid foundation for understanding how our emotional world works, as well as the tools needed to manage it effectively.

In addition to the theory, a personal reflection workbook is included, which offers practical exercises from each module designed to enable you to take what you have learned into your daily life. Through these exercises, you will be able to reflect individually on how to apply the concepts learned in real situations, allowing you to integrate theory with your own experience and advance your personal development in a more meaningful way.

Each class is structured in two parts: first, the theoretical content of the module is explained, and then you will work on group dynamics or exercises that allow you to put what you have learnt into practice. These activities are key to consolidating knowledge, as they facilitate the practical application of concepts in a collaborative environment, where sharing experiences and reflections enriches learning. In this way, knowledge is not only acquired, but also experienced in an active and experiential way.

The focus of the course is on active and participatory learning. Participants are constantly encouraged to participate and are invited to share their experiences, ask questions and reflect on their own development process. This interactive approach ensures that each person can progress at their own pace, with the support of the group, and feel accompanied in their emotional growth process.



4. SETTING NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS.

In the PEEAAR course, one of the fundamental pillars is the creation of a space of trust and respect. We know that working on oneself requires vulnerability, and for this process to be truly effective, it is necessary to feel that one is in a safe environment. A place where each participant can share their experiences, reflect on their own journey and learn without fear of judgement. We foster a culture of respect for others as well as for oneself, understanding that each person has their own rhythm and history. It is this mutual respect that facilitates genuine, deep and transformative learning.

In this sense, it is also essential that a commitment to confidentiality is a key principle. Everything that is shared within the course will be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality. The experiences, thoughts and feelings of each participant are personal and private, and our intention is that they can express themselves with the certainty that what is said will remain within the safe space we create together. This commitment to confidentiality not only ensures an atmosphere of trust, but also reinforces authenticity and openness in every interaction.

Finally, commitment to the process is fundamental. Participating in this course implies an active willingness to learn, reflect and put into practice what is learned outside of the sessions. Real change does not happen only in the classroom, but when each person commits to applying the tools and knowledge acquired in their daily lives. This process is personal and unique, and requires both effort and self-compassion. Our aim is for each participant to feel motivated to commit to their own development, knowing that true growth comes from action and from integrating what they learn into their daily lives.

In this way, the course will not only be an opportunity to acquire knowledge, but also a space to grow together, in a respectful, confidential and committed way, fostering a continuous and transformative learning environment.



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MY INNER WORLD



MODULE 1

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

-THE HEART-

1. 1. INTRODUCTION: WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

- Main characteristics of emotions.
- Purpose of emotions.

1. 2. HOW EMOTIONS WORK.

- Stages of the emotion cycle.
 - Stimulus perception.
 - Evaluation (cognitive or automatic).
 - Emotional response.
 - Expression or action.
 - Regulation.
 - Resolution or integration.
- Importance of the cycle of emotions.

1. 3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE. HOW I MANAGE EMOTIONS:

- Strategy for managing emotions in 4 stages:
 - Identification of the emotion.
 - Regulation of emotional intensity.
 - Analysis of the information provided by the emotion.
 - Making decisions on how to act.

1. 4. WHEN EMOTIONS BECOME MALADAPTIVE: WARNING SIGNS AND PATHWAYS TO WELL-BEING

1. 5. SYNTHESIS



1. 1. INTRODUCTION:

Understanding what emotions are is an essential first step on the road to conscious emotional management. However, in order to relate to them in a healthier and more effective way, it is also necessary to know how they work. Exploring their main characteristics allows us to understand why they arise, how they affect us and what role they play in our daily lives. This knowledge not only lays the foundation for deeper emotional work, but also prepares us to apply management strategies more adapted to our own needs. Therefore, we have decided to start this module by familiarising ourselves with the most basic concepts about emotions: what they are, how they manifest themselves and why they play such a relevant role in our daily experience. Some of these concepts may already be familiar to you; others may offer new perspectives. In any case, reviewing and deepening your understanding of them will help you build a solid foundation to better understand your emotions and begin to manage them more consciously and effectively. Let's get started!

WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

Emotions are natural reactions that arise in response to what is happening inside and outside of us. They function as an internal compass that guides how we interpret, adapt and respond to the world. These reactions involve how we physically feel, how we think and how we act in response to situations.

In our daily lives, emotions can be our best friends or our worst enemies, depending on how we understand and manage them. If we learn to recognise and manage them, they become powerful tools that help us make decisions, relate better and grow as people. For example, feeling sadness after a failure can motivate us to reflect and improve, but if we do not know how to manage it, this sadness could stagnate us and lead to demotivation. Similarly, emotions such as anger can help us set limits or stand up for what we value. On the other hand, if we let anger control us, it can generate harmful conflicts in our relationships. Therefore, developing our emotional intelligence is crucial to transform our emotions into allies and not obstacles.

Ultimately, all emotions serve a purpose, including those that may be uncomfortable. The essential thing is not to avoid them, but to learn to recognise, understand and manage them properly. Therefore, in this module we will explore in a clear and efficient way the fundamental concepts, key processes and practical strategies needed to understand them and turn them into our allies. This learning will enable us to develop emotional skills that contribute to a more balanced and satisfying life.



➤ *Key characteristics of emotions:*

Now that we know what emotions are and why they are important, let's look at what their main characteristics are. Understanding how they work allows us to recognise them more clearly and respond to them more consciously:

- **They are universal and natural:** All human beings feel emotions, no matter where we come from. For example, someone may feel happiness when receiving good news or fear when being in a dark place, regardless of their culture or language.
- **They are quick and intense:** Emotions often come on quickly, even before we have time to think. For example, if you see a spider unexpectedly, you might jump before you realise it is not dangerous.
- **They influence us profoundly:** Emotions affect how we make decisions, how we relate to others and how we take care of ourselves. For example, sadness may cause us to seek support from a friend, while anger may motivate us to resolve a conflict.

➤ *Purpose of emotions.*

Every emotion has a function, and while some are uncomfortable, as mentioned above, they are all important. Here are some examples of common emotions and what they teach us or help us to do. For example:

- **Joy:** When you are surprised with a gift or achieve something that matters to you, you feel an emotion of happiness that prompts you to smile or share it with others.
- **Fear:** If you see a car coming towards you quickly, you feel fear, which makes you react to get out of the way and protect yourself.
- **Anger:** If someone treats you unfairly, you may feel anger, which motivates you to stand up for yourself or solve the problem.
- **Sadness:** When you lose something important or someone close to you, you feel sadness, which helps you to reflect and seek comfort.



1. 2. HOW EMOTIONS WORK.

To better understand how emotions work, it is important to analyse the different stages they go through over time. The concept of the "cycle of emotions" will help us in this task, as it describes step by step how emotions evolve in people from their onset to their resolution, i.e. how human emotions evolve, flow and are regulated in response to the events we experience in life. This cycle reflects how emotions arise, develop, are expressed and finally dissipate, helping us to process experiences and adapt to circumstances.

➤ *Main stages of the emotion cycle:*

- **Stimulus or trigger:**

An emotion arises in response to an external event (e.g. someone says something that upsets you) or internal event (a thought, a memory, a physical sensation). This trigger activates an emotional reaction in the brain.

- **Perception and evaluation:**

Stimulus perception follows a clear order in the brain, and the first station is the thalamus. The thalamus acts as a kind of "distribution centre" that receives sensory information (such as sounds, images or tactile sensations) and decides where to send it for processing, either to the amygdala (fast route) or to the prefrontal cortex (slow route).

Fast route (amygdala)

The amygdala is like an 'alarm centre' of the brain, responsible for detecting potentially dangerous stimuli and triggering rapid emotional responses. Its role is especially important in threatening situations, where there is no time for deep cognitive processing. This gives rise to what is known as "amygdala hijacking", a phenomenon that explains why we sometimes react automatically, without thinking. This mechanism has a key evolutionary advantage: rapid activation of the amygdala has been crucial for human survival, allowing us to react instantly to real dangers, such as a predator or a falling object. However, in modern contexts, these automatic responses can be maladaptive. For example, reacting impulsively in an argument due to a quick emotional interpretation can generate unnecessary conflict, showing that our instinctive reactions are not always adequate to the current challenges.



Therefore:

- ♦ Information goes directly from the thalamus (which processes basic sensory stimuli) to the amygdala.
- This circuit is fast but less accurate.
- It allows automatic responses such as running away, screaming or attacking before we are fully aware of the stimulus.
- **Example:** Jumping when hearing an unexpected loud noise before analysing what caused it.

Slow pathway (prefrontal cortex)

The prefrontal cortex is like the desk where we do all our mental work. Imagine you have an organised space where you can plan, solve problems, make decisions and learn new things. This "place where we think" helps us keep our thoughts in order, concentrate on what we are doing and decide what is best at any given moment. It also acts as a filter, helping us to think before we speak or act, as if to remind us: "Wait a minute, check this first! Therefore, we interpret the stimulus according to our beliefs, past experiences and the context. For example, the same event can generate sadness or anger depending on how we interpret it. So:

- ♦ Information travels from the thalamus to the prefrontal cortex, where it is processed in a more detailed and conscious way.
- This circuit is slower, but allows us to evaluate the context and adjust our response.
- **Example:** After jumping at the noise, you realise that it was just a door banging in the wind and you calm down.



The process is neither black nor white, it is grey!

In reality, the process our brains go through does not follow a single pathway, but is a combination of both. Although many emotional responses occur automatically, the cycle of emotions also includes moments when we have the ability to reprocess and modulate our initial reaction. This adjustment occurs through the interaction between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex, which acts as a conscious regulator, allowing us to assess whether our response was appropriate.

For example:

- 1) The amygdala triggers a rapid fear reaction upon seeing a shadow that looks like a dangerous animal.
- 2) The prefrontal cortex, analysing the situation, concludes that it is just a branch blown by the wind.
- 3) This re-evaluation calms the initial response.

- **Emotional responses:**

Three types of responses are activated:

- ♦ **Physiological:** Changes in the body, such as increased heart rate, sweating or muscle tension. A more complete list of physiological reactions that trigger emotions can be found in Annex 1.
- ♦ **Cognitive:** Thoughts associated with the emotion, such as "this is unfair" or "I am not enough".
- ♦ **Behavioural:** Visible actions such as crying, shouting, or avoiding the stimulus.

- **Expression and regulation:**

The emotion is manifested in some way (through the body, words, or behaviour). This is where we decide whether to express the emotion, repress it, or manage it constructively.

- **Integration and recovery:**

The emotion decreases in intensity over time. This is a time of reflection where we process what happened and learn from the experience.

- **Calm or equilibrium:**

At the end of the cycle, we return to a more neutral state, until a new stimulus triggers a different emotion. This emotional balance is important to maintain our mental health.



➤ *Importance of the cycle of emotions*

The cycle of emotions allows us to understand that emotions are not permanent, but have a beginning, a development and an end. This is key to not getting caught up in intense emotions such as sadness or anger.

Learning to manage each stage of the cycle can help us avoid impulsive responses and develop greater emotional intelligence. If the cycle is blocked (for example, if we constantly repress emotions), it can lead to a build-up of stress, anxiety or psychological problems. Therefore, it is important to allow ourselves to feel, reflect and release emotions in a healthy way.

1. 3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE. HOW I MANAGE EMOTIONS.

➤ *Strategy for managing emotions in 4 stages.*

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise, manage and express our emotions appropriately. As mentioned above, emotions function as a mechanism that provides us with valuable information about our internal and external circumstances, in order to generate changes in our behaviour that favour balance and promote our well-being.

Thus, the key questions that will help us to understand this process are: What am I feeling? And What am I doing with what I am feeling? In this sense, the person with high emotional intelligence, which we aspire to become at the end of this module, will be able to identify and take advantage of the useful information provided by their emotions to face and resolve situations effectively. In addition, you will develop the ability to recognise and discard emotional information that is maladaptive or irrelevant to the situation. This is crucial as, due to the natural functioning of emotions, emotional responses can arise which, if not managed properly, can contribute to discomfort or even the development of psychological problems, such as anxiety or prolonged sadness.

This balance between taking advantage of what is useful and discarding what is unnecessary is essential for building lasting emotional well-being and preventing the negative effects of mismanaged emotions on our mental health and personal relationships. To achieve this, we can follow the following 4 steps:



1) Identifying the emotion.

Have you ever felt something that you couldn't explain clearly? In order to manage our emotions, we must first learn to identify them, and this requires familiarity with them. While some emotions, such as sadness or happiness, are more obvious, others may be more subtle or blend together, making them difficult to understand. In some cases, the difficulty in recognising emotions is that we have not taken the time to understand them in depth: what they are, what they mean, why they arise and what triggers them. Nor do we often explore the signs or indicators that help us differentiate between them, such as physiological reactions, facial expressions, behaviours or thoughts. Without this knowledge, it is easy to become confused about what we are experiencing. Therefore, a fundamental step in developing our emotional intelligence is to familiarise ourselves with emotions.

To support you in this process, we have included an emotion dictionary (Annex 2) in which you can discover and explore the most common emotions, as well as the indicators that will help you recognise them, such as physiological changes or the typical trigger thoughts for each one. Take the time to familiarise yourself with them, reflect on how they manifest in your life and begin to name them. This exercise will be the basis for a better understanding of what you are feeling and will help you to develop your emotional intelligence.

2) Regulating emotional intensity:

Once we have identified the emotion, we must reduce its intensity to allow the prefrontal cortex, in charge of rational thinking, to function properly without the interference of the amygdala. This helps us to think clearly and make more rational decisions. To make this task easier for you, we have compiled some strategies (appendix 3) that combine physiological, cognitive and behavioural approaches to deal effectively with intense emotions.

3) Analysing the information provided by the emotion.

Every emotion arises for a reason. It is important to analyse what is behind the emotion: What situation provoked it? What needs or values are at stake? This emotion provides us with valuable information about what is going on inside us and in our environment. By taking a moment to reflect on its origin, we can better understand the message the emotion is sending us and use it as a tool for positive change.



4) Make decisions about how to act.

Once we have regulated the emotion and understood its message, the next step is to make decisions about what to do with the information we have gathered. How do we direct our actions so that the emotion works in our favour? This step involves choosing a conscious and strategic response that is aligned with our personal goals, whether it is seeking a solution to the conflict, improving a situation or taking action to take care of our well-being. The goal is to channel emotion in a way that propels us towards useful and positive action, contributing to a more balanced and healthy life.

In short, emotional self-regulation is not only about managing what we feel, but also about using that emotional energy to make decisions that bring us closer to our personal goals, promoting a more harmonious and conscious life.

1. 4. WHEN EMOTIONS BECOME MALADAPTIVE: WARNING SIGNS AND PATHWAYS TO WELL-BEING.

Although all emotions serve a valuable function, they are not always expressed or processed in a healthy way. At times, emotions can become maladaptive, meaning that they stop helping us adapt to our environment or our inner world and begin to generate distress, blockage, or difficulties in everyday life. This can happen for various reasons: unresolved past experiences, dysfunctional emotional learning, a lack of resources to manage what we feel, or current situations that reactivate old wounds.

When can an emotion become maladaptive?

Some signs that indicate that an emotion is no longer fulfilling its healthy function are:

- Its intensity is excessive or disproportionate to the stimulus.
- Its duration extends over time beyond what would normally be expected.
- It appears frequently in similar or different situations.
- It interferes with well-being, relationships, or daily activities.
- It leads us to act in ways that harm ourselves or others.
- It becomes a repetitive pattern that limits our emotional freedom.



For example, feeling fear in the face of a real danger is adaptive, but if that fear appears constantly without a clear threat (as in some cases of generalized anxiety), it can become maladaptive. The same occurs with deep sadness that persists over time without relief, or with anger that becomes overwhelming and distances us from the people we care about.

What can we do?

When we identify emotions that seem to be “malfunctioning,” the goal is not to eliminate them, but to understand their origin, examine their message, and seek healthier ways to regulate and express them.

Some key strategies may include:

- Observing what we feel with curiosity, without judgment.
- Asking ourselves: What is this emotion trying to tell me? Does it make sense in this context?
- Exploring whether there are unmet emotional needs behind that emotion.
- Seeking help if the distress becomes persistent or difficult to manage.
- Using emotional intelligence strategies to regulate, understand, and act in a more conscious manner.

Let us remember: a maladaptive emotion is not a “bad” emotion, but rather a sign that there is something within us that requires attention, care, and transformation. Listening to these signals is part of the path toward emotional well-being.



1. 5. *SYNTHESIS.*

At the end of this first module, we have explored in depth what emotions are, how they work and how we can manage them effectively. Understanding emotions is an essential step in achieving sustainable emotional wellbeing, as it allows us to tap into their wealth of information while learning to minimise their negative impact when they are not properly regulated.

We have discovered that emotions are much more than just reactions. They are an intrinsic mechanism of our organism, designed to help us adapt to our environment and guide us towards balance. Each emotion has a purpose and arises in a cycle that includes its perception, evaluation, expression, regulation and eventual resolution or integration. Recognising this process allows us to relate to our emotions in a more conscious and beneficial way.

We have also introduced the concept of emotional intelligence as the ability to manage our emotions appropriately and effectively. Through the four key stages-identification, intensity regulation, information analysis and decision-making-we can transform our emotions into valuable tools to solve problems, strengthen our relationships and promote our personal growth.

This module not only teaches us to know and manage our emotions, but also lays the foundation for developing emotional skills that enable us to live more balanced and fulfilled lives. In the following chapters, we will delve even deeper into the practical strategies that will help us to put this learning into practice, consolidating our capacity to act with emotional intelligence in the different areas of our lives.



PEERAR



MODULE 2

UNDERSTANDING THOUGHT AND BELIEFS -THE MIND-

2. 1. INTRODUCTION.

2. 2. THOUGHTS, SHAPERS OF OUR REALITY.

➤ Cognitive distortions.

- Types of cognitive distortions.
 - ✦ All-or-nothing thinking.
 - ✦ Overgeneralisation.
 - ✦ Mental Filtering.
 - ✦ Disqualification of the Positive.
 - ✦ Mind Reading.
 - ✦ Catastrophising.
 - ✦ Emotional Reasoning.
 - ✦ "Should" Statements.
 - ✦ Labelling.
 - ✦ Personalisation.

2. 3. BELIEFS WHAT ARE THEY AND WHAT IS THEIR ORIGIN?

➤ Maladaptive beliefs.

➤ Limiting vs. empowering.

2. 4. MANAGEMENT OF MALADAPTIVE THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS.

➤ Identification of maladaptive thoughts and beliefs.

- Cognitive restructuring to transform negative thoughts and beliefs.
- Promoting healthy and empowering beliefs.

2. 5. SYNTHESIS



2. 1. INTRODUCTION:

Taking care of our emotional health is key to living a full and balanced life, and for this it is essential to understand the role played by our thoughts and beliefs. Beliefs are those deep and abiding ideas that influence how we see the world and guide us in our daily decisions. In contrast, thoughts are more immediate and arise in specific moments, reflecting our reactions to a situation or emotion. Although they are closely related, beliefs form the underlying framework through which we interpret everything that happens to us, while thoughts are the immediate responses that emerge within that framework.

When we change our beliefs, we can profoundly transform our thoughts and, with it, the way we live and act. In this module, we will delve together into the workings of these dynamics, learn to identify when our thoughts and beliefs are affecting us negatively and explore tools and strategies to manage them. The aim is to give you a clearer understanding of how you interpret reality and thus help you take control of your emotional well-being.

2. 2. THOUGHTS, SHAPERS OF OUR REALITY.

Mary was walking down the street when she saw her friend John on the opposite pavement. With a big smile, she raised her hand in greeting. John walked past her without looking at her. Maria stood still, thinking, "He's probably mad at me, maybe I did something to upset him." She felt anxious and guilty all the way home. Later, when she passed him again, John greeted her enthusiastically and said, "I didn't see you before! I was so focused on getting to work on time that I didn't even notice anything around me."

This simple misunderstanding is a clear example of how thoughts function as lenses through which we interpret everything that happens around us. Their main function is adaptive: they help us solve problems, make decisions and cope with different situations in life. However, we do not always have full control over what we think and how we think. Many thoughts arise automatically and unconsciously. Sometimes, as happened to Maria, these thoughts can become maladaptive, disconnecting us from reality and distorting our perception. This can generate negative emotions or block our ability to act with clarity. Such thoughts are known as cognitive biases or cognitive distortions.



➤ *Cognitive distortions*

As we have already seen in the previous example, cognitive distortions are maladaptive thought patterns that lead us to interpret reality inaccurately, generating unnecessary negative emotions. This phenomenon is completely natural and occurs in everyone, to a greater or lesser degree. These automatic thoughts often appear without us realising it, distorting our perception by interpreting as negative an event that could be ambiguous or even harmless. They also tend to reinforce negative beliefs about ourselves, the world and the future.

Although these distortions have an adaptive origin, as in the past they helped us to make quick decisions in the face of potentially dangerous stimuli, in our daily lives they are often counterproductive. They can lead us to make impulsive decisions, misinterpret situations and generate emotional blocks, provoking disproportionate reactions that hinder our well-being. Recognising and understanding these distortions is a key step in managing them effectively. By doing so, we can reduce their negative impact, better cope with emotional challenges and promote a more balanced well-being.

In the following, we will explore the most common types of cognitive distortions to familiarise ourselves with these patterns and learn how to address them.

➤ *Types of cognitive distortions.*

- **All-or-nothing thinking.**

This is seeing things in extremes: black or white, with no middle ground. If something is not perfect, it is perceived as a complete failure.

☐ Examples:

"If I don't get the best grade on this exam, I'm useless."

"If I don't get the whole project done today, it's as if I haven't done anything."

"If he didn't text me back quickly, he probably doesn't care about me anymore."

- **Overgeneralisation.**

This is based on taking an isolated event and assuming that this will always be the case. This thinking turns a single instance into a permanent rule.



☐ Examples:

"I got turned down for this job; I'm never going to get a job."

"Whenever I try to speak in public, I get nervous. I'm no good at this."

"We argued once; this relationship will always be adversarial."

- **Mental Filter.**

Is focusing only on the negative aspects of a situation and overlooking them or ignoring the positive.

☐ Examples:

"In the meeting I was wrong on one point; no one noticed the good ideas I proposed."

"Even though my boss complimented me, all I can think about is the comment he made about being more punctual."

"Even though I did well at the event, I still think about the moment when I almost fell down."

- **Disqualification of the Positive.**

Consists of minimising or dismissing the positive, as if it were worthless or accidental.

☐ Examples:

"Yes, I passed the exam, but it was because the questions were easy."

"Sure, they told me I did a good job, but they probably just wanted to be nice."

"They complimented me on my presentation, but it was nothing special, anyone would have done the same."

- **Mind Reading.**

It is assuming you know what others think of you, usually negatively, without evidence.

☐ Examples:

"I'm sure they think I dressed weird at the party."

"I think he didn't answer my message because he's upset with me."

"I'm sure my boss thinks I'm not competent."



- **Catastrophising.**

It is anticipating the worst possible outcome in a situation, without considering other possibilities.

☐ Examples:

"If I miss this train, I won't make the meeting, I'll get fired and ruin my career."

"I have a headache, I'm sure it's something serious like a tumour."

"If I fail this exam, I'll never be able to graduate."

- **Emotional Reasoning.**

It is based on believing that if you feel something, it must be true, even if there is no evidence to support it.

☐ Examples:

"I feel insecure, so I must be doing everything wrong."

"I'm nervous about my presentation, I'm sure it won't be good."

"I feel like I'm not good enough, so it must be true."

- **"Should" statements.**

These are rigid rules about how you or others should act, which generate frustration when they are not followed.

☐ Examples:

"I should be able to handle all of this without help."

"I shouldn't feel sad, there are people who have bigger problems."

"Others should treat me with more respect."

- **Labelling.**

Is placing a negative label on yourself or others based on a specific action or event.

☐ Examples:

"I'm a mess because I forgot the appointment."

"She's selfish because she didn't text me back."

"I gave a bad presentation, I'm incompetent."



- **Personalisation.**

It is assuming that everything that happens around you is about you, or is your responsibility.

□ **Examples:**

"My friend is in a bad mood, I must have done something to annoy him."

"The project went wrong because I wasn't good enough."

"The meeting was chaotic because I didn't intervene to organise it better."

Have you identified with any of the examples we have seen? Maybe when reading them you have recognised yourself or remembered a situation in which these thoughts popped into your mind. The cases mentioned above are just some of the most characteristic ones, but there are many other cognitive distortions that also influence the way we interpret reality. To explore them in more detail, we invite you to consult Annex 4, where you will find a more complete list. Even with the examples presented, it is enough to start reflecting on our own thinking patterns and take the first step towards greater emotional and mental well-being.

2. 3. BELIEFS, WHAT THEY ARE AND WHERE THEY COME FROM.

➤ **Maladaptive beliefs.**

Phrases such as "Life is hard", "You only live once", "True friendships require daily effort" or "Failure is just learning" are beliefs that, although not always verifiable, are deeply rooted in our minds and we often do not question them. These beliefs, although they may lack logic, serve to interpret reality, helping us to understand and react to everyday situations.

Beliefs are ideas, judgements and evaluations about ourselves, others and the world around us. They are mental schemas stored in our memory that, rather than being rational, are assumed to be true. Through them, we filter our perception of the world and, based on this filter, we make decisions and act accordingly.

The set of all beliefs together forms what we call our belief system, a dynamic set that is mainly shaped during our childhood, influenced by our family and culture. This system is not static, but evolves throughout our lives, either by new experiences or by conscious decisions to modify our beliefs.



Beliefs function as "our personal truths" and act as "prophecies of inevitable fulfilment". That is, our beliefs guide our actions, which reinforce the beliefs, creating a self-reinforcing cycle. But what happens when these beliefs, instead of helping us, become impediments that limit our potential, generate insecurities or perpetuate negative patterns in our lives? In these cases, far from being a support, they become barriers that hinder us from moving towards our goals and building healthy relationships. Therefore, it is essential to become aware of them, question them and, if necessary, change them so that they work in our favour and allow us to grow and adapt better to reality.

➤ *Limiting vs. empowering beliefs.*

The beliefs we have about ourselves, others and the world play a fundamental role in the way we face life. There are two types of beliefs that, depending on how we manage them, can positively or negatively influence our daily experience: empowering beliefs and limiting beliefs.

Empowering beliefs are those that drive us to grow, to overcome obstacles and to believe in our own capabilities. These beliefs give us confidence and motivate us to take risks, learn from our mistakes and keep moving forward. They are thoughts like "I am capable of learning new skills", "Effort brings rewards" or "Every challenge makes me stronger". With these beliefs, we feel empowered to make bold decisions and pursue our goals with perseverance.

On the other hand, limiting beliefs keep us trapped in thoughts that paralyse us and prevent us from moving forward. These beliefs tell us that we are not enough, that we don't deserve what we want or that change is too risky. Phrases such as "I'm not good at it", "It's too late to start something new" or "I'll never get what I want" are examples of limiting beliefs. These types of beliefs create mental barriers that prevent us from exploring our full potential.

The difference between empowering and limiting beliefs lies in how they affect us: empowering beliefs open doors, motivate us and push us to do our best, while limiting beliefs trap us in a cycle of doubt and fear, holding us back before we even try.

Therefore, in the following section we give you the guidelines to carry out a deep analysis of your own belief system, being essential to identify what they are and how they influence your daily life. By becoming aware of those limiting beliefs that are holding you back, you will have the opportunity to transform them into empowering beliefs. This change of perspective will not only broaden your horizons and allow you to face challenges with greater confidence, but will also strengthen your self-esteem and your ability to make decisions and act more effectively.



2. 4. MANAGING MALADAPTIVE THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS.

➤ *Identifying maladaptive thoughts and beliefs.*

As we have already seen, our beliefs and thoughts can become barriers when they are maladaptive, negatively influencing our perception of reality and our decisions. The first step in managing both maladaptive thoughts and beliefs is to identify them, because without being aware of them it is impossible to change them. To do this, it is important to pay attention to the moments when our negative emotions are intense or our reactions seem disproportionate, asking ourselves questions such as "What was I thinking at that moment" or "How is this belief influencing my reaction?"

Another useful strategy is to recall recent situations in which you have not been feeling well emotionally and reflect on the thoughts or beliefs that may have been present at those times. For example, you could ask yourself: "What thought or assumption led me to feel this way?" or "What belief might be linked to this discomfort? If, for example, you feel frustrated after not receiving a quick response to a message, you might identify that the underlying belief is "If I don't get a quick response, it means they don't care about me". This belief can generate insecurity and discomfort, and by identifying it, you can begin to question it and seek a more realistic and balanced perspective.

This process of identification allows us to bring to the surface automatic patterns that we may have normalised, laying the groundwork for addressing them more consciously. Once detected, the next step is to work on modifying them.

➤ *Cognitive restructuring to transform negative thoughts and beliefs.*

Cognitive restructuring is a key technique in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) that aims to transform negative and dysfunctional thoughts into more balanced and realistic interpretations. This process involves challenging the automatic and distorted beliefs we have about ourselves, others and the world, and replacing them with more adaptive and positive thoughts.

As we have already seen in the previous section, to carry out cognitive restructuring effectively, the first thing to do is to identify the negative beliefs or thoughts that arise in times of emotional distress. Once you have identified them, you can follow a series of steps to challenge and transform them. Below, we will guide you through some key questions you can ask yourself to challenge these negative thoughts, using an example to illustrate how to go about it.



□ Imagine that after a job interview, you think:

"I didn't do well, I'm probably not going to get called back. I'm a failure."

You might ask yourself the following questions to challenge this thought:

1. "Is this thought really true?" You don't know how your interview was fully evaluated. You have not received direct feedback from the interviewer, so your conclusion of "I am a failure" is based on an assumption, not on concrete facts.

2. "Do I have concrete evidence to support the belief that I did not do well?" or "Do I have all the information necessary to reach this conclusion?" In this case, you don't have all the information. There may have been difficult questions, but you also answered others with confidence. So, the conclusion that "you didn't get it right" may not be accurate.

3. What other explanations could there be? There could be other factors that influenced the outcome of the interview, such as the interviewer having a difficult day or having limited time to delve into your profile. It is important to consider other possible explanations rather than thinking so negatively.

4. Is this thinking helping or hurting me? This type of thinking only generates anxiety and decreases your motivation. Instead of helping you to improve your performance or learn from the experience, it is leaving you in a state of hopelessness, which is not helpful.

5. What would be the worst thing that could happen? The worst case scenario would be that you don't get the job, but that doesn't mean you are a failure. You can think of this situation as an opportunity to improve yourself, learn from the experience and look for other options. The fact that you don't get a job does not define your worth as a person.

After challenging these thoughts with these questions, you can replace the negative thinking with a more balanced and realistic one. For example, instead of thinking "I'm a failure", you can restructure it to something like: "Even though I wasn't perfect, I did my best. If I don't get called back, I will keep looking for other opportunities. This is just one more step in my career."

Cognitive restructuring takes practice and patience, but over time, by questioning and replacing negative thoughts with more realistic alternatives, your mind will train itself to interpret situations in a healthier, more adaptive way. This not only improves how you perceive challenges, but also has a positive impact on your emotional well-being and your ability to cope with everyday life.



➤ *Foster healthy and empowering beliefs.*

Having identified and transformed negative thoughts through cognitive restructuring, the next step is to strengthen deeper, healthier beliefs that serve as a foundation for dealing with challenges in a positive and resilient way. While cognitive restructuring works with immediate and specific thoughts, fostering empowering beliefs focuses on changing the overall narrative we have about ourselves and the world.

Empowering beliefs are those that support us, motivate us and allow us to move forward even in difficult times. Unlike limiting beliefs that hold us back, healthy beliefs propel us towards personal, professional and emotional success.

☐ Practical example:

SSuppose your habitual belief is: "I'm not capable of doing important things, I'm always wrong." This limiting belief may cause you to avoid making important decisions or taking on new challenges for fear of failure. To transform it into a healthier belief, you can follow these steps:

1. Identify the limiting belief.

In this case, the belief is: "I am not capable of doing important things". This may have limited you in the past and created doubts about your capabilities.

2. Question that belief.

Ask yourself, "Is it true that I am always wrong?" Think about past situations where you have made good decisions or achieved something important. You may have had moments of success in which you demonstrated ability and competence.

3. Replace the limiting belief with an empowering belief.

After questioning that belief, try to replace it with something more positive and realistic: "Even though I make mistakes, I am capable of learning from them and improving. I have the capacity to do important things and face challenges." This belief allows you to acknowledge your limitations, but gives you confidence in your ability to overcome them.

4. Reinforce the healthy belief.

The key to making this empowering belief stronger is to practice it constantly. You can remind yourself of your past successes, affirm yourself every day in your abilities, and visualise your future achievements. Over time, this belief will strengthen and guide your decisions and behaviours in a more positive way.



In conclusion, both cognitive restructuring and fostering empowering beliefs are powerful tools for improving our emotional and mental well-being. Cognitive restructuring allows us to address and modify automatic and negative thoughts that arise in times of distress, helping us to see situations in a more balanced and realistic way. On the other hand, fostering healthy and empowering beliefs takes a more long-term approach, helping us to transform the core beliefs that guide our decisions and behaviours, strengthening our confidence and resilience. While cognitive restructuring works on specific, one-off thoughts, fostering empowering beliefs focuses on strengthening our self-perception and our ability to cope with challenges. Both strategies, although different in their approach, complement each other and allow us to achieve lasting, positive change in our lives.

2. 5. SYNTHESIS.

In this module we have explored the workings of the mind and how our thoughts and beliefs shape our reality. We have studied cognitive distortions, those mental filters that have often made us see life in a biased way (and, let's face it, with more drama than necessary). We have also analysed the origin of our beliefs, differentiating between those that have driven us and those that have limited us. But we didn't stop at theory: we learned how to identify and transform maladaptive thoughts and beliefs, applying strategies such as cognitive restructuring. In short, we have worked on our way of thinking to develop a healthier, more flexible and empowering mindset. Mission accomplished! 🚀



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MODULE 3

SELF-CARE AND PERSONAL WELLBEING -THE BODY-

3. 1. BODY.

- Importance of physical care in the emotional state.
- Listening to the body: signs of well-being and exhaustion.

3. 2. EXERCISE AND MOVEMENT.

- Benefits of exercise on mental and emotional health.
- Strategies for moving more in everyday life.
 - What exercise is best for you?
 - Tools and strategies for incorporating exercise into your life.

3. 3. FOOD AND REST.

- Nourish your body, nourish your mood.
- Importance of sleep. Healthy sleep habits and their impact on the mind.

3. 4. RELAXATION AND CONNECTING WITH THE PRESENT.

- My time and space.
- Breathing techniques and mindfulness.
- Mindfulness.
- Meditation and stress management.

3. 5. SYNTHESIS.



3. 1. BODY AND MOVEMENT.

➤ *Importance of physical care in the emotional state.*

Our body is much more than a set of muscles, bones and organs. It is our vehicle, the only one with which we will travel throughout our lives. And like any vehicle, its performance will depend on how we take care of it.

Imagine you have a car. If you ignore it, never maintain it, push it to the limit and fill it with poor quality fuel, it will gradually start to break down. Maybe at first it will just make strange noises, but if you keep ignoring it, one day it will leave you stranded in the middle of the road. It's the same with our body. If we don't take care of it, if we relentlessly overload it, if we ignore its signs of fatigue or discomfort, it will fail when we need it most. On the other hand, if we treat it with care and respect, if we give it the rest, movement and nourishment it needs, then instead of an old, worn-out car, we will have a well-tuned Ferrari: a body that is agile, resilient, full of energy and ready to respond to any challenge life throws our way.

Physical care not only improves our ability to move with ease, but also has a direct impact on how we feel emotionally. Exercising regularly, eating a balanced diet and getting enough rest are not only pillars of keeping the body in good shape, but are also fundamental to our emotional well-being. When our body is well cared for, our mind is well cared for. We feel more balanced, more energetic to face the day and more resilient in the face of challenges. For example, exercise not only tones our muscles, but also acts as a kind of "cleanser" for our emotions, helping to reduce stress and anxiety, while a nutritious diet and good rest allow our minds to function more clearly and calmly. In the end, when we give the body what it needs, we are not only investing in our physical health, but also in our emotional stability, leading to a happier, calmer and more balanced life.



➤ *Listening to the body: signs of well-being and exhaustion.*

Nowadays, we have access to a huge amount of information on how to take care of our body; books, articles, videos, health influencers... the message is clear: we must move more, eat better, get enough rest and, above all, listen to our body. But, despite all this knowledge, we still fall into the trap of ignoring our body's signals or simply not applying it in our daily lives. We focus so much on what we "should" be doing that we forget the most important thing: taking a moment to really listen to what our body is telling us.

Our body is an incredibly wise system that gives us constant signals of well-being or exhaustion. However, we often don't pay attention to these little "warnings" until we are already exhausted or, at worst, sick. It is essential that we understand that self-care is not just a reaction to illness, but a preventive attitude that we must cultivate every day. When we are in balance, we feel the body respond with energy, vitality and agility. Our mind is clear, our mood is stable and we feel able to face whatever comes our way. These are signs that we are doing the right things: we are eating right, moving regularly and getting the rest we need. This is the optimal state to strive for, a state of wellbeing that we can maintain with small daily actions. But what happens when the signs of exhaustion start to appear? Perhaps we feel more tired than usual, or we notice that our physical or emotional performance is not the same. These are the first signs that something is not working well. Muscle tension, lack of concentration, insomnia or irritability are just some of the symptoms that warn us that we need to take a break or make an adjustment to our routine. If we ignore them, it is possible that exhaustion can become chronic and we may begin to suffer from major problems, both physical and emotional.

This is where the importance of preventive care comes in. As with the vehicle in the previous metaphor, regular maintenance before serious problems arise is ideal. Don't wait for the body to "stop" before taking care of it. Incorporating preventive self-care habits is key to keeping the body functioning at its best: eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, getting enough rest and, above all, as mentioned above, being aware of the body's signals. Thus, when we pay attention to our physical needs, we feel more balanced and better able to handle stress. Self-care is an ongoing process that goes beyond correcting problems when they are already present. The key is regular maintenance and prevention. By paying attention to our body's signs of wellness and exhaustion, we give it the opportunity to continue to function efficiently and energetically, and ensure that we can enjoy life's journey more fully, respecting our physical and emotional needs.



So, even though we live in an age of constant social pressures, with a pace of life that often forces us to put the needs of the body on the back burner, the demands of work, family and society make it difficult for us to keep up with our physical and emotional needs. Work, family and social demands lead us to overload ourselves, ignoring the signs of exhaustion. But while stress is part of modern life, it is essential to pause in the midst of this hustle and bustle to stop, be aware of what our bodies need and allow ourselves to rest or adjust our routines. Taking time to listen to our body is not a luxury, but a basic necessity to maintain a healthy life in harmony with ourselves.

3. 2. EXERCISE AND MOVEMENT.

➤ *Benefits of exercise on mental and emotional health.*

We often think of physical activity only as a means to "get fit" or "lose a few pounds", but in reality, moving is much more than that. Exercise is a powerful tool for improving our mood, reducing stress, increasing energy and strengthening our minds. It's not about becoming elite athletes, but about understanding that movement is key to living with more balance and well-being. If exercise came in pill form, it would probably be the most prescribed drug in the world because of its impressive benefits:

- **Reduces stress and anxiety:** Has it ever happened to you that after a walk or dance session you feel more relaxed? That's because exercise releases endorphins, chemicals that work as a "natural painkiller" and help reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol.
- **It improves mood:** Physical movement stimulates the production of serotonin and dopamine, key neurotransmitters in regulating emotions. As a result, regular exercise can help combat mild depression and improve overall feelings of well-being.
- **Increases mental clarity and concentration:** When we exercise, blood flow to the brain increases, which improves memory, creativity and the ability to concentrate. If you've ever felt mentally blocked, try moving around a bit - going for a walk or stretching can do wonders for your productivity.
- **Help you sleep better:** If you find it hard to fall asleep or wake up without energy, exercise can be a great ally. Physical activity helps regulate circadian rhythms and promotes deeper, more restful sleep.
- **Increases emotional resilience:** Exercise teaches us to tolerate effort, to overcome challenges and to better handle frustration. It helps us develop discipline and perseverance, skills that we can then apply in other areas of our lives.



The benefits of exercise are therefore not just an abstract idea or popular advice, but are backed up by solid scientific studies. The release of neurotransmitters such as endorphins, serotonin and dopamine is not just a temporary "good feeling", but a biological process that profoundly affects how we feel and how our minds respond to stress, anxiety and fatigue. Regular physical activity changes our brain chemically and structurally, improving not only our mood, but also our ability to concentrate, emotional resilience and even the quality of our sleep. So, by moving, you're not just taking care of your body; you're reprogramming your brain to live a more balanced and healthy life.

➤ *Estrategies to move more in everyday life.*

Now that we've explored the benefits of exercise for our mental and emotional health, it's time to find out what kind of activity is best for us. How many times have we seen someone join a gym or start an exercise routine, convinced that it's what they "should" be doing, only to realise a few weeks later that it's not for them, that it doesn't fit with their lifestyle or what they really enjoy, and end up quitting, feeling more frustrated than motivated? This is precisely what happens when we try to fit into a mould that is not our own, in the end, exercise becomes a burden, and not a tool to improve our well-being.

This is why it is essential to personalise the planning of our future exercise routine, in order to find an activity that we like, that we enjoy and that suits us. In this way, exercise will cease to be an obligation and become a natural and enjoyable part of our daily routine. As we saw in the previous example, starting an exercise routine without adequate preparation can be fertile ground for demotivation, especially when we jump into it without thinking about how to structure it realistically, which increases the likelihood of early abandonment. This is where the importance of prevention comes in. It is crucial to take action from the beginning, to plan a strategy to start gradually and sustainably. It is not enough to decide to exercise; it is necessary to generate a structure that allows us to maintain consistency, adapting routines to what we can actually sustain in the long term. Planning includes not only the choice of activity, but also how to integrate exercise into our daily lives without it becoming a burden. Creating a well thought-out and realistic strategy is just as important (if not more so) than the exercise itself, as it significantly increases the likelihood of continuity and success. So, with the right approach, we will not only improve our physical and emotional well-being, but also incorporate exercise as a lasting and satisfying habit.



So, rather than going with the flow of what is fashionable or what we "should" do, the important thing is to move regularly, in a way that makes us feel good and enjoy it. In the following section, we give you some tips on how to find the activity that suits you best and how to incorporate it naturally and enjoyably into your daily routine.

- **Which exercise is best for you?**

There is no single answer here. The key is to find something you enjoy. We don't all have to run marathons or lift weights at the gym. If you enjoy dancing, dance! If walking relaxes you, go for a walk. The important thing is to move regularly and fit the activity into your lifestyle. To make exercise a habit rather than an obligation, we suggest you consider the following:

- ♦ **Choose something you enjoy:** If you hate running, don't force yourself to do it. Look for activities that motivate you.
- ♦ **Start small:** You don't need a 2-hour daily routine. Even 15-20 minutes a day makes a difference.
- ♦ **Make it fun:** Music, company, new challenges? Find ways to make exercise an enjoyable time.
- ♦ **Listen to your body:** Move, but don't take it to extremes. The idea is to feel better, not exhausted.

...And remember: the best exercise is not the most intense or the most fashionable, it's the one you do consistently and enjoy.

- **Tools and strategies for incorporating exercise into your daily life.**

As we have seen, sometimes the idea of incorporating exercise into our daily routine can seem overwhelming, especially when we feel that time is not on our side. However, the key is consistency and finding simple ways to integrate exercise into our lives without it becoming a burden. It's not about doing it all at once or being perfect, but about finding our own little strategies to help us take those first steps and keep moving. In this way, exercise becomes a natural part of our routine and not an obligation. Here are some examples of simple strategies you can apply to start moving more, even on the busiest days:



- ♦ **Apply the 10-minute rule:** If you ever feel like you don't feel like exercising, set a small, achievable goal: commit to moving for just 10 minutes. Often, once you start, the motivation will kick in on its own and you'll end up extending that time. The key is to overcome that initial barrier, and those 10 minutes can be the first step to incorporating regular exercise into your daily routine.
- ♦ **Turn everyday activities into exercise:** There are many ways to move around during the day without setting aside extra time for exercise. Take the stairs instead of the lift, walk while you talk on the phone, or play music and dance while you cook. These small actions can add up to much more than you might imagine and, at the same time, make exercise fun and natural.
- ♦ **Find the learning and support method that works for you:** If you are more inclined towards a more specialised exercise option, there are many options available, so it is important to choose the one that best suits your lifestyle and daily routine. You can opt for a gym, group classes, follow online tutorials, join local activities or even have a personal trainer. The key is to find an option that offers you comfort, fits your availability and gives you the support you need to stay motivated and consistent. The most important thing is to choose what is easiest and most accessible for you.
- ♦ **Make use of downtime:** Take advantage of those little pockets of time that arise throughout the day, such as when you are waiting for something or during a break at work. Use that time to stretch, do some breathing exercises or even walk around a bit. You don't need a long block of time to move; any time works.
- ♦ **Involve someone else:** If you're struggling to stay motivated, get some company. Exercising with a friend, family member or partner can make the activity more enjoyable and increase the likelihood that you will stay committed. Sometimes having someone else to share the experience with makes the whole thing more bearable and fun.
- ♦ **Lay out your workout clothes the night before:** If you're one of those people who always feel pressed for time in the morning, lay out your workout clothes the night before. This way, when you wake up, you'll only have to put on what you already have ready, eliminating any excuse not to move. This small action can motivate you to get moving more efficiently.
- ♦ **Exercise while watching your favourite series:** If you are a fan of series or videos, use that time to exercise. You can do stretches, sit-ups or even walk on a treadmill while enjoying an episode. This way, you take advantage of the entertainment time to stay active without having to dedicate additional time exclusively to exercise.



3. 3. *FOOD AND REST.*

➤ *Feed your body, nourish your mood.*

Food is much more than just satisfying hunger; it is the foundation that sustains our energy, physical and mental health. The relationship between our food and our mood is fundamental, but in today's society, talk of a "balanced diet" has become almost a cliché. Although we are constantly bombarded with information about what we should eat to be healthy, the overload of data often creates more confusion than clarity. The ease with which we have access to ultra-processed products, coupled with the demands of modern life and the lack of time to cook, makes maintaining a healthy diet a challenge.

The consumption of ultra-processed foods has increased greatly due to their accessibility and convenience. These products are designed to be highly palatable and addictive, as they stimulate the release of neurotransmitters such as dopamine, which gives us an immediate feeling of pleasure. This mechanism causes us to constantly seek out more foods that provide us with that "hit" of quick satisfaction. However, in the long term, this type of diet can alter the chemical balance in our brain, which negatively influences our mood, causing energy peaks and troughs, irritability and anxiety.

On the other hand, a balanced diet rich in essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants is not only beneficial for the body, but also has a positive impact on the mind. Foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes and fish rich in healthy fatty acids support the production of neurotransmitters such as serotonin, which is responsible for regulating mood, helping us to stay emotionally balanced and less likely to feel stress or anxiety. The chemistry behind these foods shows us that a healthy diet can have profound effects on our mental and emotional well-being, promoting longer-lasting emotional stability.



- **Strategies for a balanced diet: simple keys to better eating.**

As we have already seen, between daily stress, rushing around, information overload about what we "should" eat and the constant temptation of ultra-processed products, we often don't even know where to start. However, it's not just about choosing what to eat and how much to eat, it's also about how to organise ourselves to take the time to plan our meals and prioritise our health, so, as with exercise, the key is to create habits that allow us the time and space to eat in a conscious and balanced way. If we take the time to think in advance about what we are going to eat, we are one step ahead and avoid making impulsive decisions that are detrimental to our health. The strategy is the same: be aware of how our nutrition works and have a clear plan to make it part of our routine without it becoming a burden. So here is a simple approach based on four key questions that will help you get organised and make the transition to a more balanced diet more accessible. By understanding these 4 dimensions, you will be able to make more conscious choices and have practical resources to integrate a healthy diet into your daily life without complications.

- ♦ **The "What":** The "what" refers to the foods we choose and the amounts we consume. It is essential to understand that a healthy diet begins with gaining a basic understanding of the food groups and essential nutrients our bodies need to function properly. In order to start building a balanced diet, it is not necessary to have an exhaustive knowledge, but it is necessary to have a minimum of knowledge that allows us to make informed choices. To facilitate this process and give you a reference from which to start, we have attached Annex 8, where you will find a table with an estimate of the types of foods, nutrients and quantities generally recommended for a week's balanced diet.

- ♦ **The "How":** this is about simplifying the process of eating healthy, especially in a busy life. Here are some strategies to help you:

1. **Make vegetables and fruits your first choice:** Start every meal with a serving of vegetables or fruit. If you don't like them much, integrate them into soups or smoothies.
2. **Cook at home whenever you can:** Cooking at home gives you control over ingredients. Plan and prepare meals on the weekend so you have healthy options during the week.



3. Keep variety in your diet: Don't always repeat the same foods. Incorporate different proteins and carbohydrates to ensure a complete intake of nutrients.
4. Choose healthy snacks: Replace unhealthy snacks with options such as nuts, plain yoghurt or fruit. Keep healthy options on hand.
5. Listen to your body: Eat mindfully: Practice mindful eating. Eat without distractions and enjoy every bite to better recognise hunger and satiety cues.
6. Drink enough water: Stay hydrated, as sometimes hunger is actually dehydration. Carry water with you and add lemon or herbs for flavour.
7. Don't skip meals, especially breakfast: Eating at regular intervals helps to avoid cravings. Make quick, balanced breakfasts such as oatmeal or yogurt with fruit.
8. Don't punish yourself for an occasional indulgence: The focus should be on moderation. If you crave something less healthy, enjoy it in moderation and pair it with a balanced meal.

By applying these strategies, you will not only improve your health, but also your relationship with food. The goal is to create sustainable and realistic habits that fit into your daily life and, in the long term, allow you to maintain a balanced diet without sacrifice or frustration.

- ♦ **The "When":** The "when" refers to the importance of planning ahead and not waiting until you are hungry to make food choices. By eating consciously and at regular times, you avoid impulsive choices that are often unhealthy. Planning ahead not only saves you stress, but also allows you to make more informed and balanced choices. Organise your week with pre-set menus so that you are not tempted to turn to food.
- ♦ **The "Where":** The environment influences our relationship with food. Eating in a quiet place, without distractions, improves digestion and allows us to better enjoy what we eat. Try to set aside space for meals so that you can eat consciously, savouring each bite and recognising the signs of satiety.

A balanced diet does not have to be difficult to follow, nor does it require restrictive or complicated diets. The secret is to make small changes in our daily habits to ensure that our bodies get the nutrients they need to feel good and function properly.



➤ *Importance of sleep. Healthy sleep habits and their impact on the mind.*

Sleep is one of the fundamental pillars for maintaining optimal physical and mental wellbeing. However, we often underestimate it or sacrifice it in the midst of daily demands. Getting enough sleep not only allows the body to recover, but also has a direct and profound impact on our mind, our emotions and our ability to make decisions. When we don't get the sleep we need, our brains cannot function efficiently. Sleep is the time when the brain processes information, consolidates memory and restores neurotransmitters that are essential for concentration and clear thinking. Lack of rest can lead to lack of mental clarity, difficulty concentrating and increased irritability. In addition, our ability to make rational decisions and remain calm in stressful situations is affected.

Sleep also plays a crucial role in emotional regulation. Good sleep helps us to better manage our emotions, and this is because when we do not get enough sleep, our ability to manage them is impaired. During deep, REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, the brain processes and organises the day's emotional experiences, consolidating memories and emotions, which is essential for managing the next day's situations in a balanced way. If we do not sleep well, this process is disrupted, which can lead to more exaggerated or impulsive reactions. In addition, lack of sleep affects the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for decision-making and self-control. When this area is "worn out" by insufficient rest, the brain resorts to automatic and impulsive responses, associated with the amygdala, which regulates emotions such as fear and anxiety. This increases the likelihood of disproportionate stress, irritability and frustration. Therefore, without adequate rest, emotions can spill over more easily, which can lead to feeling more anxious or frustrated for no clear reason. To ensure that our sleep is restful, it is essential to establish healthy habits that promote quality rest. Here are some key guidelines:

- **Keep a regular schedule:** Going to bed and getting up at the same time every day, even on weekends, regulates your biological clock and improves the quality of your sleep. This makes it easier for your body to get used to a pattern so you can rest better.
- **Create an environment conducive to sleep:** Make sure your sleeping space is comfortable, quiet and dark. Temperature also plays an important role; a cool, but not cold, environment is conducive to deep, restful sleep.
- **Avoid caffeine and heavy meals before bed:** Caffeine can disrupt your ability to fall asleep, as can large or spicy meals, which can cause discomfort. Try to eat dinner at least two hours before bedtime and opt for light meals if you are hungry in the evening.



- **Disconnect from screens:** Blue light from phones, computers and TVs interferes with the production of melatonin, the hormone responsible for regulating sleep. Try to avoid these screens at least 30 minutes before bedtime to give your body a signal that it's time to rest.
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** If you find it difficult to switch off, you can incorporate relaxing activities before bedtime, such as reading a book, meditating or doing deep breathing exercises. This will help calm your mind and prepare your body for a restful sleep.

Getting enough sleep not only improves our cognitive function, but is also essential for maintaining good mental health in the long term. The impact of a good night's sleep is noticeable in our daily performance. If we manage to integrate healthy sleep habits into our routine, we not only improve our ability to concentrate and be productive, but also our emotional stability and our ability to enjoy everyday life with more energy and mental clarity.

3. 4. RELAXATION AND CONNECTION TO THE PRESENT.

In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, our minds often wander between memories of the past and worries about the future, which can increase stress and anxiety. To counteract this, it is essential to learn to pause and refocus our attention on the present. Taking a moment to relax and connect with the now helps to clear the mind, improves our ability to respond to challenges and allows us to enjoy each experience more. Finding these spaces of calm is not a luxury, but a necessity to maintain a balance between body and mind, and with practice, they become a refuge to which we can always return.

➤ *My time and space.*

After days full of responsibilities and constant stimuli, it's easy to forget about ourselves. When was the last time you gave yourself a moment of calm, without interruptions or pending things on your mind? Allotting ourselves these personal spaces is more than just a break; it's a way to reconnect with our well-being. It's not just about finding a quiet place, but also about giving ourselves permission to mentally disconnect from external demands. You don't need hours off or big plans, a few minutes a day can make all the difference. Maybe it's enjoying a quiet cup of tea, immersing yourself in a book you love, or simply taking a leisurely stroll. The important thing is that this time is yours, without the pressure of "what to do next". If we neglect these moments of disconnection, our body and mind suffer. Built-up stress doesn't go away on its own; if we don't manage it, it can affect our energy, our mood and even our health. Giving ourselves a break is an investment in our emotional balance, a way of reminding ourselves that our well-being also deserves space in our routine.



➤ *Breathing techniques.*

Our breathing is a constant and accessible resource, but we rarely pay attention to it. Yet the way we breathe has a direct impact on our physical and emotional state. Breathing is a powerful tool that we can use at any time to reduce stress and reconnect with the present. When we are stressed or anxious, our breathing tends to become rapid and shallow, which further reinforces the feeling of tension. In contrast, deep, conscious breathing can send a calming signal to our nervous system, reducing stress and helping us to regain balance. Below, we will explore some basic breathing techniques that can become key allies in managing stress and improving our overall well-being:

- **Diaphragmatic or abdominal breathing:** This technique involves breathing deeply by drawing the air into the abdomen rather than the chest. As we inhale, we should feel the abdomen expand outwards, and as we exhale, it should retract inwards. This type of breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps us to relax and reduce stress. It is especially useful when we feel anxious or overwhelmed, and can be practised anytime, anywhere, even while sitting or lying down. Just a few minutes of abdominal breathing can have a big impact on how we feel. This technique is simple and easy to implement, making it an excellent choice for those looking to incorporate a relaxing breathing practice without the hassle.
- **The 4-7-8 technique** works as a natural tranquiliser for the nervous system. It consists of inhaling for four seconds, holding the breath for seven and exhaling for eight. By controlling the rhythm of the breath, the heart rate is reduced and a sense of calm is created. It is an excellent technique for relaxing before sleep or in times of intense anxiety.
- **Box breathing:** This technique consists of inhaling, holding the breath, exhaling and holding again, all in a controlled rhythm. Generally, the cycle is done in four beats: inhale for 4 seconds, hold the breath for 4 seconds, exhale slowly for 4 seconds, and then hold the lungs empty for another 4 seconds. Repeating this cycle several times helps to calm the nervous system, reduce anxiety and improve concentration. It is a very practical technique, which you can do anytime, anywhere, and is ideal for when you need to calm down quickly or find some mental balance in the midst of chaos.

Each of these techniques can be adapted to different times of the day and needs, allowing us to better manage our emotions and maintain overall wellbeing. Incorporating them into our daily routine helps us to create a space of calm and balance in the midst of daily demands.



➤ *Mindfulness.*

You've probably heard of mindfulness, a practice that teaches us to be present in the moment without judgement. Like the breathing techniques we explored earlier, mindfulness helps us reduce stress and regain emotional balance, but in this case, it focuses on mindfulness of the present moment. While mindful breathing helps us to calm our mind and body, mindfulness invites us to intentionally pay attention to what we are doing, feeling or experiencing, without letting our mind wander to the past or the future. This practice is not just limited to meditation, but can be integrated into our daily activities, such as eating, walking or even washing the dishes. By focusing our full attention on what we are doing at that precise moment, we reduce feelings of stress and anxiety, enjoy each experience more, and disconnect from distractions. Just as deep breathing helps us to calm our stress response, mindfulness acts as an additional tool to manage our emotions and achieve greater mental clarity. Incorporating both practices into our daily lives can be key to improving our overall well-being and living more fully and consciously.

➤ *Meditation and stress management.*

Meditation is a practice that allows us to train our mind to focus and calm stressful thoughts. There are different types of meditation, but they all have a common goal: to find peace of mind. Some people prefer guided meditation, where a voice guides the process, while others enjoy silent meditation, focusing only on their breathing or a mantra. Meditation is a practice that allows us to train our mind to focus and calm stressful thoughts. Although there are different types of meditation, the key is to learn to find peace of mind. Here is a basic meditation that you can practice, even if you have never done it before:

- 1) Find a quiet place: Find a comfortable place free of distractions, whether at home, in the park or even in your car before going to work.
- 2) Sit or lie down comfortably: If you are sitting, make sure your back is straight but relaxed. You can put your hands on your knees or in your lap.
- 3) Close your eyes and breathe deeply: Inhale slowly through your nose, feeling your abdomen expand. Exhale gently through your mouth, releasing any tension.
- 4) Focus on your breathing: Give your full attention to each breath. Feel the air moving in and out of your body. If your mind wanders with thoughts, simply redirect your attention back to your breath without judgement.



5) Use a mantra (optional): If helpful, repeat a word or phrase that helps you stay focused, such as "calm" or "peace". This can be especially helpful if you find that your mind tends to wander a lot.

6) Start with 5-10 minutes: If you are a beginner, don't worry about doing it for long periods of time. Start with short sessions and gradually increase the duration as you feel more comfortable.

With regular practice, meditation will help you reduce cortisol (the stress hormone) levels, improve your concentration and develop greater emotional awareness. It is not about achieving perfection, but about making meditation a tool for learning to respond in a more balanced way to difficult life situations and helps us to maintain a clearer and calmer perspective on difficult situations, allowing us to respond in a more balanced and less impulsive way.

In short, integrating these practices into our daily routine can have a significant impact on our mental and physical health. Relaxation, conscious breathing, mindfulness and meditation are tools that allow us to manage stress, improve our concentration and increase our overall well-being. Creating time and space to unplug and connect with the present is an investment in our emotional health that is worth making every day.

3. 4. SYNTHESIS:

In this module we explored how taking care of the body is an essential foundation for achieving holistic wellbeing. We understood that taking care of our physical needs, such as nutrition, rest and relaxation, directly influences our emotional and mental health. By incorporating healthy habits into our daily lives, we not only improve our energy and vitality, but also strengthen our ability to cope with challenges and manage stress. In addition, we learned the importance of pausing, connecting with ourselves and finding a balance that allows us to live with more harmony and satisfaction. In short, self-care is an expression of self-respect and self-love that nurtures both body and mind, and helps us to build a strong and lasting wellbeing.



PEERAR



MODULE 4

SELF-AWARENESS

-ME AND MY TOOLS-

4. 1. INTRODUCTION.

4. 2. SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

- Self-concept and self-esteem: Who am I and how much am I worth?
- Distorted self-concept and how it influences self-esteem.
 - Rigid self-concept.
 - An overly restrictive self-concept.
 - Generalised negative self-concept.
 - Fragmented self-concept.
 - A self-concept based on the opinion of others.
 - Self-demanding or perfectionistic self-concept.
 - Inflated self-concept.
- How to build a more realistic and balanced self-concept.
 - Identify your limiting beliefs.
 - Question these beliefs with critical thinking.
 - Reframe these beliefs.
 - Reinforce your new self-concept with action.
 - Be patient and consistent.

4. 3. TRIANGLE EMOTIONAL SELF-MANAGEMENT AS A PERSONAL TOOL.

- How does the triangle work?
 - How to intervene in thoughts.
 - How to intervene on emotions.
 - How to intervene in behaviour.
- Why is triangular emotional self-management so useful?

4. 4. SYNTHESIS



4. 1. INTRODUCTION.

Self-knowledge is an ongoing process that allows us to better understand our identity and our emotional responses. As we deepen this reflective exercise, we gain a clearer picture of the patterns that influence our thoughts, emotions and behaviours. This greater clarity gives us the tools we need to manage our emotions more effectively and make more confident and consistent decisions. It is no longer just about seeking calm or balance, but about understanding what we really need to feel good and how to achieve it. By knowing our strengths and limitations, and being aware of how we value ourselves, we can make wiser decisions and significant changes that allow us to live with more confidence and fulfilment. This self-knowledge not only helps us to see what motivates and limits us, but gives us the clarity to take firm steps towards what really makes us feel good and grow.

In this module, we will delve into several aspects of self-knowledge that are key to understanding our relationship with ourselves. We will examine self-concept and self-esteem as aspects that profoundly influence how we face everyday challenges. By recognising our strengths and weaknesses, and understanding how we value ourselves, we can begin to work more consciously on improving those areas we wish to transform.

In addition to exploring these concepts, we will introduce a basic emotional management strategy to use as a personal tool: triangular emotional management. This strategy will allow us to understand how our thoughts, emotions and behaviours are connected and how a change in one of these elements can influence the others. Through this strategy, we will learn to touch the right key to modify those thoughts, behaviours or emotions that limit us in achieving a more balanced and healthy emotional response.

In short, in this module we will get to know ourselves a little better in order to take control of our life and well-being, understanding how we perceive ourselves and, most importantly, how we can transform that vision to our benefit.



4. 2. SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

➤ *Autoconcepto and self-esteem: Who am I and how much am I worth?*

You have probably noticed that, in psychology, we work with many ideas and terms that can sometimes be a bit confusing. Self-concept and self-esteem are a good example of this; they are often used, but not everyone is very clear about what they mean. To clear up any doubts, let's define two of these concepts in a simple way:

Self-concept is the set of ideas and beliefs that you have about yourself in different areas such as physical, emotional, intellectual, social or work-related. It is a cognitive description, i.e. how you define yourself based on your characteristics and experiences. It is not a visual image, like the one you see in the mirror, but a mental description of how you define yourself based on your characteristics and experiences. In essence, the self-concept answers the question "Who am I?" and reflects the image you construct of yourself based on what you think and what you have experienced. For example, if you were told as a child that you were good at sports, you are likely to believe that you are athletic; and if you were constantly labelled as "clumsy" or "absent-minded", you may incorporate those ideas, even as you may develop other skills over time. As you get older, your self-concept becomes more complex and detailed. You no longer define yourself with simple phrases like "I'm good at maths" or "I'm funny", but you begin to build a richer identity that includes your beliefs, values and the way you position yourself in the world. If someone asked you to write a list that defines you, you would probably include phrases such as "I am a people person", "I am a problem solver", "I am clumsy at sports", "I am not attractive enough" or "I am independent and determined". These thoughts form the basis of your self-concept and directly affect the way you function in life.

In contrast, self-esteem is based on an emotional appraisal of one's "self" in your perception of your personal worth. Whereas self-concept focuses on describing your attributes, self-esteem evaluates those attributes from an affective point of view. In other words, self-esteem would answer the question, "How much am I worth?" as it relates to how you feel your value and worth in the world.

Now that we have a better understanding of these concepts, we can address the core of this module: sometimes an inadequate formation, misinterpretation or poor development of our self-concept can directly affect our emotional balance.

While self-concept begins to form in childhood and self-esteem is built upon it, neither is immutable. Through personal work and self-awareness, we can identify their shortcomings, shape and strengthen them, allowing us to build a more balanced and realistic perception of who we are.



➤ *Distorted self-concept and how it influences self-esteem.*

As we have already seen, self-concept is the personal image we construct of ourselves based on our experiences and beliefs. However, this image is not always accurate or beneficial. In many cases, the self-concept we develop is distorted, functioning as an erroneous belief that, instead of boosting us, limits us and affects our self-esteem. In fact, these distortions in the way we perceive ourselves are nothing more than a type of manifestation of cognitive distortion, i.e. biased interpretations of reality that influence our thinking and emotional well-being. When we see ourselves through an unrealistic lens, either underestimating or overestimating ourselves, our confidence is undermined and our emotional stability is compromised.

Let's look at some of the most common ways in which a maladaptive self-concept can negatively impact self-esteem:

- **A rigid self-concept.**

Believing that we are fixed, "I always fail at what I try" or "I'm a person who always screws up" prevents us from changing and improving. By holding on to this view, we stop giving ourselves opportunities to learn and grow. In addition, we tend to focus on our mistakes and minimise our achievements, reinforcing a sense of inadequacy. A rigid self-concept locks us into an unchanging view of ourselves, making us feel unable to evolve, which inevitably affects our self-esteem.

- **A self-concept that is too restrictive.**

Defining ourselves only through a particular area such as work, family or a relationship can make our identity dependent on external factors. When this happens, any change in that area destabilises us and makes us feel lost. For example, if we believe that our value is exclusively linked to our career and we lose our job, our self-esteem can be severely affected. A healthy self-concept needs to be flexible and encompass different aspects of our lives so that we can adapt to change without feeling that we are losing our self-worth.

- **Generalised negative self-concept.**

In contrast to the restrictive self-concept, where identity is focused on one area, here the person tends to see themselves negatively in virtually all areas of their life. Phrases such as "I am a disaster in everything" or "I am good for nothing" reflect this distortion, which is often linked to self-esteem problems and depressive states.



- **Fragmented self-concept.**

This occurs when a person perceives him/herself very differently in different contexts, which generates inconsistency in his/her identity. For example, someone who feels competent and valuable at work, but in his or her personal life is perceived as a failure. This lack of integration can lead to insecurity and difficulties in decision-making, as the person does not know which of their versions is the 'real' one.

- **A self-concept based on the opinion of others.**

Often, our perception of ourselves is overly influenced by the way others see us. This is most often the case in youth, when we seek external validation to assert our identity. However, constantly relying on what others think makes our self-esteem fragile and unstable, as it can change with every comment or criticism. Moreover, focusing on external approval leads us to lose authenticity, as we adapt our image to fit in, rather than being true to ourselves.

- **Self-demanding or perfectionist self-concept.**

This occurs when someone values themselves only in terms of their achievements and sets unattainable standards for themselves. People with this type of self-concept put constant pressure on themselves and, when they fall short of their own expectations, experience feelings of frustration and self-criticism.

- **An inflated self-concept.**

At the other extreme, an inflated self-concept leads us to overestimate our abilities and see ourselves as superior to others. Although this may appear to be a sign of confidence, in many cases it hides a fragile self-esteem that needs to be constantly reaffirmed. People with an exaggerated self-image may react badly to criticism, become frustrated when reality does not match their expectations and find it difficult to recognise mistakes. In the long run, this distortion can alienate us from others and hinder our personal growth.

These are some examples of how our perception of ourselves can be distorted, directly affecting our self-esteem. When our self-perception is rigid, negative or dependent on external factors, our confidence is weakened and our emotions can become unstable. In contrast, healthy self-esteem is built on a balanced perception of oneself: recognising both our strengths and areas for improvement without becoming complacent or belittling ourselves. Therefore, working on a more flexible, realistic and autonomous self-concept is key to strengthening our security and well-being.



➤ *How to build a more realistic and balanced self-concept.*

So far, we have explored how a maladaptive self-concept can affect our self-esteem and emotional well-being. Identifying these patterns is the first step towards change, but it is not enough just to recognise them, it is essential to take action to transform the way we perceive ourselves. As we saw in the previous module, with self-awareness and personal work we can challenge limiting beliefs and develop a more realistic and flexible view of ourselves. Fortunately, just as our self-concept has been shaped over time, we can also consciously modify it.

Below, we are going to share with you a series of practical steps that will help you identify your limiting beliefs about yourself and replace them with healthier ones. In this way, learning to accept our qualities and our areas of improvement will allow us to strengthen our self-knowledge and confidence:

- **Identify your limiting beliefs**

The first step is to become aware of the negative or rigid thoughts you have about yourself in specific situations. For example, if you find yourself in a situation where you need to make an important decision, a thought may arise such as "I am not capable of making good decisions" or "I am always wrong in this kind of situation". To identify these limiting beliefs in specific situations, ask yourself:

- ♦ *What belief arises when I face a challenging situation?*

- ☐ Example: If you are facing an important presentation, you think "*I am not good enough to speak in public*".

- ♦ *How does this belief influence my decisions and actions?*

- ☐ For example, do you fail to prepare adequately because you think that you won't do it anyway?

- ♦ *How did this belief form in this situation - was it influenced by a past failure, criticism from someone close to you, or comparison with other people?*

Among the various mistaken beliefs that can hinder the formation of a realistic and balanced self-concept, some are particularly common and play a key role in the development of low self-esteem. In Annex 5, we have compiled some of these beliefs for you to review. This will allow you to identify whether any of them resonate with you and in which situations, which will serve as a key clue to start the analysis process.



- **Challenge these beliefs with critical thinking.**

Many limiting beliefs have become ingrained in our minds without us realising that they are not absolute truths, but subjective interpretations. To challenge them, ask yourself:

- ♦ *Is this a verifiable fact or just an assumption?* Often, our beliefs are distortions of reality based on fear or insecurity.
- ♦ *Is there evidence against this belief?* Think of times when you have demonstrated the opposite of what your limiting belief asserts.
- ♦ *Would you say the same thing to a friend in my situation?* Sometimes we are too hard on ourselves and treat ourselves in a way that we would never apply to someone we love.

□ **Example:**

If you think "I always fail at everything I try", review your history of positive achievements and experiences. There are bound to be times when you have succeeded or learned something valuable, which proves that this belief is not entirely true.

- **Reframe those beliefs.**

Once you've questioned the validity of your limiting beliefs, it's time to replace them with more realistic and healthy affirmations. Instead of simply telling yourself the opposite (which may feel false at first), try to find phrases that reflect a balanced perspective.

□ **Examples of rephrasing:**

- ♦ *"I am not good enough" → "I am constantly growing and every day I learn something new".*
- ♦ *"I always fail at everything" → "Mistakes are part of learning and every attempt brings me closer to my goal".*
- ♦ *"I don't deserve to be happy" → "I am a valuable person and I have the right to enjoy life".*

- **Reinforce your new self-concept with actions.**

For a new thought to become a solid belief, it needs to be backed up with experiences. It is not enough to repeat positive affirmations, you also need to act on them. Some strategies include:



- ♦ ***Get out of your comfort zone.*** Dare to do things that you previously avoided out of fear or insecurity. For example, if you think you are not good at socialising, try initiating a conversation with someone new.
- ♦ ***Celebrate small achievements.*** We often focus only on our failures and overlook our progress. Acknowledging each positive step reinforces a new perception of yourself.
- ♦ ***Surround yourself with people who encourage you.*** Connecting with people who value and respect your growth can help you build a more positive self-concept.

Every small action you take in this direction will help reinforce your new identity.

- **Be patient and consistent.**

Changing an ingrained belief doesn't happen overnight. It is a process that requires repetition and consistency. It is normal that, in times of stress or insecurity, old limiting thoughts will resurface.

If this happens:

- ♦ ***Don't beat yourself up or get frustrated.*** Instead, acknowledge the thought and respond to it with the new belief you are working on.
- ♦ ***Use the evidence*** of your own progress to reaffirm your growth.
- ♦ ***Be kind to yourself*** and remember that personal development is an ongoing journey.

Over time, these new beliefs will strengthen and become the basis for a more realistic, balanced and positive self-concept.

Following these steps will allow you to transform the way you perceive yourself, letting go of limiting beliefs and building a stronger self-esteem. By adopting a more flexible and growth-oriented mindset, you will feel more confident to face challenges and move forward in your life with greater confidence and well-being.

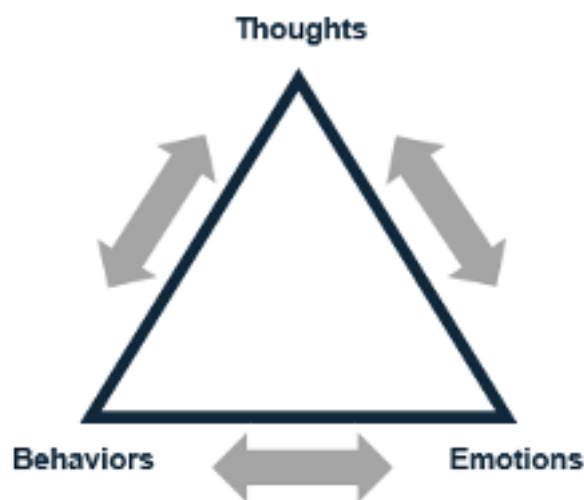


4. 3. TRIANGULAR EMOTIONAL SELF-MANAGEMENT AS A PERSONAL TOOL.

As we have seen, self-knowledge is fundamental to taking charge of our lives, developing awareness and recognising both our strengths and areas where we can improve. However, it is not enough just to know ourselves; it is also essential to have effective tools that allow us to carry out the changes we want to achieve a constant growth that favours our personal development.

To help you in this process, we will present you with a simple but effective technique, based on Aaron Beck's "cognitive triangle" theory. We have called this practice "triangular emotional self-management", and its aim is to show you how thoughts, emotions and behaviours are interconnected. Although there are many tools to generate changes in our emotions, behaviours or thoughts, the cognitive triangle stands out as a simple and versatile tool that can be applied to different situations, no matter the challenge we face. For this reason, we have found it to be an excellent starting point, as it is accessible and adaptable, making it a valuable resource for managing and transforming any emotional or mental difficulty. By applying this approach, you will be able to better regulate and control your emotions, making the necessary adjustments to achieve a more solid emotional balance.

➤ *How does the triangle work?*





Consider that we have three key points: thoughts, emotions and behaviours. These are in constant interaction, so that any change in one directly influences the other two, creating a cycle of mutual influence. If we learn to intervene in this cycle, we can transform it into a powerful tool for managing our emotions. Therefore, the interesting thing about the cognitive triangle is that it allows us to act on any of its three vertices to bring about change. Let's look at it with an example:

Imagine that you have been feeling sad or down for several days, and you find yourself tired of this situation, wishing to feel better. In these cases, it can be very difficult to simply "decide" to be happy. Trying to change an emotion from the very dimension in which it originates, the emotion, can sometimes be a complicated and exhausting process. However, if instead of trying to change the emotion directly, you intervene in a behaviour, this approach can make the process much easier.

For example, if you find yourself stuck in your thoughts and staying at home because of your mood, you could choose to do something different, such as going out for exercise, meeting friends or even going to the cinema. Even if you find it hard to get out at first, it is likely that by engaging in a different activity, you will feel a little better and less sad when you return home. This change in behaviour directly influences your emotions, as doing a different activity activates neurochemical processes in the brain that help to reduce sadness. Interestingly, having changed your behaviour, your thoughts are also likely to change. Instead of continuing to think "I don't feel like doing anything", you start to think "I feel a bit better after going out".

This is just one example of how the cognitive triangle can be used in a practical way. By intervening on one of the vertices, in this case behaviour, you not only change that behaviour, but you also influence your emotions and thoughts, creating a positive cycle that helps you feel better.

Now, to apply this knowledge in a practical way, it is useful to know concrete strategies that facilitate this intervention. In the following, we will explore some simple and effective techniques that can help us understand how to intervene in any of the three vertices to modify the other two:

- How to intervene on **THOUGHTS** to impact on emotions and behaviour:
 - ♦ **Cognitive restructuring:** this consists of analysing the veracity and usefulness of a negative thought in order to reformulate it in a more objective and functional way. See module 2: "Cognitive restructuring to transform negative thoughts and beliefs". Example: If you think "I always fail at everything I try", you can analyse that idea and realise that it is not completely true. Rephrasing it as "Sometimes I have failed, but I have also achieved many things and I can continue to improve" will help you to see it in a more balanced way.



- ♦ **Positive affirmations:** Which, over time, help to generate a more constructive mindset. Example: If you often tell yourself "I am not good enough", you can repeat phrases such as "I am constantly learning and growing". Even if you don't quite believe it at first, with constant repetition, your mind will begin to internalise it.
- ♦ **Positive internal dialogue:** Which involves replacing self-criticism with more compassionate and motivational language. Instead of thinking that you are not capable of doing something, you can try with the idea that, even if it costs you, you can learn and improve. Example: If you make a mistake at work and think "I'm a mess, I'm not good at this", you can change it to "I made a mistake, but I can learn from this and do better next time". This change of focus reduces anxiety and increases confidence.
- How to intervene in **EMOTIONS** to impact on thoughts and behaviour:
 - ♦ **Breathing, relaxation and mindfulness techniques:** which help to reduce their reduce their intensity and facilitate better decision making.
 - ♦ **Emotional validation:** which consists of recognising the emotion without judging it, allowing it to be judgement, which allows us to manage it in a healthier way instead of repressing it.
- How to intervene in **BEHAVIOUR** to affect thoughts and emotions:
 - ♦ **Engage in pleasurable or motivating activities:** even if at the beginning there is no desire, it can generate an improvement in mood. The principle of action precedes motivation suggests that, in many cases, it is necessary to act first and then feel the impulse.
 - ♦ **Set small, achievable goals:** as each achievement generates positive reinforcement that contributes to changing both emotion and self-perception.



➤ *Why is triangular emotional management so useful?*

Triangular emotional management helps us to take control of our emotions and avoid getting stuck in negative patterns. If you are aware of how what you think, feel and do influence each other, you can intervene effectively. This knowledge is a great tool to improve our own emotional management. Practice it every time you feel something is wrong, identify what you are thinking, what you are feeling and what you are doing. How can you change one of these three elements? Just move one of the other two vertices ... and everything can get better!

4. 4. SYNTHESIS.

In this module we have proposed to look inwards to understand ourselves better. Knowing ourselves is the first step towards making clearer decisions, gaining confidence and feeling good about ourselves.

We have worked on two key ideas: self-concept, which is how we define ourselves, and self-esteem, which has to do with how much we value ourselves. Although these beliefs are formed from a young age, they can be revised and transformed with time and personal work.

We have also introduced a practical tool: triangular emotional management. It starts from a simple but powerful idea: what we think, feel and do is connected. If we change one of these three aspects, we can generate a change in the other two. For example, if you are feeling down, doing something different, even if it is small, can help you start to change how you feel and what you think. To do this, we have reviewed specific strategies that allow us to intervene at each vertex of the triangle and bring about positive change. The key is to know that we have options, and that sometimes, with a small step, we can start to feel better.



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MY EXTERNAL WORLD



MODULE 5

SOCIAL SKILLS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

5. 1. INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT.

5. 2. SOCIAL SKILLS AND THE THREE RESPONSE STYLES.

- Passive style.
- Aggressive style.
- Assertive style.

5. 3. ASSERTIVENESS.

- What is assertiveness and its fundamental pillars.
- How to structure an assertive message.
- Practical techniques to develop assertiveness.
- Most common situations in which to apply assertiveness.

5. 4. TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS.

- What they are, their impact on emotional well-being and how to identify them.
- Identifying toxic relationships: common patterns.

5. 5. CONFLICT IDENTIFICATION AND RESOLUTION.

- Strategies for conflict identification.
- Strategies for conflict resolution.

4. 6. SYNTHESIS



5. 1. INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT.

Human relationships are a key part of our emotional well-being. From childhood to adulthood, our ability to relate to others influences how we cope with life's challenges, manage stress and build a strong identity. Having a supportive environment based on trust, respect and empathy provides us with emotional security and strengthens our self-esteem. However, establishing and maintaining healthy relationships is not an automatic process, nor does it rely solely on goodwill; it requires developing social skills that enable us to communicate clearly, express our needs and resolve conflicts constructively, but the reality is that the strategies we use to relate to others are not innate or something we learn in a structured way throughout our lives. Unlike other skills, such as reading or writing, no one formally teaches us how to communicate effectively, how to express our emotions without fear, or how to set healthy boundaries. From childhood, we absorb patterns of behaviour from our environment, influenced by family, school and society at large. Some people naturally develop a facility for social interaction, while others may experience difficulties that affect the quality of their relationships.

When we do not have adequate tools to interact with others, it is easy to fall into ineffective communication patterns that generate misunderstandings, tensions or unbalanced relationships that can affect our emotional health. The way we express ourselves, the way we set boundaries and our ability to recognise unhealthy dynamics play an essential role in the quality of our relationships. Therefore, learning to develop these skills not only helps us to strengthen our bonds with others, but also allows us to grow personally and create a more harmonious and nurturing environment.

This module is designed to provide you with information and practical strategies to help you improve your social and emotional life. Throughout the following chapters, we will explore the importance of effective communication, the development of assertiveness as a key tool to express ourselves with confidence and respect, and conflict management from a constructive perspective. We will also look at how to identify and manage toxic relationships, setting healthy boundaries that protect our emotional well-being. In addition, we will delve into non-verbal communication, an often underestimated but fundamental aspect to better understand others and express ourselves authentically. The aim is that you will be able to apply this knowledge in your daily life, improving the quality of your relationships and promoting an emotional balance that contributes to your overall well-being. We can all develop and strengthen our social skills with practice and awareness, and on this journey you will discover valuable tools to relate to others in a healthier, fuller and more satisfying way.



5. 2. SOCIAL SKILLS AND THE THREE RESPONSE STYLES.

Social skills are a set of strategies and behaviours that allow us to interact effectively with others, favouring healthy and balanced relationships. They include verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, conflict resolution and emotional regulation. The way we respond in our interactions has a direct impact on our self-esteem, emotional well-being and quality of life.

There are three main response styles in interpersonal communication: passive, aggressive and assertive. Each person tends to have a predominant tendency towards one of these styles, influenced by their personality, previous experiences and learned beliefs, however, these styles are not rigid or immutable; they may vary according to the context, emotional state or relationship with the interlocutor. A person may be assertive in a professional environment but adopt a passive style in his or her personal life or react aggressively in high-stress situations. Understanding these dynamics allows us to recognise our own tendencies and work on more effective and balanced communication.

Main response styles:

- **Passive style.** This is characterised by difficulty in expressing one's thoughts, emotions and needs. People with a passive style tend to avoid conflict, give in to others and prioritise other people's needs over their own. This form of communication can lead to feelings of frustration, anxiety or low self-esteem, as personal needs are neglected. Common indicators of passive style include a low tone of voice, reduced eye contact and the use of hesitant or ambiguous expressions.
- **Aggressive style.** At the opposite extreme, the aggressive style is based on the imposition of ideas, needs or desires without regard for the rights and emotions of others. Aggressive communicators may use a high tone of voice, dominant body language and imposing expressions, often leading to rejection, conflict and deterioration in interpersonal relationships. Although this style may seem effective in the short term to achieve certain goals, in the long term it generates distancing and resentment in others.



- **Assertive style.** Assertiveness represents a balance between passivity and aggressiveness. It involves expressing thoughts, emotions and needs in a clear, direct and respectful manner, without belittling the rights of others or allowing them to infringe on one's own. Assertive people know how to set healthy boundaries, defend their positions firmly and communicate with empathy, favouring relationships based on mutual respect. Some characteristics of assertive communication include a confident tone of voice, appropriate eye contact and the ability to say "no" without guilt when necessary.

□ Example: Imagine a waiter brings you the wrong order in a restaurant.

- **Passive style:** The person says nothing and accepts the wrong dish even though it was not what they wanted. They may feel uncomfortable, but prefer to avoid the conflict. He/she thinks: "I don't want to bother the waiter, maybe I ordered the wrong thing".
- **Aggressive style:** The person reacts angrily, raises their voice and rudely demands a change of plate. He or she might say, "This is not what I ordered! Didn't you hear correctly?", creating tension in the interaction.
- **Assertive style:** The person addresses the waiter in a polite and firm manner to express his or her need. He/she says: "Excuse me, I think there has been a mistake. I ordered a salad, but they brought me a soup, could you please change it?" In this way, he communicates clearly and respectfully, increasing the likelihood that the situation will be resolved in a positive way.

While each person may naturally lean towards one of these styles, developing assertiveness allows us to improve our communication, strengthen our self-esteem and build healthier, more satisfying relationships.



5. 3. ASSERTIVENESS.

➤ *What is assertiveness and its fundamental pillars.*

As we have just seen, assertiveness is the point of balance between passivity and aggressiveness. It is the ability to express thoughts, emotions and needs with clarity and respect, defending our rights without overriding those of others. More than just a communication tool, it is a skill that strengthens mutual respect and contributes to more balanced and healthy relationships.

In addition to the way we express ourselves, assertiveness implies an attitude based on knowledge of our own emotions and sensitivity to those of others. Being assertive means having the courage to speak from the "I", expressing what we need and want in an honest way, without fear of judgement or allowing others to overstep our boundaries. This not only protects our self-esteem and emotional well-being, but also favours the construction of an environment based on respect, where relationships can develop in a healthy and harmonious way.

On the other hand, assertiveness is not only about speaking, but also about active listening. Respecting the needs and perspectives of others without neglecting one's own allows for a more open and authentic dialogue, where communication flows naturally and interpersonal bonds are strengthened. In fact, expressing clearly what we think and feel is also a form of self-care, as it helps us to manage disagreements without them leading to unnecessary conflict or resentment, thus promoting healthier and more constructive relationships.

To develop this skill, it is essential to rely on certain principles that guide us in our daily practice. These pillars provide us with the tools to communicate more effectively, maintain a balance between advocating for our needs and respecting others, and ultimately improve our emotional well-being. Below, we will explore these essential foundations of assertiveness, which will serve as a benchmark for strengthening your communication and building healthier relationships:



- **Recognise our rights:** To practice assertiveness, it is essential to know our rights: the right to say "no", to express our opinions, to be treated with dignity and to make mistakes. Recognising that we have these rights is fundamental to feeling confident in communicating. In Annex 6, we provide you with a list of the main assertive rights.
- **Setting clear boundaries:** Setting boundaries is one of the most important aspects of assertiveness. Learning to say "no" when necessary, without guilt, is key to protecting our emotional health. Boundaries protect us from external demands and allow us to better manage our interactions.
- **Shared responsibility:** In every interaction, responsibility is shared. We should not bear all the responsibility for a misunderstanding or conflict. We do not have to continually justify our decisions or ask for permission to set limits. On the contrary, we can use interventions that put the responsibility on the other in a respectful and constructive way.
- **Avoid aggressiveness:** Taking a firm stance should not be confused with being aggressive. Assertiveness is not about imposing our will on others, but about expressing our needs in a respectful way. It is essential not to feel bad about saying "no" and to set limits when necessary.
- **Maintain an attitude of mutual respect:** Assertiveness is not only about expressing our needs, but also about listening to and respecting the needs of others. Mutual respect is the basis for effective communication and balanced relationships.

➤ *How to structure an assertive message*

Now that we know what assertiveness is, a key question arises: how to put it from theory into practice? Although we understand the concept and its benefits, it is sometimes difficult to apply it in everyday situations, especially when we are under pressure, facing disagreements or dealing with intense emotions. The transition from knowing what to do to doing it effectively can be challenging, but with the right tools, it is possible.

Here is a framework designed to help you construct assertive messages effectively. By following this structure, you will find it easier to put assertiveness into practice in your daily life, reducing misunderstandings and fostering a more open and respectful dialogue. Like any skill, it requires training and constant practice, but over time, it will become a natural and healthy way of communicating.



1. Calling attention to yourself (optional):

- Ensure that the other person is available for conversation.

☐ Example: *"I would like to talk to you for a moment about something important".*

2. Objective description of the situation:

- Explain what happened in a concrete and specific way, without judgement or interpretation.

- Avoid generalisations such as "always" or "never".

☐ Example: *"Yesterday we agreed that you would deliver the report at 3 p.m., but I didn't receive it until 6 p.m.".*

3. Expressing feelings:

- Communicate how the situation made you feel by using "I" instead of "you".

- Avoid blaming or attacking the other person.

☐ Example: *"I felt worried because it held up the rest of the work."*

4. Explaining the consequence:

- Describe the impact the situation had on you or the environment.

☐ Example: *"I had to stay late to finish it on time."*

5. Concrete proposal or request:

- Express what is expected in a clear and realistic way.

☐ Example: *"I would like that, if there is a delay in the future, you let me know in time so that I can organise myself better."*

6. Positive closure:

- Show willingness to solve the problem and reinforce the relationship in a positive way.

☐ Example: *"I believe that if we can improve communication, the work will be more efficient for both of us."*

➤ **Techniques for Developing Assertiveness.**

Once we have learned how to construct an assertive message to apply in daily practice, it is important to understand that, although having the right tools makes the task easier, sometimes challenges persist. Faced with real situations that are complex and sometimes require a more flexible approach that adapts to the context and the people we interact with, we need to have specific techniques to help us deal with these difficult moments effectively.



Therefore, we will now explore some of these techniques that have proven to be effective in developing assertiveness and improving our communication skills:

- **The Assertive "No" Technique.**

This is about learning to say "no" in a firm and respectful way, without feeling guilty about refusing something you can't do.

☐ Example:

"I can't attend the meeting today, because I have other important commitments."

- **Assertive Body Language.**

Non-verbal communication also plays an important role in assertiveness. Maintain an open posture, appropriate eye contact and a calm, firm tone of voice.

☐ Example:

When you are talking to someone, make sure you maintain eye contact, don't cross your arms and speak in a calm but firm tone of voice, so that your message is clear and confident.

- **Active Listening and Empathy.**

Active listening is key. Pay attention to what the other person is saying without interrupting, show understanding and respond empathetically.

☐ Example:

"I understand why you feel this way, I can see you are worried about deadlines. I'm trying to accomplish my tasks too, but I need to be given more time."

- **"I" instead of "you".**

Instead of accusing or blaming the other person, focus on expressing your feelings and needs by using "I" statements.

☐ For example, instead of saying, "You are always late and keep me waiting," you could say, "I feel frustrated when I am on time and have to wait."

- **Use "I feel" instead of "you make me feel".**

Avoid blaming the other person for your emotions and instead communicate how you feel and how you can work together to solve the problem.

☐ For example, instead of saying "You make me feel sad", you could say "I feel sad in this situation and I would like to find a way to make it better".



- **Assertive Response versus Submissiveness or Aggressiveness.**

In this case, it is about making the other person see how they are behaving and suggesting a change towards a more respectful and assertive interaction.

☐ Example:

"When you get angry and start yelling, I have a hard time being able to talk. Why don't we stop for a moment and listen to each other?"

- **Remember My Own Rights.**

Keeping in mind that we all have rights is essential to strengthen our confidence and posture when communicating our needs.

☐ Example:

"I have the right to say no without feeling guilty."

- **Positive Assertiveness.**

This consists of recognising and expressing the positive aspects of others, promoting an atmosphere of mutual respect.

☐ Example:

"I like the way you respond to customers because you show a lot of patience and professionalism."

- **Assertive deferral.**

Assertive deferral involves letting our interlocutor know that the current time is not the right time to continue the discussion. This technique is useful when, despite using assertive communication, we cannot get the other person to understand our point of view or when the conversation becomes too aggressive. We can say: "I would like to return to this conversation at another time, when we are both calmer and can talk calmly".

- **Assertive questioning.**

Assertive questioning consists of responding to the other person by asking questions to obtain more information, without directly questioning or challenging what has been said. This technique allows us to gain clarity and better understand the other person's perspective.

☐ For example, we might ask, "I understand that you have a criticism of my work, could you give me more details so that I can better understand your concerns?"



- **Assertive agreement.**

The technique of assertive agreement involves showing understanding and partially agreeing with the other person, while insisting on the error or misunderstanding. It is about avoiding direct confrontation and focusing on the problem rather than attacking the person.

☐ For example, we might say: "I understand your point of view and I agree in part, but I also want to point out that there is a mistake in the information you are using as the basis for your argument".

- **Fog banking.**

This technique is to avoid getting into unnecessary arguments or debates. Instead of aggressively defending your point of view, acknowledge the valid elements in the other person's perspective and make subtle adjustments without losing your position.

☐ For example, you might say: "I understand that you have some concerns. Let's take your comments into account and explore other options".

- **Negotiating needs.**

When you find yourself in a situation where your needs and the other person's seem to conflict, look for compromise solutions that satisfy both of you. Focus on finding common ground and proposing alternatives.

☐ For example, you might say, "I understand that you want to do it this way, but how about trying a combination of both approaches?"

- **Appreciation and acknowledgement.**

Although you may disagree with the other person, it is important to recognise and acknowledge the positive points of their perspective. This shows respect and openness to constructive dialogue.

☐ For example, you might say, "I appreciate your concern about this issue and value your input. However, I would like to explore some additional alternatives".

➤ ***Most common situations in which to apply assertiveness.***

Now that we are clearer about the concept of assertiveness and all that it entails, it is time to focus on the contexts where it is essential for effective communication. Below, we will explore some of the most common situations in which assertiveness plays a key role in our daily lives:



- **Expressing emotions and feelings.**

"When you constantly interrupt me, I feel frustrated and cannot express my ideas properly. Could we give each other space to talk without interruptions?"

"I feel happy and excited about this new project. Thank you for giving me this opportunity."

- **Giving and receiving constructive feedback.**

"Aprecio tu esfuerzo en este proyecto, pero creo que podríamos mejorar la presentación si

"I appreciate your effort on this project, but I think we could improve the presentation if we include more concrete examples."

"I would like to give you feedback on your presentation. I think you could improve your body language to convey more confidence."

- **Set personal boundaries.**

"Entiendo que necesitas mi ayuda, pero en este momento no puedo comprometerme. Tengo otros compromisos que debo cumplir."

"I feel uncomfortable when that topic is brought up. I prefer not to discuss it and keep the conversation on a more positive note."

- **Refusing a request or proposal.**

"I appreciate that you have considered me, but at this time I cannot accept that additional responsibility."

"I don't feel comfortable participating in that activity. Thank you for thinking of me, but I'll have to pass this time."

- **Express a personal opinion.**

"In my opinion, I think it would be more effective to approach the project this way."

"I respect your point of view, but I also want to share my perspective on the issue."

- **Set clear expectations.**

"In order for us to move forward with this project, I think it is important that we are all clear about the role we play. Can we define that now?"

"It's critical that we have a clear idea of timelines, to avoid misunderstandings later on."



- Express disagreement in a respectful way.

"I understand your position, but I don't agree with that solution. I think we could explore an alternative that benefits both of us."

"I respect your decision, but I don't share the same view on this issue. I would like to discuss it further."

- Ask for help or support.

"I am having difficulties with this issue and I would like your support to be able to resolve it efficiently."

"I can't handle all this work by myself, could you help me distribute the tasks more evenly?"

- Appreciate or acknowledge the effort of others.

"I want to thank you for your dedication to this project. Your effort has not gone unnoticed."

"I thought you did a great job on this presentation. It is evident that you put a lot of effort into it."

5. 4. TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS.

➤ **What they are and how to identify toxic relationships and their impact on emotional well-being.**

We have all heard of toxic relationships, yet we are often not fully aware of what it means to be in one until we find ourselves in one. Toxic relationships are those that, instead of supporting us and helping us grow as people, affect us in a negative way, draining our energy and affecting our emotional stability. These relationships can take many forms: friendships, family ties, couple relationships or even in the workplace. The common denominator is that the people involved experience suffering, anxiety or discomfort due to destructive, controlling or manipulative behaviour on the part of one of the parties. Being trapped in a toxic relationship not only affects the person emotionally, but can also have long-term physical and psychological repercussions. Anxiety, depression, chronic stress and diminished self-esteem are some of the most common consequences.



As the person feels more trapped and trapped, their ability to trust others and to develop healthy relationships in the future is seriously affected, and the emotional toll caused by these relationships can lead to a constant feeling of insecurity, loneliness and even hopelessness, which damages the quality of life of the person living in them.

➤ *IDENTIFYING TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS: COMMON PATTERNS*

Recognising a toxic relationship is not always easy, especially when we are emotionally involved. However, there are certain patterns of behaviour that tend to be repeated in this type of dynamic. Here are some of the most characteristic patterns:

- **Constant lack of respect:** Personal boundaries are crossed, there are insults, mockery or disqualifications that undermine self-esteem.
- **Excessive control:** One of the partners tries to impose their will on the other, either by limiting their independence, making decisions for them or constantly demanding explanations.
- **Emotional dependence:** The relationship is based on the extreme need for approval and affection, generating fear of abandonment and hindering personal autonomy.
- **Emotional manipulation:** Emotional manipulation is a form of control in which one person resorts to tactics such as guilt, fear, victimisation or distortion of reality to influence the thoughts, emotions and actions of another, with the aim of obtaining personal benefits or exerting dominance over them. As there are a variety of manipulative strategies, a full list of the most representative ones is provided in Annex 7 to help you identify them.
- **Power imbalance:** One party imposes their desires, emotions or needs on the other, without considering their well-being.
- **Cycle of abuse and reconciliation:** Moments of tension and conflict followed by periods of apparent calm and affection, making it difficult to break the relationship.
- **Emotional drain:** The relationship generates constant exhaustion, anxiety or sadness rather than support and well-being.

If several of these patterns are present repeatedly in a relationship, it is essential to stop and reflect on their impact on our lives. It is crucial to consider setting clear boundaries with the other person, which may involve talking openly about how we feel or what we are no longer willing to tolerate. Sometimes, however, boundaries are not enough and it may be necessary to walk away from the relationship to prevent it from continuing to affect our well-being.



Self-care and the preservation of mental health must be a priority, and sometimes that means putting emotional or physical distance from people who do not provide a positive environment. Making difficult decisions like this is not easy, but it is a way of respecting ourselves and maintaining our inner peace.

5. 5. CONFLICT IDENTIFICATION AND RESOLUTION.

In any social context, whether professional, family or couple, conflict is a natural part of human interaction. What really makes the difference is how we identify and deal with them. Simply recognising conflicts in their early stages can prevent them from growing and affecting relationships or common goals. Identifying conflict effectively and having appropriate strategies for conflict resolution are fundamental skills that we should all develop.

In this section we present two essential aspects of effective conflict management: conflict identification strategies and best practices for dealing with conflict in a constructive and positive way. Both are key tools for promoting collaboration and mutual understanding; if you put them into practice, you will undoubtedly improve the quality of your relationships considerably.

➤ *Conflict identification strategies*

Identifying conflict early is key to addressing it before it becomes a major problem. However, it is not always easy to recognise conflict, as it can often manifest itself in subtle or indirect ways. Sometimes people do not openly express their disagreements, or may not even be aware that they are experiencing conflict. Emotions, lack of communication or fear of confrontation can cloud early recognition of a disagreement. So here are some strategies to help you identify conflicts effectively, so you can successfully manage them before they become a major obstacle:

1. **Pay attention to emotions:** The first step is to identify the feelings of the people involved. Frustration, anger or discomfort are often clear signs that something is wrong. It is important not only to listen to the words, but also to observe tones of voice, body language and pauses. This will give clues to the real conflict.



2. **Watch for signs of avoidance:** When participants in a conflict avoid talking about certain issues or respond vaguely, this is a sign that something is not being said. Evasions or ambiguous responses can be a clear indication of unacknowledged conflict.
3. **Differentiate between urgent and persistent problems:** It is common to focus on the immediate, such as a poorly performed task or an incorrect action. However, the most significant conflicts often lie in unmet expectations or deeper differences in values. It is important to go beyond the superficial and reflect on the underlying causes.
4. **Ask questions and reflect on what is going on:** Sometimes conflict is not expressed directly. Therefore, asking open questions and reflecting on what is really going on is essential to identify the conflict accurately.
5. **Take time to analyse the situation:** Rather than rushing to find a solution, it is crucial to take the time to understand the conflict in its entirety. This step will help to find the root of the problem, which will facilitate a more effective resolution.

➤ *Conflict resolution strategies*

Once we have identified a conflict, the next step is to address it effectively in order to resolve it. Resolving disagreements is not always easy, but with the right strategies, it is possible to reach win-win solutions. Here are some keys that can make a difference:

1. **Active listening:** Listen not just to respond, but to understand. This means giving the other person space to express themselves without interruption, showing them that we value their point of view. Sometimes, when emotions are running high, what we need most is to feel listened to. This establishes an atmosphere of respect and facilitates mutual understanding.
2. **Assertive communication:** Expressing what we feel and need in a clear and respectful way. Assertive communication is essential to avoid misunderstandings and to allow both parties to express their interests without attack or judgement. Using "I feel" instead of accusations helps to maintain a constructive tone.



3. **Seek creative solutions:** Often, conflict focuses on a "one-size-fits-all solution", but it is important to explore alternatives. Brainstorming ideas, even those that seem unusual, can lead to solutions that no one has considered before. Creativity in conflict resolution allows us to find agreements that, while not perfect, meet the needs of both parties.
4. **Accept flexibility:** Resolving conflict does not necessarily mean that everyone will get everything they want. In most cases, the solution involves making concessions and finding common ground. Being willing to compromise on some issues without losing sight of the essentials is crucial to reaching a satisfactory agreement.
5. **Remain calm:** Disagreements can escalate quickly if we get carried away by emotions. It is essential to remain calm during discussions and take short breaks if necessary. This helps you think clearly and prevents words spoken in a tense moment from further complicating the situation.
6. **Have a mediator:** Sometimes the intervention of a neutral person can be helpful in facilitating conflict resolution. A mediator can bring an impartial perspective and help the parties find a middle way that was not considered before.
7. **Focus on the future, not the past:** Sometimes conflicts drag on because both parties continue to focus on what has happened, rather than on what can be done to improve the situation. Focusing on future solutions, rather than past blame, allows for more effective progress.

Ultimately, resolving conflict is a skill that develops with practice. It requires patience, a willingness to listen and a commitment to finding solutions that not only solve the immediate problem, but strengthen long-term relationships. Resolving disagreements constructively can be the first step towards deeper collaboration and a more sincere understanding between all parties involved.



5. 6. *SYNTHESIS.*

In this module we have addressed a key issue: how to communicate without getting entangled, without fear and without trampling on anyone in the process. We have seen the different styles of response and how assertiveness becomes a great tool to say what we think with clarity and respect, unquestionably improving communication.

We also entered into the realm of toxic relationships, those that drain our energy and make us doubt ourselves. We learned how to identify them and, more importantly, how to make decisions that help us to get out of them. And finally, we have seen how conflicts, although sometimes unavoidable, can be managed without having to turn the space into a battlefield.

Now comes the good part: putting all this into practice. Observing how we relate to each other, daring to be more assertive and using tools to resolve conflicts in a healthy way will not only improve our relationships, but will make our lives much easier. So let's get to work!



PEERAR



MODULE 6

MANAGING EVERYDAY PROBLEMS

6. 1. INTRODUCTION.

6. 2. STRESS: UNDERSTANDING, REGULATING AND PREVENTING IT.

- Recognising the signs of stress.
- Strategies to regulate everyday stress.

6. 3. PROBLEM SOLVING.

- The six-step model of problem solving.
- The role of emotional intelligence in problem solving.
- Adaptability: the key to solving real-life problems.

6. 4. DECISION-MAKING.

- Combined decision-making technique.
 - Step 1: Reflection on your values and objectives.
 - Step 2: Analysis of available options.
 - Step 3: Consideration of emotions and uncertainty.

6. 5. THE ART OF COPING WITH CHALLENGES.

- Resilience and positive coping.
- How to strengthen resilience and positive coping.

6. 6. TIME MANAGEMENT.

- Time management techniques.
 - Eisenhower matrix.
 - Pomodoro technique.
 - Two-minute rule.
- Identification of time thieves.
- Procrastination and its impact.

6. 7. SYNTHESIS



6. 1. INTRODUCTION.

In our daily lives, we face a variety of challenges and situations that require attention, decisiveness and adaptation. Knowing how to manage these everyday problems is fundamental to maintaining our emotional well-being and developing a more balanced life. This module is designed to accompany you in learning practical skills that will enable you to identify and manage stress, solve problems effectively, make conscious decisions, face difficulties with resilience and optimise the use of your time.

We will begin by recognising stress, that natural response that can sometimes overwhelm us, and learn to understand and regulate it so that it stops being an obstacle and becomes an ally. We will then move on to techniques for solving problems and making decisions from a holistic perspective that takes into account both reason and emotions. Finally, we will develop tools to strengthen your resilience and time management, facilitating a healthier and more effective coping with daily challenges.

6. 2. STRESS: UNDERSTANDING, REGULATING AND PREVENTING IT.

Stress is a natural and universal reaction that is activated in our body and mind when we face situations that we interpret as challenging, demanding or threatening. This response has an important adaptive function: it prepares us to act, mobilises energy and helps us focus on the task or problem at hand. This type of "positive" stress is called eustress and, in the right doses, it can be an ally that enhances our performance and well-being.

However, when stress becomes intense, prolonged or frequent, it can have detrimental effects on our physical, emotional and mental health. This type of harmful stress is known as distress. Distress can affect our concentration, cause fatigue, irritability, sleep difficulties, muscle problems and, in the long term, contribute to more complex disorders such as anxiety or depression.



➤ *Recognise the signs of stress.*

A key step in managing stress is learning to identify its early signs. These can be very varied, as stress impacts on several levels:

- On the body: muscle tension, headaches, palpitations, changes in appetite or problems sleeping.
- On the emotions: irritability, anxiety, feeling overwhelmed or sad.
- In thinking: difficulty concentrating, racing thoughts or feeling blocked.
- In behaviour: isolation, impulsivity or changes in habitual habits.

Knowing how to detect these signs gives us the opportunity to act in time and prevent stress from building up and getting out of hand.

➤ *EStrategies to regulate daily stress:*

There are a number of practical tools we can incorporate to manage stress effectively. Among the most useful and accessible are:

- **Mindful breathing techniques:** Deep, controlled breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, helping to reduce tension and regain calm in times of high arousal.
- **Active breaks and movement:** Taking short breaks to stretch or walk improves circulation, reduces muscle tension and refreshes the mind.
- **Organisation and time management:** Planning and prioritising tasks with techniques such as the Eisenhower matrix or the Pomodoro technique reduces feelings of overload and improves productivity.
- **Self-care and rest:** Maintaining healthy sleep, eating and leisure habits helps strengthen physical and emotional resilience in the face of stress.
- **Reviewing thoughts:** Learning to identify rigid or catastrophic thoughts and replacing them with more flexible and realistic ones decreases the negative emotional burden associated with stress.



In summary, understanding what stress is, recognising how it manifests itself and applying strategies to regulate it are essential steps to improve our ability to cope with daily challenges. Integrating this knowledge into our daily lives brings us closer to a healthier, more conscious and balanced emotional management.

6. 3. PROBLEM SOLVING.

Problems are inevitable in our daily lives. From making small decisions, such as choosing what to eat or what clothes to wear, to facing more complex situations involving work, family or personal issues, we are all continuously making decisions and solving difficulties. How we approach and manage these problems has a direct impact on our quality of life, our emotional well-being and, of course, our relationships with others.

Sometimes the sheer number or magnitude of problems can make us feel overwhelmed. At these times, our ability to find effective solutions can be reduced. Negative thoughts, anxiety or stress can cloud our judgement, making it even more difficult to think clearly and make good decisions. It is at these times that having a systematic and structured approach to problem solving can be particularly helpful. Using a problem-solving model does not simply mean looking for quick or superficial answers. Rather, it is about adopting a methodology that allows us to approach each situation in a thoughtful and orderly manner, evaluating the different options available and considering the consequences of each action before making a decision. The following approach not only makes it easier to find effective solutions, but also allows us to maintain calm and perspective, even when faced with difficult situations. By applying this step-by-step process, we are able to act more effectively and with greater confidence, which contributes to better management of our emotions and greater resilience in the face of life's challenges.

➤ *The six-step model for problem solving.*

The six-step problem-solving model is a simple and effective tool for dealing with any problem in an orderly way and without impulsivity. It consists of the following steps:



1) Define the problem.

Before looking for a solution, it is essential to identify precisely what is happening. A well-defined problem is a problem half solved. It is useful to ask: What exactly is bothering me? How does it affect my life? Is it a real problem or an interpretation of mine?

2) Analyse the situation.

Reflecting on the problem from different angles helps to better understand its origin. Here we can ask ourselves: Why has this problem arisen, is it dependent on me or on external factors, what are the short and long term consequences?

3) Generate possible solutions.

At this stage, it is important to think of different options without immediately discarding them. Sometimes an idea that at first seems unhelpful can lead to an effective solution. The more alternatives you consider, the more likely you are to succeed.

4) Evaluate and choose the best option.

Once you have several solutions, you need to assess their advantages and disadvantages. It is useful to ask yourself: Which of these options is most realistic, what are the possible consequences, what resources do I need to carry it out, and what resources do I need to implement it?

5) Implement the chosen solution.

Taking action is a crucial step. It is important to make sure that the solution is implemented in a concrete and planned way. If necessary, small steps can be set up to facilitate the process.

6) Evaluate the result

Once the solution has been implemented, it is advisable to review its effectiveness. Did it work as expected? Can I improve something? If the solution was not adequate, you can always make an adjustment or try a new alternative.

This model helps us to move from concern to action, reducing the feeling of uncertainty and increasing our confidence in decision-making. By following these steps, we can approach problems in a calmer and more effective way, allowing us not only to find solutions, but also to develop greater resilience in the face of the challenges of everyday life. With practice, this approach becomes a powerful tool for managing our emotions and making more informed and balanced decisions. Thus, each problem solved strengthens our ability to face new challenges with greater clarity and confidence.



➤ *The role of emotional intelligence in problem solving.*

Not all problems can be solved by logic alone. Our emotions influence the way we make decisions and can sometimes hinder the process. That is why it is important to learn to manage them before we act. If we are very stressed, angry or anxious, it is advisable to pause, take a deep breath and allow ourselves a moment of calm before looking for solutions. Mental clarity improves when we regulate our emotions, allowing us to make better decisions.

➤ *Adaptability: the key to solving real-life problems.*

Beyond following a structured model, the most important problem-solving skill is adaptability. We will not always find perfect solutions, but being flexible and open to new strategies will allow us to deal better with challenges. If a solution does not work, we can modify it. If a problem seems complex, we can break it down into smaller parts. If emotions overwhelm us, we can pause and come back to it with a different perspective. Solving problems does not mean eliminating all difficulties, but learning to deal with them with effective tools. Therefore, by integrating this model into our daily lives, we strengthen our ability to make conscious decisions and face situations with greater confidence.

6. 4. DECISION-MAKING.

Decision-making is a fundamental skill in everyday life, as it influences every aspect of our existence, from the smallest choices to the most momentous decisions. However, the process of deciding is not always straightforward. Emotions, doubts, external pressures and uncertainty can complicate the picture and make it difficult to make a clear and rational choice. In order to make more effective decisions that are aligned with what we really want, it is essential to have an approach that considers not only logic, but also our values, goals and emotions. In this section, we will explore a practical technique that combines two key approaches to facilitate decision-making, allowing us to act with more clarity, confidence and balance.



➤ *Combined decision-making technique.*

This technique is the result of the integration of two complementary approaches: values and objectives analysis and pros and cons analysis. By combining the two, we achieve a comprehensive approach that not only considers the practical consequences of each decision, but also ensures that these choices are aligned with what really matters to us.

Step 1: Reflect on your values and goals.

Before evaluating the options, it is essential to know what is most important to you. To do this, start by identifying your values and setting your goals:

- **Identify your key values:** Reflect on what you value most in life, such as honesty, family, personal growth or stability. These values will guide all your decisions, helping you to ensure they align with your purpose.
- **Define your goals:** It is important to be clear about what you want to achieve in the short, medium and long term. Setting clear goals allows you to make decisions that move you closer to what you really want to achieve.

Step 2: Analyse the options available to you.

Once you are clear about what you value and what you want to achieve, the next step is to evaluate the available alternatives. To do this, carry out a pros and cons analysis, but keeping in mind the values and objectives you have already set. In this way, you can ensure that your choice is not only practical, but also consistent with your principles and goals.

- **Pros:** List the concrete benefits of each option - how does it fit with your values and goals, and what practical advantages can it bring to your life?
- **Cons:** Identify the potential drawbacks or challenges of each alternative - what difficulties might arise and how do they impact on your long-term goals?

Step 3: Consider emotions and uncertainty.

In decision-making, as in problem-solving, our emotions play a key role. Sometimes anxiety, fear or excitement can cloud our judgement, making it necessary to find a balance between reason and feelings. This is where emotional intelligence comes into play: it is important to recognise our emotions without allowing them to control us. In doing so, we can make more rational and less impulsive decisions. Moreover, decisions are often accompanied by uncertainty. Accepting that we will not always have all the information we would like to have is liberating. In this sense, you can apply tools to manage uncertainty in a healthy way:



- **Divide the problem:** If the decision is complex, break the process into smaller parts so that you can evaluate each aspect more clearly.
- **Accept the uncertain:** Recognising that perfection does not exist and that some situations will always be marked by uncertainty will allow you to act with greater confidence.

By integrating these three steps - reflecting on your values and goals, analysing pros and cons, and managing emotions and uncertainty - you can make decisions that are more balanced and aligned with what really matters to you. This approach will help you reduce anxiety and confusion, allowing you to move forward with greater clarity and confidence. In the end, decision-making becomes a more conscious and satisfying process that not only moves you closer to your goals, but also allows you to act in accordance with your deepest principles and values.

6. 5. THE ART OF COPING WITH CHALLENGES.

➤ *Resilience and positive coping.*

It is impossible to move forward in life without facing problems. Every challenge, every mistake, is part of the path towards any goal we set ourselves. There is no learning without mistakes, no progress without difficulties. Often, we tend to see problems as obstacles that we should avoid, but in reality they are signs that we are on the move, that we are growing and evolving. The important thing is not to try to live without mistakes, but to learn to manage them in ways that propel us forward rather than hold us back, and this is where resilience and positive coping come into play. Resilience is the ability to adapt and overcome difficulties without being defined or paralysed by them, and positive coping is the ability to deal with problems in a proactive and healthy way, focusing on solutions rather than getting caught up in worry or frustration. Together, these skills enable us to better manage stress and life's challenges, helping us to emerge stronger rather than worn down by adversity.

The path to resilience begins when we dare to step outside the habitual frameworks of thinking in which we are comfortable, challenging the comfort zone that often limits us to seeing problems and mistakes as insurmountable failures. Instead of seeing difficulties as unbreakable barriers, it is essential to begin to understand them as opportunities to grow and transform ourselves. This shift in perspective allows us to leave behind the idea that mistakes are negative and begin to see them as stepping stones for learning and development. By breaking out of these rigid and limiting frameworks, we open ourselves to new possibilities and become stronger in the face of challenges.



Positive coping, on the other hand, involves not only accepting the existence of problems, but also taking an active role in managing them. Rather than reacting impulsively or being driven by anxiety, this strategy encourages us to analyse the situation calmly, evaluate our options and make decisions that help us move forward. It is an approach that allows us to take control of what we can manage, rather than focusing on what is beyond our control.

Uncertainty is a constant in life, and much of our anxiety in the face of problems arises from not knowing with certainty what will happen. In the face of this reality, positive coping becomes a key tool. Rather than being driven by fear or frustration, it involves adopting an attitude that allows us to face challenges with flexibility and confidence. It is not about minimising difficulties, but understanding that every challenge can be an opportunity for learning and growth. Resilience, in this sense, helps us to stand firm in the face of the unexpected, allowing us to adapt to circumstances without losing sight of our goals.

➤ *How to strengthen resilience and positive coping.*

We have already seen that resilience and positive coping are not built in the absence of difficulties, but precisely in the way we relate to them. But how can we strengthen these capacities, how do we turn them from mere inspirational concepts into concrete ways of living? The first step is to look inward, to that belief system that, as we explored in module 2, shapes the way we interpret reality. Every time we face a difficulty, our beliefs are activated. Some sustain us, allow us to move forward, to seek solutions, to ask for help. Others, on the other hand, limit us: they make us feel incapable, insufficient, trapped.

We cannot talk about resilience without referring to these deep beliefs. Positive coping is not possible if our automatic interpretation of what happens to us tells us that we are not capable or that making mistakes makes us failures. Therefore, strengthening resilience is not just about "being strong", but about revising and transforming the way we tell ourselves what we experience. It is not about denying the difficulty, but about daring to look at it with a more flexible, honest and compassionate perspective. To facilitate this process, here are some tools that can help you develop a more constructive view of adversity:



- **Shift the frame:**

Reinterpret what seems immovable. Often, what hurts us most is not what happens, but what we think it says about us. When faced with a mistake, for example, automatic thoughts may arise such as:

- *"This proves that I am worthless."*
- *"I always fail."*
- *"I won't be able to do it."*

These phrases do not appear by chance: they respond to ingrained beliefs, in many cases learned during our childhood or adolescence. And most importantly: they are not truths, but interpretations. Changing this interpretative framework is not easy, but it is possible. It requires awareness, pause and courage to question these ideas from experience, not from denial.

Strengthening resilience involves becoming aware of the internal narrative that emerges in difficult moments and learning to transform it without falling into self-demand or punishment.

- **Train flexibility:**

The opposite of rigidity is not chaos, but openness. One of the keys to positive coping is the ability to adapt without losing one's way. This requires cognitive flexibility: the ability to change strategy when something doesn't work, to look at a problem from another perspective, to accept that things will not always turn out as we expect, and still move forward. Mental rigidity traps us in what "should be". Flexibility allows us to be open to what can be. Training this capacity is not about convincing ourselves that "everything is fine" when it is not, but about holding open questions such as: "Is there another way to see this?"

- Is there another way to look at this?
- What part of this situation can I manage?
- What small step can I take today?

These questions do not solve problems immediately, but they put us in an active position, healthier than resignation or the need to have everything under control.



- **Take care of internal dialogue:**

The way we talk to ourselves conditions how we cope with what we experience. The way we talk to ourselves when things do not go as expected can be more decisive than the problem itself. One mistake does not define us. One bad day does not invalidate everything we have achieved. But if we treat ourselves harshly, if we judge ourselves out of guilt or perfectionism, it is very difficult to sustain a resilient attitude.

Strengthening resilience involves developing an inner voice that accompanies us, that reminds us that mistakes are not synonymous with failure and vulnerability is not synonymous with weakness. It is not a matter of repeating set phrases or feigning optimism, but of reminding ourselves, realistically, that we have the right to make mistakes, to be afraid, to not know, and yet to move forward.

- **Reclaiming action:**

Moving forward from where we are. One of the most frequent effects of discomfort is paralysis. We feel overwhelmed, we don't know where to start, and so we procrastinate, avoid, disconnect. Positive coping, in this sense, means returning to action, even if it is minimal. Not to force ourselves, but to remind ourselves that we still have the capacity to make decisions, even in the midst of uncertainty. Moving forward does not always mean big changes. Sometimes moving forward is simply getting up for another day. Sometimes it is asking for help and sometimes it is simply holding on without giving up.

In short, strengthening resilience and positive coping is not about giving up fear, sadness or frustration. It is about learning to live with these emotions without being immobilised or defined by them. It is about reconnecting with what you already know: that your beliefs have an influence, that you can challenge them, that you have internal resources, and that every difficulty is also an opportunity to grow. It is not a straight or fast path, but it is a path that is trained, that is travelled with practice, and that, above all, is built with honesty, courage and patience.

6. 6. TIME MANAGEMENT.

Time management is an essential skill to be able to handle daily problems efficiently. We often feel that time is not enough, but with the right tools, we can take control and use it to our advantage. In this section, we will explore some practical techniques and reflections that will help us to manage our time effectively.



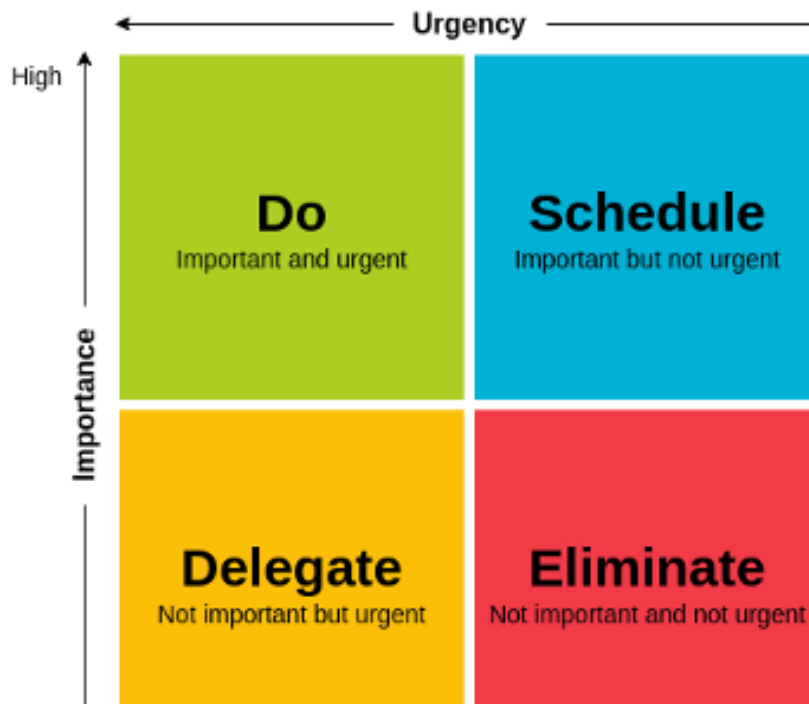
➤ Time management techniques:

There are several tools that allow us to organise our time more effectively. Each has a specific focus, but they all have one thing in common: they help us to work more efficiently and avoid chaos.

One of the best known is the Eisenhower Matrix, which invites us to classify tasks into four quadrants:

- **Urgent and important:** These are the tasks that need to be done immediately.
- **Important but not urgent:** These are the tasks we need to plan to do later.
- **Urgent but not important:** These are the tasks that, although they seem urgent, do not add so much value and can be delegated.
- **Neither urgent nor important:** These are activities that do not help us to solve problems and should be avoided.

The key to this technique is to know how to distinguish between what really requires our immediate attention and what can wait or even be eliminated.





Another very effective technique is the Pomodoro Technique, which encourages us to work in 25-minute blocks of time, followed by short breaks. This approach helps maintain concentration and prevents burnout. By dividing work into intervals, efficiency is improved and, at the same time, the feeling of being overwhelmed is reduced.

Finally, there is the "two-minute" rule, which may seem simple, but is incredibly effective. If a task takes less than two minutes, do it now. In this way, we avoid accumulating small tasks that, although they may not seem important, accumulate and cause us to waste more time in the future.

➤ *Identifying time thieves.*

One of the biggest challenges for effective time management is to identify time thieves. They are those activities that do not add value and that, without realising it, consume a large part of our day. Among the most common are distractions, such as social networks, emails, or even conversations that divert us from our priorities.

It is essential to recognise these thieves in order to minimise or eliminate them completely. Some strategies for doing so are:

- **Establish specific time blocks for tasks** such as checking emails or social networks, so that they do not interfere with our productivity.
- **Use applications or tools** that temporarily block distracting websites or applications.
- **Identify the activities** that really add value to us and make sure that the time we spend on them is proportional to their importance.

The key to all this is self-awareness: the more we are able to recognise how we are using our time, the easier it will be to make the necessary adjustments to be more productive.



➤ *Procrastination and its impact.*

Procrastination, understood as the act of putting off or postponing tasks, decisions or responsibilities in favour of more pleasant or irrelevant activities (even though we are aware of the possible negative consequences) represents one of the biggest obstacles in time management. Although it is a common experience, in many cases it can become a significant barrier to dealing with important problems. This habit of procrastination not only delays progress, but also generates stress and can make the situation even worse.

One of the reasons we procrastinate is fear of failure. If a task seems difficult or challenging, we tend to procrastinate to avoid the discomfort of facing it. However, by procrastinating, we only increase anxiety and discomfort.

To overcome procrastination, it is useful to apply the technique of breaking the task into small, manageable steps. This allows us to start with a simple part and make progress without feeling overwhelmed. It is also important to remember that the first step is always the most difficult, but once we start, the task becomes much more manageable.

Another effective strategy is to change our perspective on failure. Instead of seeing it as something negative, we can see it as a learning opportunity. The faster we act, the faster we can learn and correct course if necessary.

6. 7. SYNTHESIS.

By the end of this module, we have learned to understand what stress is, how to recognise its signs and the importance of regulating it to prevent it from affecting our wellbeing. Understanding stress has enabled us to identify times when it manifests itself and to apply simple but effective strategies to manage it in everyday life.

We have also explored a clear and practical model for problem solving, which has helped us to face difficulties step by step, taking into account not only logic but also our emotions. We have understood that adaptability is key to finding effective solutions and responding to the changes that life presents us with.



In terms of decision-making, we have learned about a technique that integrates reflection on our values and objectives, the analysis of options and the consideration of our emotions, which allows us to choose with greater clarity and security, even in situations of uncertainty. In addition, we have deepened in the art of facing challenges, learning to strengthen our resilience and to adopt a positive approach to overcome adversity with greater strength and optimism.

Finally, we have worked on time management, incorporating practical techniques such as the Eisenhower matrix, the Pomodoro technique and the two-minute rule, which have helped us to better organise our tasks, recognise time thieves and understand the impact of procrastination in our daily lives.

This module has provided us with essential practical tools to live with greater balance, efficiency and peace of mind, preparing us to face the challenges of everyday life with a more mindful and resilient attitude. Remember that learning these skills is only the first step; putting them into practice requires patience and perseverance. Every little effort you make to apply what you learn brings you closer to a fuller and more balanced life.



PEERAR



INTEGRATION OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WORLDS.



MODULE 7

COMPETENCES OF EXPRESSION AND CONNECTION WITH NATURE

-FEELING AND EXPRESSING THROUGH ART AND NATURE-

7. 1. INTRODUCTION.

7. 2. NATURE AND EMOTIONAL STATE.

➤ Relationship and influence of contact with nature with the emotional state.

- The healing power of nature: harmony with the environment and emotional balance.

➤ How to promote an approach to nature with benefits for emotional health.

- Identification of the relationship with the surrounding environment and detection of unbalancing factors on an emotional level.
- Proposal of realistic and affordable alternatives linked to a change or opening of the environment related to a direct approach to nature.
- Planning and execution of this approach.

MODULE 7

COMPETENCES OF EXPRESSION AND CONNECTION WITH NATURE

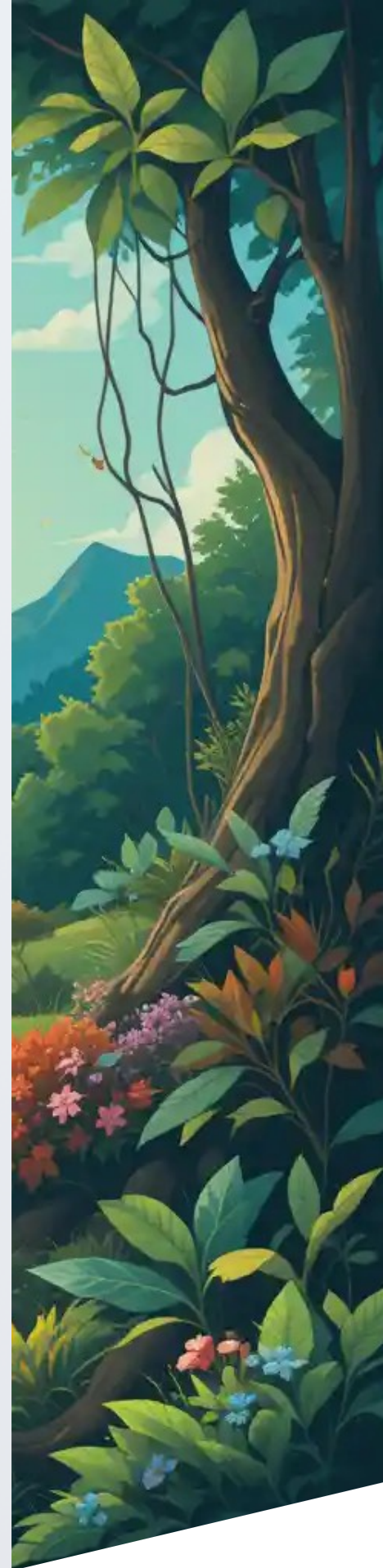
-FEELING AND EXPRESSING THROUGH ART AND NATURE.

7. 3. ART AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE: VEHICLE FOR EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT, EXPRESSION AND EDUCATION.

- Art and its practice as a tool and emotional instrument.
 - The healing power of art: introductory approach to the link between art and emotions and emotional state.
 - Art and emotion: an ancestral alliance.
 - Art as a safe space without judgement.

- The artistic experience as a tool for emotional intervention.
 - Visual arts and emotions.
 - Music and emotional state.
 - Literature and emotions.
 - Performing arts and emotions.

7. 4. SYNTHESIS.





7. 1. INTRODUCTION.

We live in times in which disconnection with the essential -with nature, with the body, with our emotions- has become a constant. In a world of hyper-productivity, screens, urban noise and immediacy, we are increasingly distant from elements that, paradoxically, are key to emotional balance: the earth, art, silence, play, colour and contemplation.

This module proposes an integrative look at two great sources of profoundly human "emotional reconnection": nature and art. Both have the capacity to affect us, to touch us deeply, to rebalance us when the rhythm of everyday life overwhelms and de-centres us. Moreover, both are easily accessible. They do not require large investments or complex technologies. They are tools that have always been there, within reach, waiting to be rediscovered as bridges to better emotional management and understanding.

Numerous recent research in psychology, neuroscience and mental health validate what we have intuited for centuries: contact with a natural environment can have a direct impact on our well-being and emotional health, reducing stress, anxiety and mental fatigue. The same is true of art: creating, observing, interpreting or simply allowing ourselves to be touched by an artistic expression can generate profound internal processes of catharsis, liberation, understanding and transformation.

But beyond the studies and objective data, there is an experiential truth that this module, in a similar way to the previous ones, also seeks to rescue: emotion is not taught from theory, but from experience. For this reason, not only concepts will be proposed, but also concrete actions, real cases and practical exercises that facilitate a sensitive and applied approach to these tools of emotional connection.

In the first part of the module, the intention is to focus on the relationship between nature and emotional state. It will explore and demonstrate how the natural environment influences our inner balance, presenting everyday practices that can be easily incorporated into our daily lives and activities. It will reflect on the factors that disconnect us from the surrounding environment and how to identify new ways to reconnect in an affordable and sustainable way. This part will culminate with a proposal for practical planning to strengthen the link with nature from an emotional health perspective. In this sense and throughout these days, we will explore how the natural environment - the countryside, a tree, the sky, a path - can help us to feel better, to think more clearly, to lower the noise inside. There is no need to go far away: nature is already where we live, we just need to see it again.



In the second part of the module, we will look at art as an emotional vehicle. We will analyse how the different artistic disciplines - from the visual arts to theatre, music and literature - allow us to express, channel, re-signify and educate our emotions. We will approach art not as something for artists or experts, but as a simple and powerful way of expressing what we feel. Painting, writing, moving the body or listening to a song can be enough to release tensions, understand ourselves and take care of ourselves. Specific proposals and exercises for emotional intervention from different art disciplines will also be presented.

Finally, an integrative synthesis will be offered that takes up the main contributions of the module, allowing the reader or participant to make a personal and practical reading of the tools offered.

It should be made clear beforehand that this journey is not intended to offer closed answers, but to open up paths. Paths back to the essential, to what connects us to ourselves, to our emotions and to others. Because in an increasingly fragmented world, "reconnecting" with emotion is also a necessary and increasingly complex act of resistance, humanity and hope.

7. 2. NATURE AND EMOTIONAL STATE.

➤ *Relationship and influence of contact with nature on the emotional state.*

The relationship between humans and nature is as old as existence itself. Since ancient times, the natural environment has been a home, a source of food, inspiration and also an emotional regulator. Native peoples knew - and still know - that inner balance depends, to a large extent, on the link we establish with our environment. In contemporary society, this link has gradually weakened as we move away from direct contact with the natural elements themselves, contributing to a growing sense of alienation, anxiety and emotional imbalance.

People have always lived in relationship with nature. Not just as an environment, but as part of it. Our grandparents, great-grandparents and those who lived before us knew, without having to study anything, that the countryside not only nourishes the body, but also the soul. Being in contact with the trees, the river, the earth or the wind was a way to put order inside, to calm the nerves, to find balance.



There was no talk of mental health, stress or anxiety, but it was known that going for a walk helped to "wake up", that sitting in the sun cleared the head, that digging in the earth could help to let go of anger or repetitive thoughts. Often, what we call therapy today was once found in the daily routine: tending a garden, milking, walking to fetch water, looking at the sky, observing the seasons. That knowledge was not scientific, but it was profound. It came from experience. It came from listening. From being attentive to the environment, to the body, to the moment.

Nowadays, on the other hand, we are often more enclosed: in houses, on screens, in a hurry, in noise, etc. We spend the day looking at a mobile phone or a computer, solving things, keeping to schedules, and we leave aside the most basic things: looking at a tree, opening a window, feeling the sun on our face, taking a deep breath.

In the current context, marked by digital hyperconnection, constant overstimulation and urban isolation, this distancing has tangible and serious psycho-emotional consequences. Lack of contact with natural spaces is associated with an increased risk of developing mood disorders, such as depression or generalised anxiety disorder, and with a decreased ability to concentrate, emotional self-regulation and general sense of well-being.

We live connected to the digital, but disconnected from the essential. It shows. It shows in the anxiety. In the permanent tiredness. In the feeling of having no space or air. In the lack of desire. In the insomnia. In the irritability. In that "I don't know what's wrong with me, but it's wrong with me".

The most surprising thing is that the solution is often close. Very close. You don't need to travel far or spend money. Sometimes, it is enough to walk for a while in the countryside. Go out the front door of your house. Touch a tree. Listen to the song of a bird. Sitting and watching the light change on a stone. These are simple, small but powerful things. They are ways of returning to the body, of returning to the present, of returning to ourselves.

- **The healing power of nature: harmony with the environment and emotional balance.**

Nature is not only beautiful. It is not just a place to go for a walk or take a photo. It is much more than that: it is a space where the body relaxes, the mind quiets down and the heart finds another way of being. Nature heals us. It does so without asking for anything, without giving us advice, without demanding explanations.



When we are in a natural environment - a forest, a meadow, an orchard, a mountain or simply a dirt road - something in us begins to change. The inner rhythm slows down. Breathing becomes deeper. A sense of relief appears, as if the volume of the outside world is lowered and the world within begins to speak more clearly. This is no coincidence. Our body recognises nature as a safe place. A place where it can let its guard down. Where there is no need to run, no need to compete, no need to defend oneself. Just to be, to breathe, to look, to feel....

Nature has a rhythm of its own. One that doesn't rush, doesn't compare and doesn't disconnect. Being in it helps us to return to that rhythm. To remember that not everything has to go so fast.

Many people say that when they are nervous or sad, what suits them best is to go out into the countryside. Breathing fresh air. To listen to the silence. Walking aimlessly. Feeling the cold on your face. Getting your feet wet in the river. That's because, without realising it, we are allowing the body and emotions to settle, to sort themselves out. It is a kind of "silent medicine". It does not cure with pills, but with presence, with space, with natural beauty.

The most valuable thing is that you don't need anything special to access it. No money, no studies, no skills are needed. It is enough to go out. It is enough to let yourself feel. By giving a few minutes a day to be in contact with what is alive outside, to take care of what is alive inside.

From an emotional perspective, we could say that nature acts as a "symbolic container": it offers us a space where we can project, calm, integrate and re-signify our emotions. Wind can help us to let go. Water can teach us to flow. The roots of a tree can remind us that there is strength in support. And all of this works, most of the time, without words.

➤ *How to foster an approach to nature with emotional health benefits.*

For the link with nature to really have an impact on our emotional wellbeing, it is not enough to know that it "does good": it is necessary to build a conscious, sustained and personalised approach. Sometimes, nature is there, close by, but we don't see it or use it in a meaningful way. This section aims to offer simple but powerful tools to activate this relationship, from the everyday and the possible.



- **Identification of the relationship with the surrounding environment and detection of unbalancing factors on an emotional level.**

Each person has a unique history with their environment. Some grew up surrounded by trees and rivers; others grew up amidst concrete and car horns. It is not a question of idealising a single model of natural contact, but of taking an honest look at how we relate to the environment around us today. Do we have green spaces nearby? Do we use them or do we avoid them? Do they do us good or are they indifferent to us? Do we spend most of the day indoors, under artificial light, without contact with the outdoors? This initial observation is key. It allows us to detect factors that generate emotional imbalance: excessive noise, overcrowding, lack of natural light, grey or neglected spaces, routines without breaks, stressful or depersonalised environments. The first step is to see what surrounds us, and then make more conscious decisions about how we want to live in that environment.

- **Proposing realistic and affordable alternatives for a change or opening towards a more natural environment.**

Not everyone can move to the countryside, or take extended holidays. But almost everyone can open small windows of connection to the natural, even in urban or limited contexts. Some simple alternatives:

- Go for a walk in a park, even half an hour a week.
- Observe the sky from a window, noticing how it changes throughout the day.
- Growing a plant at home and tending to its growth.
- Listening to the sounds of nature (birds, water, wind) as a relaxation practice.
- Take breaks in the open air during the working or study day.
- Create a green corner in the home, however small it may be.

These actions do not require large resources. Just an internal decision to inhabit the natural world with more presence and attention. Over time, this small change can become a habit that transforms our emotional state in a profound way.



- **Planning and executing this approach**

Like any emotional process, reconnecting with nature is not instantaneous. It requires intention, repetition and care. To facilitate this, it can be helpful to do some simple planning, as if it were an appointment with yourself. Here is a simple way to plan it:

- 1) Choose a natural environment nearby (a square, a courtyard, a path, a balcony with plants).
- 2) Define a fixed weekly or daily time (for example: every Tuesday, half an hour in the park).
- 3) Establish an emotional purpose: to seek calm? to breathe better? to feel the body? to rest the mind?
- 4) Record the experience, even briefly: write down what we felt, what changed, what we want to repeat or adjust.

This kind of planning not only helps sustain the habit, but reminds us that our well-being matters. Turning nature into an emotional ally is not a luxury, but a simple and profound form of daily care.

7. 3. ART AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE: A VEHICLE FOR EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT, EXPRESSION AND EDUCATION.

➤ *Art and its practice as a tool and emotional instrument.*

- **The healing power of art: an approach to the relationship between art and emotions.**

From cave paintings to contemporary digital artistic expressions, art has been an essential language of human beings. It has not only served to leave cultural traces, but also as a means to contain and transform the deepest and most complex emotions. Where words sometimes fall short or are insufficient, art appears as a symbolic, intuitive and profoundly human channel for communicating the invisible.



Human emotions, as we have already seen in module 1, are neither static nor uniform entities. They are dynamic, multiform phenomena, influenced by experience, context and personal history. Throughout life, many of these emotions do not find an adequate channel to express themselves, which can generate blockages, internal tensions or even somatisation. This is where art acquires its therapeutic value: it acts as a psychic container that allows us to symbolise and metabolise experiences that might otherwise remain crystallised or repressed.

Art does not demand rational coherence or logical explanation. It allows us to inhabit ambiguity, to play with chaos and to give form to pain or joy without the need to convert it into discourse. This symbolic quality is fundamental for emotional work, since often the deepest emotions - such as guilt, shame or grief - cannot be addressed directly, but need creative detours, metaphors or non-verbal languages to be understood and transformed.

- **Art and emotion: an ancient alliance**

Art has always been linked to the emotional world. Tribal dances to release collective sadness, ritual chants to accompany births or funerals, textiles with protective symbols or ceremonial masks show how different cultures have channelled their emotions through artistic expression. Aesthetics, in this sense, was never neutral: it was and is a form of emotional communication.

Today, in the contemporary context, many of these practices resurface strongly in educational, therapeutic and community settings, especially in times of personal or collective crisis. The recent pandemic, for example, revived the use of art as a form of emotional support around the world. In hospitals, schools and homes, experiences multiplied where music, writing or painting acted as means of expression, comfort, connection and meaning.

- **Art as a safe space without judgement.**

On a psychological level, art creates an intermediate space between internal and external reality. In this space of symbolic play, people can project their emotions, reorder their experiences, revise their internal narratives and generate new views of themselves and their history. This process is key to emotional self-regulation.



One of the great virtues of art is that it does not demand that "things be right" or "correct": every artistic act is valid by the mere fact of having been created. This generates an atmosphere of freedom, exploration and emotional validation that is especially important for vulnerable populations (children, adolescents, older adults, people in mourning or diagnosed with mental health problems, etc.).

In addition, artistic creation involves a complete sensory experience. The choice of colours, the rhythm of a piece of music, the texture of a material or the tone of a voice activate different perceptive channels that favour the body-emotion connection, which is fundamental for integrating the emotional from a somatic and not only an intellectual perspective.

Moreover, the creative act reduces the activity of the sympathetic nervous system (associated with stress) and activates the parasympathetic system, facilitating relaxation, introspection and emotional recovery. This is why people often describe artistic creation as "liberating", "healing" or even "restorative".

Art practice - both active (creating art) and receptive (contemplating or participating in art) - has measurable benefits for people's emotional and general health. Art not only reflects emotions: it transforms them, re-signifies them, orders them, liberates them. It is an emotionally fertile territory where each person can find themselves from a safe, free and creative place.

As a tool for emotional management, art allows:

- Identify and name emotions that are difficult to verbalise.
- Channel internal tensions or traumatic experiences without reliving them directly.
- Develop empathy and connection with others.
- Promote self-esteem, autonomy and emotional self-regulation.
- Recover play, enjoyment, intuition and a sense of life.

In the educational and therapeutic context, including artistic practices is not a decorative accessory, but a profound way to educate in the emotional from the experiential, with an approach that integrates mind, body and emotion.



➤ *The artistic experience as a tool for emotional intervention.*

Art, in its various forms, offers a unique channel for exploring, processing and expressing emotions. Each artistic discipline - from the visual arts to the performing arts - has particular qualities that can be used in therapeutic processes to intervene in the emotional state of individuals. Through creation and contact with art, people can gain a greater understanding of themselves, release emotional tensions and develop skills to manage their feelings.

Artistic creation, being a subjective and free process, allows people to connect with their emotional states in a different way than other forms of communication. This process involves both an act of introspection and a form of externalisation of the inner self, a means of revealing what often remains hidden or repressed in the unconscious. Through creative action, be it painting, writing, dancing or any other artistic manifestation, people have the opportunity to give form to their emotions, which not only facilitates their expression, but also allows for a better understanding of them.

Art then acts as a mirror of the psyche, reflecting emotions in their many layers, without judgement or expectation. This allows individuals not only to process and externalise their feelings, but also to experience a sense of liberation and relief, as they are able to release tensions and emotional burdens that might otherwise remain repressed. This process of release not only contributes to immediate emotional well-being, but can also lead to greater resilience in the face of adverse situations, as the individual learns to manage their emotions in a more conscious and healthy way.

In addition, the artistic experience allows for mental and emotional relaxation, which creates a space of calm and reflection, conducive to healing. By engaging with art, people can experience a disconnection from everyday worries, offering a respite from anxiety, stress and other emotional disorders. In this context, art becomes not only a form of expression, but also a therapeutic resource that promotes emotional balance and health, providing tools to deal with the complexities of emotional life in a more balanced way.



- **Visual arts and emotions.**

The visual arts (such as painting, drawing, collage or sculpture) have been widely used in the therapeutic context because of their ability to connect the unconscious with the conscious, allowing people to express themselves without the restrictions of verbal language. The process of creation in visual art offers an opportunity to externalise inner experiences and emotions that might otherwise be difficult to verbalise.

How do the visual arts impact on the emotional state?

The act of creating through the visual arts involves both the body and the mind. The use of colour, shapes and materials has a direct impact on the emotional state. Colours, for example, can evoke different emotional responses: blue can calm, while red can generate energy or agitation. Abstract shapes can help release tension, while aggressive or fluid strokes can express inner conflicts.

- **Music and emotional state.**

Music has had a powerful impact on human emotions since ancient times. Each musical style can influence mood, memory and behaviour, and this quality makes it an effective tool for emotional intervention. Music can mobilise a wide range of emotions, such as joy, melancholy, calm or excitement.

How does music impact on emotions?

Music has the ability to change heart rate, breathing and brain chemistry, activating centres in the brain associated with memory, pleasure and reward. In addition, melodies and rhythms have a strong influence on emotions and can alter mood quickly and directly.

- **Literature and emotions**

Literature - whether poetry, narrative or drama - has immense power to provoke, reflect and process human emotions. Literary texts, through their plots, characters and conflicts, allow people to see themselves reflected in other people's experiences and to recognise their own feelings.

How does literature impact on emotional state?

Literature can act as an emotional mirror, helping people to become aware of their own inner experiences through identification with characters and situations. In addition, reading or writing about emotions can be a form of emotional outlet, where readers find comfort, understanding and validation in the words of others.



- **Performing arts and emotions**

The performing arts (theatre, dance, performance) combine body, voice and emotion, providing a unique space for emotional expression. Through dramatic play and role-playing, individuals can explore their own inner conflicts, rehearse new forms of behaviour and, above all, experience emotional catharsis.

How do the performing arts impact on emotions?

The performing arts allow emotions to be experienced in a controlled and safe context, which can be therapeutic for those who have difficulty accessing or expressing their feelings. Through the performance of characters, individuals can explore aspects of themselves that would otherwise remain hidden.

7. 4. *Synthesis.*

Throughout Module 7 the close relationship between the environment, whether natural or symbolic, and the emotional state of individuals has been explored. We have reflected on how contact with certain environmental stimuli has the capacity to have a direct impact on our internal world, modifying our emotions, thoughts and perceptions. In this sense, two major axes of emotional intervention were identified: nature and art, understood as spaces of containment, expression and transformation.

Firstly, the positive influence that the link with nature has on the emotional state was addressed. Direct contact with natural environments promotes feelings of calm, connection, vitality and wholeness. It was observed how nature acts as a spontaneous emotional regulator, offering a context that favours introspection, self-regulation and stress reduction. This approach proposes a re-appropriation of natural space as an everyday resource for emotional well-being.

The concept of the healing power of nature, understood not only as an external setting, but also as an internally reordering experience, was also analysed. Being in harmony with the environment allows us to recover our emotional balance, as it awakens in human beings a sense of belonging, of connection with something greater than oneself, and the possibility of inhabiting the present from a more conscious and slower perspective.

From this perspective, concrete proposals were presented to promote a healthy approach to nature. The importance of identifying the elements of the environment that favour or unbalance our emotional state was emphasised, as well as the importance of implementing realistic changes that promote a more direct contact with natural spaces. The planning of outdoor experiences was proposed as an active strategy to cultivate emotional health through the environment.



In a second axis of work, the role of art as a vehicle for emotional management, education and expression was explored. Art was considered not only as a symbolic language, but also as a tool that allows access to emotions from another, freer, more sensory and subjective place. Through the creative process, people can explore, channel and re-signify their emotions in a safe way, stimulating self-understanding and well-being.

The links between art and emotion were explored, identifying how different artistic disciplines - visual arts, music, literature and performing arts - can activate, regulate or transform emotional states. In addition, practical exercises were carried out to experience this influence in an experiential way, highlighting the value of art both in its therapeutic dimension and in its educational and expressive function.

Special attention was given to the artistic experience as a tool for emotional intervention. It was recognised that it is not necessary to have technical skills to benefit from artistic practice, since the essential thing is the process, not the result. The creative act offers a space of emotional freedom where one can experiment, play, let go and construct new meanings around one's own experiences.

Within this framework, each artistic discipline was approached from its specificity and potential. The visual arts as a way of symbolically representing the inner self; music as a trigger and emotional container; literature as a way of reflection and narrative elaboration; and the performing arts as a space to embody and express emotions through the body, voice and presence. These practices not only encourage individual expression, but also the development of empathy and connection with others.

In sum, this module has offered tools to recognise and cultivate two essential dimensions of human emotional life: connection with nature and artistic practice. Both invite us to step out of automatism, to stop and reconnect with our inner selves from authentic and transformative spaces. They are paths that allow us to process, understand and express what we feel without the need to explain everything rationally.

Finally, it is reaffirmed that both nature and art are accessible, humane and profoundly effective resources to accompany processes of emotional regulation. Integrating these practices into daily life not only enriches personal experience, but also strengthens our competencies to accompany others from a more empathic, sensitive and coherent perspective with the emotional complexity of each individual. This module leaves us with the message of the importance of inhabiting our environment and our emotions with greater presence and sensitivity, recognising in the natural and the creative two fundamental allies for integral wellbeing.



PEERAR



MODULE 8

INTEGRATION AND HABIT

8. 1. THE MEANING OF INTEGRATING WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO INTEGRATE LEARNING?

8. 2. WELL-BEING AS A COMPASS.

8. 3. THE CYCLE OF SUSTAINABLE CHANGE.

➤ Stages in the process of personal transformation.

- Becoming aware.
- Reflection and learning.
- Initial action.
- Repetition and adjustment.
- Maintenance.
- Relapses as part of the process.

8. 4. TOOLS TO ACCOMPANY AND SUSTAIN CHANGE.

- Emotional anchors or personal reminders.
- Periodic review of progress.
- Compassionate self-evaluation.
- Symbolic routines of closing and opening.
- Community and connection.

8. 5. THE ROLE OF HABITS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGE.

- How habits are formed and why they are so difficult to change.
- Habits, identity and well-being.
- How habits are formed (and why it is difficult to change them).
- Strategies for building new habits from what we have learned.
- Repetition, environment and small changes with big impact.

8. 6. HOW TO IDENTIFY AND MANAGE THE "INTERNAL SABOTEURS" IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGE.

8. 7. SYNTHESIS.



8. 1. THE MEANING OF INTEGRATING WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO INTEGRATE LEARNING?

We reach the last module of the course, and although it may seem like the end, in reality it is the beginning of a new stage: that of putting into practice what we have learnt, in an authentic way and connected to our daily lives.

This module proposes a space to integrate and consolidate everything we have experienced and learnt during the course, so we are going to reflect on the path we have travelled to recognise what has changed in us, what we have discovered and what is still to come. Throughout this process you have explored many ideas, tools, resources and experiences. Some resonated more with you, others perhaps raised doubts or surprised you. Some you put into practice right away, and others have been left waiting for their moment.

Integrating means taking all that and transforming it into something meaningful and useful for your daily life, it is not memorising or repeating concepts, it is something deeper: it is looking at how what you learned connects with your way of living, feeling and relating. It is turning knowledge into experience. It is to recognise that certain learning is already part of you, sometimes in a subtle way, as a new way of reacting, taking care of yourself or making decisions. Integrating is also accepting that it is not about applying everything or making it perfect. It is about choosing what works for you, what brings you value, what you can adapt to your own lifestyle. Sometimes, just one well-incorporated tool is enough, a phrase that reconnects you, a more compassionate look at yourself... and... of course, as a gradual process, there is no single moment and no single way, the important thing is that you can open yourself to revisit what you have learnt when you need to.

Throughout this course, the intention has not been simply to teach you a set of tools or theories. The real purpose is for you to realise that there are multiple ways to address your daily problems, worries and discomforts. What we really need to integrate is the awareness that we can access these resources when we need them. Learning how to find the right tools is as important as learning how to use them. This course has given you the map to some of those resources, but true integration happens when you realise that you can always count on them to transform any aspect of your life. If you ever feel that something is not working or that you would like to change some part of yourself, you will know where to look, what options exist and how to put them into practice. The intention is that you will be able to look at your daily difficulties with different eyes, knowing that solutions are within your reach, and most importantly, that you have the capacity to implement them whenever you decide to do so.



8. 2. WELL-BEING AS A COMPASS.

As we have seen throughout the course, wellbeing is not a fixed state that we reach and remain in, but a dynamic process that constantly guides us towards personal growth and continuous improvement. Living with this attitude is, in essence, the secret to feeling fulfilled and improving day by day. This implies maintaining an active awareness, recognising that we can always revise, adjust and evolve what we are and what we do. It is essential to cultivate the ability to be self-critical, understanding that everything in life can be improved: our habits, relationships, emotional responses and ways of taking care of ourselves. In addition, we must be able to identify the areas of our lives that need improvement or are causing us difficulties, and then apply the tools we have learned to make the necessary changes. The only thing necessary to start this change is to take the first step: stop, observe and look for information, guidance or strategies to help us improve. Transformation begins with a humble and powerful decision: not to stand still, but to move with intention towards a more balanced and conscious version of ourselves. For this progress to be sustainable over time, it is essential to live wellbeing as an ongoing process and not as a momentary achievement; it is essential to sustain the learning beyond the initial moments of motivation or change.

Integrating what we learn into our daily lives requires perseverance, support and tools that favour our growth, something that can sometimes be challenging. Therefore, to accompany you in this stage, we share three key strategies that will help you maintain and strengthen this process over time:

1. **Identifying ways to seek support:** Maintaining wellbeing requires connecting with people and spaces that offer support and accompaniment. This can range from family or close friends with whom to share experiences, to participating in online communities or groups of practice where topics related to personal growth are addressed. In addition, joining a practice or class - such as yoga, meditation, sports or hiking - can create a sense of belonging and encourage healthy habits. Seeking professional counselling is also a valuable option for specialised guidance. For example, someone might join a weekly meditation group, participate in a yoga class to cultivate mindfulness, or share sports activities with others to strengthen relationships and motivation.



2. **Using resources for further learning in practical psychology:** To maintain wellbeing and further deepen self-knowledge, it is helpful to take advantage of different resources that facilitate ongoing learning. Reading books on emotions and healthy habits, listening to podcasts that address practical psychology topics or following specialised social media accounts can provide new ideas and tools that can be applied in everyday life. To facilitate this process, we attach annex 9 with the bibliography used throughout the course, as well as useful information including recommendations for podcasts, videos, channels and other resources that can accompany you in your personal growth beyond the course.

3. **Using a personal journal as a tool to sustain emotional change:** Keeping a personal journal (whether a notebook, a diary, or your smartphone's notepad) is a simple but powerful practice to accompany the process of wellbeing. Writing regularly allows you to record emotions, identify thought patterns and reflect on progress or difficulties. This practice helps to distance oneself from situations and to observe one's own growth more clearly.

8. 3. *THE CYCLE OF SUSTAINABLE CHANGE*

In order to better understand the process of personal transformation, it is useful to know a model developed by James O. Prochaska and Carlo C. DiClemente that explains how change occurs in a sustainable way. This model describes the different stages we go through when we want to change some aspect of our lives, and helps us to understand that moving forward is not always a linear or fast path, but requires time, practice and patience.

➤ *Stages in the process of personal transformation:*

1. **Awareness:** In this phase, we recognise the need for change. This is the moment when we stop to take an honest look at our reality and detect which aspects of our life we would like to transform in order to feel better or more aligned with our values.

2. **Reflection and learning:** Here we question the reasons behind the change and explore possible strategies. We look for information, tools and perspectives that allow us to understand what is holding us back and how we can overcome it.



3. Initial action: This is about taking the first concrete step towards transformation. It may be a small action or adjustment in our routine that marks the beginning of real change, such as practising a new emotional management technique or changing a habit.

4. Repetition and adjustment: At this stage, we regularly practice what we have learned, assessing what works and what needs to be changed. It is a process of trial and error that allows us to adapt the new behaviours to our personal reality.

5. Maintenance: We consolidate the changes, integrating them into our daily lives in a stable and lasting way. Here the new behaviour goes from being a conscious effort to becoming a natural part of our lifestyle.

6. Relapses as part of the process: It is normal to experience setbacks or moments when we return to old patterns. Far from being a failure, relapses are an opportunity to learn more about ourselves, strengthen our motivation and continue on the path with greater knowledge.

Knowing and accepting these stages allows us to go through the process with greater understanding and self-compassion, maintaining the motivation and perseverance to continue growing.

8. 4. TOOLS TO ACCOMPANY AND SUSTAIN CHANGE.

For the process of integration and personal transformation to be sustainable over time, it is necessary to have concrete support to help us stay focused, motivated and flexible in the face of challenges. Here are some practical tools that you can use in your daily life to sustain change and deepen your wellbeing:

- **Emotional anchors or personal reminders:**

An emotional anchor is anything that helps you reconnect with a positive emotion, inner motivation or decision you have made. It can be a phrase written in a visible place, an image, a symbolic object or even a song. These reminders function as points of return when you feel you are straying from your intentions or losing clarity. Posting a sign with a meaningful phrase in your workspace, or carrying an object in your pocket that symbolises your commitment to change, can be more powerful than it seems.



- **Periodic review of progress:**

It is useful to set times to stop and review how you are doing, what is working and what aspects need adjustment. You can do this once a week or at the end of each month by asking simple questions: What did I learn this week, where did I feel most connected to me, what was difficult, what do I want to try or change next month? This practice strengthens self-awareness and allows change to keep moving.

- **Compassionate self-assessment:**

Not all progress is visible or immediate. Sometimes we make progress in ways that are not so easy to measure, such as feeling calmer or making decisions more calmly. That's why it's key not to judge yourself harshly. Being compassionate with yourself implies accepting your rhythms, recognising your efforts and understanding that relapses do not cancel out what you have achieved. It is part of the process.

- **Symbolic routines of closing and opening:**

Every now and then, consciously closing cycles helps to let go of what we no longer need and open ourselves to new possibilities. You can create small personal rituals to mark important changes: write a farewell letter to a previous stage, light a candle with a clear intention or dedicate an evening to tidy up your physical space as a way of tidying up your inner space as well. The symbolic has profound value when we do it with intention.

- **Community and connection:**

Sharing your path with others can be a great source of sustenance. Talking to someone who will listen, participating in spaces where these issues are discussed, or even facilitating small gatherings with friends to share learning can help you feel supported. Emotional connection with others enhances your well-being and your commitment to change.



8. 5. THE ROLE OF HABITS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGE.

➤ *How habits are formed and why they are so difficult to change.*

One of the most important factors in sustaining long-term wellbeing is the development of healthy habits. Turning our change into a habit is a guarantee that it will take hold over time and become part of us. Although we are often not fully aware of it, a large part of our daily life is made up of habits: automatic actions that we repeat without thinking too much about it and that directly influence how we feel, how we relate to each other and how we respond to what happens to us. Habits, therefore, are not just practical routines, but concrete expressions of our inner world. They reflect our priorities, our values and ultimately shape our identity. When we want to bring about deep psychological change, we need to transform not only what we think, but also what we repeatedly do. Therefore, integrating what we have learned during this course involves translating ideas into sustainable daily actions over time.

➤ *Habits, identity and well-being.*

There is a direct relationship between our habits and our identity. Every action we repeat reinforces an image of who we are. For example, if every night you write a few lines in your personal diary, you are not only developing a self-reflection skill, but also building the idea that you are a person committed to your emotional well-being. In other words, habits are not only born from identity, they also shape it. This link is key to generating authentic change. The more aligned our habits are with the person we want to be, the more coherence and well-being we will feel. And although change is hard, each small step reinforces that new version of ourselves.



➤ *How habits are formed (and why it is difficult to change them).*

Changing a habit is not an easy task because, in general, they are deeply ingrained. Our brain seeks to automate tasks to save energy, so it tends to repeat familiar actions, even if they are not beneficial to us.

A useful model to understand this process is the habit cycle, proposed by Charles Duhigg. According to this approach, every habit consists of three elements:

- **Signal:** the stimulus that initiates the habit (e.g. feeling tired).
- **Routine:** the behaviour that is set in motion (turning on the TV without thinking).
- **Reward:** the benefit obtained (momentary relaxation or disconnection).

To change a habit, the ideal is not to eliminate it all at once, but to identify the signal and replace the routine with a healthier one that offers a similar reward. For example, if you tend to reach for unnutritious food when you are stressed, you could replace that behaviour with a short walk, mindful breathing or writing in your journal, generating emotional relief in more constructive ways.

➤ *Strategies for building new habits from what you have learned*

Based on the resources worked on in this course, there are several strategies that can help you consolidate healthy habits:

- **Start with small, specific goals:** big changes start with simple steps. Instead of aiming to "meditate every day for an hour", you can start with five minutes after waking up.
- **Attach the new habit to an established routine:** for example, after brushing your teeth in the evening, you can do a brief emotional review of the day. This is called "habit stacking".
- **Use visible reminders:** a sentence on your desk, a picture on your phone or a note on the fridge can help you maintain focus and intention.



- **Design an environment that facilitates the habit:** if you want to read more, keep the book in sight. If you're looking to reduce mobile phone use, keep it out of the bedroom or mute unnecessary notifications.
- **Record your progress with kindness:** it's not about making demands on yourself, but about observing your process with curiosity. You can briefly write down how it felt to stick to the new habit or what obstacles arose.

➤ ***Repetition, environment and small changes with big impact.***

Creating a new habit requires constant repetition, but also flexibility. Not everything will be perfect, and that's part of the journey. As you repeat a behaviour that is aligned with your wellbeing, it becomes part of your lifestyle, no longer an effort, but something natural. The environment, as we have already seen, plays a fundamental role; many times, what seems to be a lack of willpower is actually an environment that does not accompany you. Therefore, it is important to surround yourself with elements, people and spaces that favour the changes you want to make.

Finally, it is important to remember that you do not need to transform your whole life to feel a profound change. Just one well-incorporated habit can make a difference: taking a few minutes a day to pause, taking conscious care of your body, speaking more kindly to yourself or reconnecting with what matters to you. These gestures, although they may seem small, have a great cumulative power if they are sustained over time.



8. 6. HOW TO IDENTIFY AND MANAGE THE "INTERNAL SABOTEURS" IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGE.

Change is not just about making important decisions or having big revelations. Change is also about getting up on a grey Monday and doing what we said we wanted to do, even if we don't feel like it. It is to continue betting on a habit when the initial enthusiasm has passed. It is to hold on to the small things, even when no one else is looking.

There is something that tends to happen when we talk about change: we usually focus on the beginning. We get excited about the idea, we plan, we get motivated. It's a high-energy stage, because the horizon of change inspires us. But as the days go by - when that initial spark fades a little - the real test comes: sustaining what we have chosen over time. This is when the day-to-day saboteurs appear. They are not always elaborate thoughts or deeply held beliefs. Often they are simple sensations that pass through us without us realising it: laziness when the alarm clock goes off, the impulse to stay in the familiar, the reluctance to repeat an action that no longer seems so new...

Change is often uncomfortable. It involves moving out of one's comfort zone, putting energy into it, saying no to things that are tempting, exposing oneself to frustration. And that's tiring. That is why it is not uncommon for procrastination to appear, that indefinite postponement of the commitment we make to ourselves. The curious thing is that we often do not recognise it as such. It is disguised as reasonable arguments: "I don't have time", "I'm not that motivated", "today is not a good day". And although they sound legitimate, the truth is that if we allow them to be repeated frequently, they end up undermining the process. But it is important to understand that this is not a sign of personal weakness. It is part of the human process of change. All of us, to a greater or lesser extent, face those inner voices that invite us to let go of what we are building. And it is not a matter of ignoring them or fighting them harshly, but of recognising them and learning to manage them with emotional intelligence and self-compassion.

This is where a valuable concept comes into play: flexible will. It is not a rigid will, which acts as an internal whip and does not allow deviations. That is often unsustainable. Flexible will, on the other hand, is based on cultivating constancy with adaptability. It is knowing when we need to push ourselves a little, and when it is better to give ourselves a pause without letting go completely. It is understanding that doing, even if we don't feel like it, is not forcing ourselves, but an act of conscious care. Sustaining change also requires very concrete resources: clear routines, visual reminders, small rewards, progress monitoring, environments that support our goals. And something even more important: reconnecting with the why. To remember the deep reasons that led us to start this process. Returning to that meaning is a very powerful way to start the internal engine when we feel we are running out of gas.



Ultimately, change is not just a matter of wanting to change, but of learning to hold on to what we want. And that requires a combination of clarity, strategies, patience and a lot of humanity with ourselves, as well as the awareness that things will not always go our way and that in those moments, we have to take every fall as an opportunity to refocus on change. With this course we have not sought perfection, but awareness. Together we have walked a path of applied psychoeducation, with concrete tools to understand ourselves better, manage our emotions more clearly and build a more sustainable wellbeing. Throughout the modules, we have added internal resources, discovered kinder ways of accompanying ourselves and practised skills that can help us in our daily lives. We have learned that emotions are not "solved", they are learned to inhabit, and the more you understand them, the more you are able to respond with calm, creativity and presence. This is the true transformation and the seed that we wanted to leave in you: not to eliminate what we feel, but to learn to manage it in order to lead a healthier, more conscious life, more in tune with what really matters. Because in the end, knowing ourselves, taking care of ourselves and accompanying ourselves well is the best starting point to develop emotional wellbeing.

8. 7. SYNTHESIS.

By the end of this module, we have explored the deeper meaning of integrating learning, understanding that integrating means connecting what we learn with our daily lives so that change is real and lasting. We have seen how wellbeing can act as a compass that guides our decisions and orients us towards a more balanced and healthy lifestyle.

We also went through the cycle of sustainable change, an approach that allows us to understand that change is a path with ups and downs, but with meaning and direction. We have learned about tools to accompany and sustain that change, such as emotional anchors that remind us of our purpose, periodic review of our progress, compassionate self-assessment that helps us to be kind to ourselves, symbolic routines that mark closures and beginnings, and the importance of community and connection to feel supported and motivated.

In addition, we understood the fundamental role that habits play in the process of psychological change. We learned how they are formed, why they are so difficult to change, and how they are linked to our identity and well-being.



Finally, we reflected on the importance of identifying and managing our "inner saboteurs", those voices or beliefs that can hinder progress, and how to face them with awareness and compassion so as not to lose our way in our process of personal transformation.

As we have progressed through this module, we have been building a steady path so that the changes you desire will be real and lasting. Keep in mind that the process of transforming habits and ways of thinking is not always linear or quick, and above all, don't be discouraged by difficulties; they are a natural part of growth.



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PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR WELL-BEING
APPENDICES

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ANNEX 1

MAIN PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS THAT MANIFEST EMOTIONS

1. General Physiological Reactions

- Increase or decrease in heart rate
- Changes in breathing (rapid, short or deep breathing)
- Changes in body temperature (feeling hot or shivering)
- Excessive sweating (especially of hands, forehead and armpits)
- Muscle tension or relaxation
- Dilated or constricted pupils
- Tingling or empty feeling in the stomach
- Dry mouth or increased salivation
- Changes in blood pressure
- Disturbances in digestion (nausea, butterflies in the stomach or loss of appetite)

2. Nervous system responses

Sympathetic Nervous System (arousal, fight or flight)

- Release of adrenaline and noradrenaline
- Increased blood pressure
- Dilated pupils (to take in more visual information)
- Increased blood flow to muscles (to prepare the body for action)
- Decreased digestive activity

Parasympathetic Nervous System (relaxation and recovery)

- Decreased heart rate
- Pupillary contraction
- Increased digestive activity
- Feeling of calmness or fatigue



APPENDIX 2

DICTIONARY OF EMOTIONS

Boredom

An emotional state characterised by a lack of interest or stimulation, which can lead to a feeling of monotony, mental fatigue or annoyance. It can arise from repetitive activities, lack of novelty or attractive stimuli.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Reduced brain activity in areas associated with motivation.
 2. Decreased heart rate due to low level of arousal.
 3. Mild muscle tension due to discomfort or need to move.
 4. Changes in posture or yawning to combat lethargy.
-

Joy

A positive and energising emotional state, characterised by a feeling of contentment, well-being or euphoria, often manifested by physical and behavioural expressions such as smiling or laughing.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 5. Release of dopamine, serotonin and endorphins.
 6. Mild acceleration of the heart rate.
 7. Generalised muscle relaxation.
 8. Positive facial expression (smile, squinting eyes).
 9. Warmth or tingling sensation in the chest.



Relief

Emotional state that arises after the decrease or disappearance of an emotional, physical or psychological burden, generating a feeling of calm and restfulness.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Decrease in heart rate.
 2. Reduction in cortisol levels (stress).
 3. Progressive muscular relaxation.
 4. Deeper and slower breathing.
 5. Feeling of warmth in the body.
-

Love

Complex emotion involving a deep connection to another person, living being or concept, characterised by feelings of affection, attachment, empathy and commitment.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Release of oxytocin and dopamine.
 2. Moderate acceleration of heart rate when close to the loved one.
 3. Sensation of warmth or fullness in the chest.
 4. Dilated pupils and increased attention to the loved one.
 5. Reduced cortisol levels in positive relationships.
-

Distress

Intense emotional state associated with a sense of threat, discomfort or psychological pressure, accompanied by persistent worry.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 6. Acceleration of heart rate.
 7. Increased respiratory rate.
 8. Release of cortisol and adrenaline.
 9. Muscle tension, especially in the neck and back.
 10. feeling of tightness or emptiness in the chest



Anxiety

Emotional state characterised by excessive activation of the nervous system, generating a feeling of unease, worry and alertness in the face of a perceived threat, whether real or imagined.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Acceleration of the heart rate (tachycardia).
 2. Increased respiratory rate (hyperventilation).
 3. Excessive sweating.
 4. Muscle tension, especially in the jaw, hands and shoulders.
 5. Peripheral vasoconstriction (cold hands or feet).
-

Nostalgia

Melancholic emotion characterised by affective recall and a sense of loss or absence of someone or something important in life.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Tightness or emptiness in the chest.
 2. Decreased heart rate (bradycardia).
 3. Tearfulness or blurring of vision.
 4. Feeling of heaviness in the body.
 5. sleep disturbances
-

Apathy

Emotional state characterised by a lack of interest, motivation or energy to perform activities or react emotionally to stimuli.

- **Associated physiological reactions**
 1. General decrease in motor activity.
 2. Bradycardia.
 3. Extreme muscle relaxation, associated with lack of action.
 4. Altered sleep patterns (insomnia or hypersomnia).
 5. Low activity in reward-related brain areas.



Attachment

Emotion linked to the establishment of deep and lasting emotional bonds with significant people, objects or places, based on the need for closeness and connection.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Release of oxytocin and dopamine.
 2. Moderate acceleration of heart rate when interacting with the object of attachment.
 3. Feeling of calm and security when close to the emotional attachment.
 4. Positive or relaxed facial expression.
 5. Cortisol reduction in secure attachment contexts.
-

Harmony

Positive emotional state arising from the perception of balance, congruence and peace between different areas of life, environment or interpersonal relationships.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Decreased heart rate.
 2. General muscle relaxation.
 3. Release of serotonin and oxytocin.
 4. Slow, deep breathing.
 5. Feeling of lightness or physical well-being.
-

Throwing

Emotion that drives one to act with courage and determination, overcoming fear or insecurity in challenging or risky situations.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Release of adrenaline and noradrenaline.
 2. Acceleration of heart rate.
 3. Increased respiratory rate.
 4. Muscle tension, especially in the extremities.
 5. Dilated pupils and improved visual focus.



Disgust

Emotional reaction of rejection or disgust towards stimuli that are unpleasant, offensive or threatening to hygiene or health.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Activation of the parasympathetic system (nausea, vomiting).
 2. Facial vasoconstriction (pallor).
 3. Changes in facial expression (frowning, wrinkling of the nose, wrinkling of the forehead).
 4. Reduced appetite and gastrointestinal activity.
 5. general feeling of discomfort in the abdomen.
-

Astonishment

Sudden and intense emotion provoked by an unexpected event, which may generate either fascination, shock or surprise.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Dilation of the pupils.
 2. Acceleration of heart rate.
 3. Opening of the mouth and raising of the eyebrows (characteristic facial expression).
 4. Sudden muscular tension.
 5. Feeling of emptiness in the stomach.
-

Calm

Emotional state of tranquillity and mental equilibrium, characterised by the absence of agitation or tension.

- **Associated physiological reactions**
 1. Decreased heart rate.
 2. Deep, slow breathing.
 3. General muscular relaxation.
 4. Release of serotonin and oxytocin.
 5. Feeling of lightness or bodily stability.



Affection

Emotion of deep affection and positive connection to someone or something, accompanied by gestures or expressions that reflect tenderness and closeness.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Release of oxytocin and dopamine.
 2. Feeling of warmth in the chest.
 3. Mild muscle relaxation.
 4. Serene facial expression or smile.
 5. Stable heart rate and slow breathing rhythm.
-

Jealousy

Negative emotion arising from fear of losing an affectionate bond or a desired good, perceiving that another person could interfere with the relationship or enjoyment.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Cortisol release (stress).
 2. Acceleration of heart rate.
 3. Muscle tension, especially in jaw and neck.
 4. Excessive sweating.
 5. Feeling of restlessness or physical discomfort.
-

Anger

Intense emotional state of anger and rage, often accompanied by impulses to act aggressively in a situation perceived as unfair or threatening.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Acceleration of heart rate and increase in blood pressure.
 2. Release of adrenaline and noradrenaline.
 3. Extreme muscle tension (clenched fists, clenched jaw).
 4. Increase in body temperature (sensation of heat)
 5. Facial vasodilatation (flushing).



Compassion

Empathic emotion that arises when perceiving the suffering of another, motivating a desire to help or relieve that pain.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Oxytocin release.
 2. Mild muscle relaxation.
 3. Increased blood flow to empathy-related brain regions.
 4. Slow and steady breathing.
 5. Soft facial expression (eyebrows slightly raised).
-

Confidence

Positive emotional state characterised by security and faith in one's own abilities or in the trustworthiness of another person or situation.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Oxytocin release.
 2. Stable heart rate.
 3. Deep, calm breathing.
 4. Muscle relaxation.
 5. Brain activation in areas related to reward.
-

Confusion

Emotional state of uncertainty or mental disorientation, caused by difficulty in understanding or processing a situation.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Moderate acceleration of heart rate.
 2. Increased brain activity in search of solutions.
 3. Mild muscle tension.
 4. Irregular or shallower breathing.
 5. Facial expression of perplexity (frowning, half-open mouth).



Congoja

Emotional state of deep sadness, anguish and distress, often accompanied by a sense of oppression or hopelessness.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Sensation of tightness in the chest.
 2. Tearing or ocular hypersensitivity.
 3. Decreased respiratory rate.
 4. Tension in shoulders and neck.
 5. Loss of energy or feeling of heaviness in the body.
-

Guilt

Emotion that arises from recognising an action, thought or decision as wrong or harmful, leading to regret or remorse.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Increased heart rate and sweating.
 2. Tightness in the chest or abdomen.
 3. Muscle tension, especially in the face.
 4. Decreased appetite.
 5. Sleep disturbances.
-

Equanimity

Ability to maintain a balanced and calm judgement, without being influenced by extreme emotions or prejudices.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Stable heart rate.
 2. Deep and regular breathing.
 3. Muscle relaxation.
 4. Activation of the prefrontal cortex, related to self-control.
 5. Decreased activity in the amygdala, reducing intense emotional responses.



Anger

Unpleasant emotional state caused by an upsetting or frustrating experience that generates irritation or discontent.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Acceleration of heart rate.
 2. Muscle tension (especially in the jaw and hands).
 3. Release of adrenaline and cortisol.
 4. Increase in blood pressure.
 5. ECharacteristic facial expression (furrowed eyebrows, pursed lips).
-

Anger

Emotional reaction of intense irritation at a situation perceived as offensive, unfair or threatening.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Increase in body temperature.
 2. Facial flushing due to vasodilatation.
 3. Rapid heart and breathing rate.
 4. Tension in the neck and back muscles.
 5. Activation of the fight or flight response.
-

Enthusiasm

State of positive emotional arousal generated by a stimulus that inspires admiration, interest or passion.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Release of dopamine and endorphins.
 2. Moderate acceleration of heart rate.
 3. Open and smiling facial expression.
 4. Increased physical and mental energy.
 5. Deeper and faster breathing.



Envy

Unpleasant emotion generated by the desire to possess something that belongs to or is attributed to another person, sometimes accompanied by resentment.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Cortisol release (stress).
 2. Acceleration of heart rate.
 3. Tension in the face (frowning, clenched jaw).
 4. Feeling of emptiness or discomfort in the stomach.
 5. Increased amygdala activity (negative emotional processing).
-

Empathy

Ability to understand and share another person's feelings, from both an emotional and cognitive perspective.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Oxytocin release.
 2. Mild muscle relaxation.
 3. Increased blood flow in brain areas related to social connection.
 4. Facial expression reflecting perceived emotions (smile, tears, etc.).
 5. Breathing synchronised with the empathised person.
-

Fright

Intense emotional reaction of extreme fear or terror to an unexpected and perceived threatening situation.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Acceleration of heart rate.
 2. Dilation of the pupils.
 3. Sudden muscle tension (startle response).
 4. Cold sweating.
 5. Feeling of emptiness in the stomach



Hope

Positive emotion experienced when visualising the possibility of a wish or goal being fulfilled.

- **Associated physiological reactions**
 1. Dopamine release.
 2. Moderate and stable heart rate and breathing.
 3. Relaxed or smiling facial expression.
 4. Feeling of lightness in the body.
 5. Increased energy and motivation.
-

Stupor

Emotional state of extreme surprise, which may cause shock or momentary immobility in the face of a shocking or disconcerting event.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Brief immobility (freeze response).
 2. Dilation of the pupils.
 3. Mild acceleration of heart rate.
 4. Perplexed facial expression (eyes open, eyebrows raised).
 5. Breathing may be held or irregular.
-

Euphoria

Extreme emotional state of joy and optimism, often accompanied by a feeling of invulnerability or total well-being.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Release of dopamine, serotonin and endorphins.
 2. Accelerated heart rate.
 3. Exaggerated smiling facial expression.
 4. Increased physical and mental energy.
 5. Rapid breathing but no shortness of breath.



Excitement

Intense emotional state that may be linked to feelings of excitement, nervousness or heightened joy.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Acceleration of heart rate.
 2. Release of adrenaline.
 3. Dilation of pupils.
 4. Moderate muscle tension.
 5. Tingling sensation or body heat.
-

Ecstasy

An emotional state in which a person experiences an intense connection with a feeling of awe, deep joy or spiritual transcendence.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Massive release of dopamine and endorphins.
 2. Moderately accelerated heart rate and respiratory rate.
 3. Muscle relaxation in parts of the body, but tension in others (depending on the stimulus).
 4. Feeling of lightness or weightlessness.
 5. In some cases, tears of joy or intense pleasure.
-

Meanness

Lack of nobility and generosity in character or actions, often accompanied by selfish or greedy attitudes.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Cortisol release from social stress.
 2. Mild muscular tension.
 3. Facial expression of displeasure or coldness.
 4. Slightly elevated heart and respiratory rate.
 5. Feeling of discomfort when interacting with others.



Fear

Emotional response to a perceived threat or danger, whether real or imagined, that prepares the body to flee or defend itself.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Acceleration of heart rate (tachycardia).
 2. Dilation of the pupils.
 3. Release of adrenaline and cortisol.
 4. Sweating and sensation of coldness in the extremities.
 5. Muscle tension and possible "freezing" response.
-

Homesickness

Emotional state characterised by a melancholic sadness caused by the memory of significant times, places or people that are no longer present.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Decreased heart rate.
 2. Slow and deep breathing.
 3. Release of oxytocin in cases of positive memories.
 4. Activation of brain areas related to memory.
 5. A feeling of tightness in the chest or emptiness in the stomach.
-

Obnubilation

A state of mental confusion or momentary loss of clarity, either due to intense emotion, surprise or extreme distraction.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Temporary reduction in cognitive activity.
 2. Dilated pupils.
 3. Irregular heartbeat.
 4. Feeling of lightheadedness or dizziness.
 5. Mild muscle tension.



Hatred

Intense and persistent feeling of dislike or aversion towards something or someone, often accompanied by a desire for harm or evil.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Increase in heart rate and blood pressure.
 2. Release of adrenaline and cortisol.
 3. Sustained muscle tension.
 4. Frowning and clenched jaw.
 5. Feeling of body heat or "boiling".
-

Omnipotence

Feeling or belief of possessing absolute or unlimited power, often associated with egocentrism or overestimation of one's own abilities.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Dopamine release (satisfaction from perceived control).
 2. Moderate and steady heart rate.
 3. Feeling of high energy in the body.
 4. Confident or defiant facial expression.
 5. Expansive body posture.
-

Optimism

Tendency to perceive and evaluate events positively, confident of favourable outcomes in the future.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Release of dopamine and serotonin.
 2. Stable heart rate.
 3. Relaxed and smiling facial expression.
 4. Increased energy and motivation.
 5. Reduced amygdala activity (less stress).



Patience

Ability to tolerate setbacks, delays or difficulties calmly and without losing heart.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Stable and low heart rate.
 2. Activation of the prefrontal cortex (self-control).
 3. Moderate muscular relaxation.
 4. Slow and regular breathing.
 5. Reduction of cortisol.
-

Panic

Extreme emotional state of uncontrollable terror or anxiety, usually triggered by a perceived imminent threat.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Extreme acceleration of heart rate (tachycardia).
 2. Rapid, shallow breathing (hyperventilation).
 3. Excessive sweating.
 4. Intense muscular tension.
 5. Feeling of dazed or disorientated.
-

Passion

Intense and overflowing emotion towards an activity, idea or person, which generates deep enthusiasm and commitment.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Release of dopamine and endorphins.
 2. Increased heart rate.
 3. Sensation of body heat.
 4. Accelerated but controlled breathing.
 5. Muscle tension associated with excitement.



Sorrow

A feeling of deep distress caused by a loss, difficulty or painful situation.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Decreased heart rate.
 2. Slowed, sighing breathing.
 3. Release of tears.
 4. Tightness in the chest.
 5. Generalised reduction of energy.
-

Laziness

State of unmotivation or lack of interest in activities that require effort or attention.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Slow heart and respiratory rate.
 2. Feeling of heaviness in the body.
 3. Reduced adrenaline release.
 4. Stooped or excessively relaxed body posture.
 5. Low brain activation in motivational areas.
-

Surprise

Emotion that arises when faced with an unexpected stimulus or an unforeseen situation, generating a rapid reaction of attention and evaluation. It can be positive, negative or neutral, depending on the context.

- **Associated physiological reactions:**
 1. Rapid opening of the eyes and raising of the eyebrows.
 2. Momentary acceleration of heart rate.
 3. Short, sharp intake of breath (sometimes accompanied by a small gasp).
 4. Temporary immobility or bodily startle.
 5. Increased attention and focus on the novel stimulus.



APPENDIX 3

SOME BASIC STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING INTENSE EMOTIONS

As previously mentioned in the theoretical guide, intense emotions can be difficult to manage, and we often find ourselves in situations where our ability to regulate them is overwhelmed. However, there are a number of tools that combine physiological, cognitive and behavioural approaches that allow us to effectively address and transform these emotions. Many of these techniques are simple and quick to implement, making them an accessible first step to begin managing our emotional reactions at specific times of difficulty. These practices are designed to help you calm down, reassess the situation and think clearly when emotions are running high, giving you the opportunity to make more conscious decisions and regain control.

1. Breathing and deep relaxation:

Controlling your breathing allows you to regulate the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing physical responses such as muscle tension. For example, you can practice square breathing: inhale for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, exhale in 4 seconds and wait another 4 seconds before repeating. Progressive relaxation is another option, tensing and relaxing muscle groups, starting with the feet and moving up towards the head. This is useful for managing anxiety and stress.

2. Applied cognitive restructuring:

Identifying irrational thoughts and transforming them helps to balance emotions. For example, instead of thinking "He never listens to me", you can say "Maybe he didn't understand my point, I can explain it in another way". Before a major challenge, change "I'm going to fail" to "I've practised, I can try". This technique is useful for emotions such as frustration and fear.

3. Deep emotional identification and labelling:

Naming emotions helps to understand them better. Instead of saying "I feel bad", describe more precisely: "I feel sadness and a bit of frustration because things didn't go as I expected". This allows the emotion to be addressed more clearly and effectively.



4. Regulation through artistic expression:

Art allows you to channel intense emotions in a creative way. You can draw a picture representing your emotional state with colours that reflect it or write a poem that translates your feelings. This technique is ideal for managing emotions such as melancholy, anger or sadness.

5. Containment technique with physical anchoring:

Associating a gesture with a calm state can be a powerful tool. For example, gently press a point on your wrist while thinking of a positive phrase, such as "I am at peace". Use this gesture in times of stress or anxiety to reconnect with that state of calm.

6. Mindfulness with sensory focus:

Focusing attention on the senses helps to get out of intrusive thoughts. You can focus on a nearby object, observing its colour, texture and details, or practice the 5-4-3-2-1 method: identify 5 things you see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell and 1 thing you taste. This reduces the impact of stress.

7. Controlled venting with the paper technique:

Externalising emotions by writing them down helps process them. Write a letter expressing how you feel, without worrying about the structure, and decide whether to keep it, tear it up or review it later. This technique is especially useful for releasing pent-up anger or sadness.

8. Mini-rituals of emotional regulation:

Small symbolic actions can reconnect with calm. For example, lighting a candle while repeating a phrase such as "This too shall pass" or drinking water slowly while imagining how it calms your body. These practices help to manage insecurity and stress.

9. Conscious exposure to the emotional stimulus:

Gradually facing what generates intense emotions helps desensitise its impact. If a social situation generates anxiety, start by visualising it before gradually exposing yourself to it in small doses. This strategy is useful for fear or insecurity.

10. Recreate a safe space:

Creating a physical or mental place where you feel protected can be very comforting. You can designate a corner at home with objects that relax you, such as pictures, cushions or soft lights. Using this space in times of distress helps to reduce stress and sadness.



11. Writing with a positive focus:

Writing about positive aspects or solutions helps to redirect attention. Write down three things that went well during the day, even if they are small, or recall a time when you overcame a similar challenge. This combats emotions such as dissatisfaction or pessimism.

12. Releasing body movements:

Performing purposeful movements helps to release physical tensions. Shaking hands and feet as if releasing trapped emotions or performing wide stretches with deep breaths are effective ways to release stress and helplessness.

13. Observation time technique:

Allowing time to feel the emotion without acting impulsively allows you to make better decisions. For example, count to 30 while watching the intensity of the emotion change. This is especially useful for managing anger and frustration.

14. Narrative reframing:

Changing the story you tell yourself about a situation changes emotional perception. For example, instead of thinking "I failed because I was rejected", change to "This is an opportunity to learn and improve". This approach is useful for guilt or disappointment.

15. Mindful physical contact:

Physical contact can be a great emotional regulator. Place a hand over your heart or hug your shoulders while repeating a phrase such as "I am here for me". This type of self-care helps to manage emotions such as helplessness and sadness.



APPENDIX 4

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

All-or-nothing thinking

It is seeing things in extremes: black or white, without considering the middle ground. If something is not perfect, it is perceived as a complete failure.

Examples:

- *"If I don't get the best grade on this exam, I'm useless."*
- *"If I don't get the whole project done today, it's as if I didn't do anything."*
- *"If he didn't text me back quickly, he probably doesn't care about me anymore."*

Overgeneralisation

This is based on taking an isolated event and assuming that this will always be the case. This thinking turns a single instance into a permanent rule.

Examples:

- *"I got turned down for this job; I'm never going to get a job."*
- *"Whenever I try to speak in public, I get nervous. I'm no good at this."*
- *"We argued once; this relationship will always be adversarial."*

Mental Filter

Is focusing only on the negative aspects of a situation and overlooking them or ignoring the positive.

Examples:

- *"In the meeting I was wrong on one point; no one noticed the good ideas I proposed".*
- *"Even though my boss congratulated me, all I think about is the comment he made about being more punctual."*
- *"Even though I did well at the event, I still think about the moment when I almost fell down."*



Disqualification of the Positive

Consists of minimising or dismissing the positive, as if it is worthless or accidental.

Examples:

- *"Yes, I passed the exam, but it was because the questions were easy."*
- *"Sure, they told me I did a good job, but they probably just wanted to be nice."*
- *"They complimented me on my presentation, but it was nothing special, anyone would have done the same."*

Mind Reading

Is assuming you know what others think of you, usually negatively, without evidence.

Examples:

- *"I'm sure they think I dressed weird at the party."*
- *"I think he didn't answer my message because he's upset with me."*
- *"I'm sure my boss thinks I'm not competent."*

Catastrophising

Is anticipating the worst possible outcome in a situation, without considering other possibilities.

Examples:

- *"If I miss this train, I won't make the meeting, I'll get fired and ruin my career."*
- *"I have a headache, I'm sure it's something serious like a tumour."*
- *"If I fail this exam, I'll never be able to graduate."*

Emotional Reasoning

This is based on believing that if you feel something, it must be true, even if there is no evidence to support it.

Examples:

- *"I feel insecure, so I must be doing everything wrong."*
- *"I'm nervous about my presentation, I'm sure it won't be good."*
- *"I feel like I'm not good enough, so it must be true."*



"Should" statements.

These are rigid rules about how you or others should act, which generate frustration when they are not followed.

Examples:

- *"I should be able to handle all of this without help."*
- *"I shouldn't feel sad, there are people who have bigger problems."*
- *"Others should treat me with more respect."*

Labelling

Is placing a negative label on yourself or others, based on a specific action or event.

Examples:

- *"I'm a mess because I forgot the appointment."*
- *"She is selfish because she didn't text me back."*
- *"I gave a bad presentation, I'm incompetent."*

Personalisation

Is assuming that everything that happens around you is about you, or is your responsibility.

Examples:

- *"My friend is in a bad mood, I must have done something to annoy him."*
- *"The project went wrong because I wasn't good enough."*
- *"The meeting was chaotic because I didn't intervene to organise it better."*

Fallacy of change

This is the belief that others should change to make you feel good, and that if they do, your life will be better.

Examples:

- *"If my boss would change his attitude, things would be much easier for me."*
- *"If my partner was more understanding, I wouldn't have so many problems."*
- *"If my friends were more supportive, I wouldn't feel so lonely."*



Tunnel vision or selective vision.

This is focusing only on one negative aspect of a situation, ignoring all other positive or neutral details.

Examples:

- *"Everything went wrong on the day, there was nothing good."*
- *"I couldn't achieve that goal, so everything I've done so far is useless."*
- *"The project was not successful, therefore everything I did was a failure."*

Social comparison

The tendency to constantly compare oneself with others, usually unfavourably.

Examples:

- *"Look how that person already has an amazing job, I'm never going to get something like that."*
- *"My co-workers are smarter than me, I'm sure I won't get promoted."*
- *"She always has time for her family, while I barely have time for myself."*

Reward fallacy

Is believing that effort or sacrifice should always be rewarded, and that if you don't get a reward, something is wrong.

Examples:

- *"I've worked very hard on this project, I should get recognition."*
- *"If I do everything for others, they should return the favour."*
- *"I don't understand why they don't thank me for everything I've done."*

Control fallacy

This is the tendency to feel that one has to control everything in life, or conversely, that one has no control at all over what happens.

Examples:

- *"If I don't do everything perfectly, things will fall apart."*
- *"I have no control over anything in my life, things always get out of hand."*
- *"It's all up to me, if I don't do this, no one will."*



Dichotomous thinking

It is thinking that there are only two options: one good and one bad, without contemplating other possible nuances.

Examples:

- *"If I am not perfect, I am a total failure."*
- *"If I don't succeed at this, my life will be a disaster."*
- *"If I don't get everything I want, then I haven't achieved anything."*

Disqualification of the negative.

It is downplaying or avoiding acknowledging the negative, ignoring that it may be an important part of the experience.

Examples:

- *"That thing I was told is unimportant, it shouldn't bother me."*
- *"It doesn't matter that I made a mistake, that has no relevance."*
- *"Criticism is not important, I only focus on the positive."*

Fairness fallacy

It is believing that everything must be fair, both to oneself and to others, and that if it is not, there is an imbalance that must be corrected.

Examples:

- *"It's not fair that my partner gets more recognition than I do for the same work."*
- *"It's unfair that things don't go my way, I deserve more."*
- *"Life is not fair, I always get the worst."*

External attribution

Is blaming external factors for problems or situations without taking any personal responsibility.

Examples:

- *"If the weather hadn't been so bad, I would have been on time."*
- *"I can't concentrate because the place is too noisy."*
- *"The project went wrong because my partner didn't contribute enough."*



Causality fallacy.

Is believing that you are responsible for how others feel or that your actions always cause other people's reactions.

Examples:

- *"If my friend is sad, it must be because I did something wrong."*
- *"If I don't do everything perfectly, the situation could get worse for everyone."*
- *"If I don't try hard enough, everything will fall apart."*

Fallacy of doom.

It is thinking that certain things are inevitable, as if there are no options to change the situation.

Examples:

- *"It will always be this way, no matter what I do."*
- *"I can't stop this from happening to me, there is no way out."*
- *"Things won't change, everything is predestined."*

Projection

Is attributing your own thoughts or feelings to others.

Examples:

- *"I don't like him, I'm sure he doesn't like me either."*
- *"I know everyone thinks I'm incompetent, even though no one has told me so."*
- *"I always feel nervous, and I'm sure others do too."*

Emotional generalisation.

Is basing all your conclusions about a specific experience on how you feel at the time.

Examples:

- *"I'm feeling anxious, so I'm sure everything I do today will go wrong."*
- *"I'm sad now, therefore my life is ruined."*
- *"Because I feel insecure, that means I will never succeed."*



Disqualification of the future.

It is thinking that things will not get better in the future, without considering that they may change.

Examples:

- *"I'm never going to get a good job."*
- *"I'm never going to be happy."*
- *"Things are only going to get worse."*

Future guessing.

Is anticipating that something negative will happen without evidence to back it up.

Examples:

- *"I'm sure it's going to go badly for me this time."*
- *"I'm sure no one will come to the party."*
- *"I think I'm going to fail at everything I do tomorrow."*

Excessive self-criticism.

Is being excessively hard on yourself for making mistakes or having imperfections.

Examples:

- *"I made a mistake, that means I'm a failure."*
- *"I can't believe I did that, I'm horrible."*
- *"Every time I make a mistake, I feel like I'm worthless."*

Hyperresponsibility

Is assuming that everything depends on you and that you are responsible for everything that happens.

Examples:

- *"If something goes wrong, it's always my fault."*
- *"I must do everything to make others well."*
- *"I can't fail, because if I do, everything will be ruined."*



Devaluing effort.

It is thinking that the effort you make is not important or not worth it.

Examples:

- *"What I did is not enough, I could have done more."*
- *"If I didn't achieve it perfectly, it's not worth it."*
- *"Even though I tried hard, it will never be enough."*

Escapism

Is trying to avoid difficult problems or emotions without facing them.

Examples:

- *"I'd better not think about this, it makes me uncomfortable."*
- *"If I ignore the problem, it will go away on its own."*
- *"Running away from the situation is the only way to feel good."*



APPENDIX 5

MOST COMMON ERRONEOUS STATEMENTS THAT DISTORT SELF-CONCEPT.

This annex provides examples of thoughts that many people express in moments of insecurity, frustration or self-criticism. These are statements that, although they may seem logical or justified, actually reflect distorted beliefs that negatively affect the way we see ourselves. For ease of understanding, each example is presented in a clear and simple structure:

Example: a typical statement that might arise in a real situation.

What it means: the underlying interpretation or implicit belief behind the statement.

Reasoning: an alternative explanation that helps to challenge the erroneous belief by erroneous belief, offering a more realistic, flexible and compassionate view.

This format aims to promote awareness and facilitate personal reflective work. By identifying these beliefs and understanding their impact, it opens up the possibility of transforming them, thus favouring a healthier and more realistic self-concept.

1. Example: *"I failed my driving test today, I am useless".*

Meaning: I am completely incapable in some areas, which makes me useless.

Reasoning: We all have strengths and weaknesses. There is no such thing as a person who is completely skilled in everything or completely inept in everything. Having difficulties in certain areas does not define us, but shows us opportunities to improve and learn.

2. Example: *"I am not able to give a presentation without getting nervous, I will never be good at it."*

Meaning: My value depends on being the best at everything I do.

Reasoning: Weaknesses do not detract from our value. Not being particularly good in one area does not mean we are less valid or capable in general. We all have talents in different areas, and recognising them helps us to build a fairer view of ourselves.



3. Example: *"I misspoke at the meeting, this shows that I am not competent."*

Meaning: If I fail, it means I am not capable and never will be.

Reasoning: Mistakes are part of growth. Making mistakes does not mean that we are incapable, but that we are in the process of learning. Instead of interpreting failures as definitive failures, we can see them as necessary steps to improve and evolve.

4. Example: *"Nobody invites me to hang out with the group, it must be because I am not interesting".*

Meaning: I don't belong to any group, which means I have no value.

Reasoning: We won't always fit in everywhere, and that's OK. Not belonging to a group or not standing out in a particular field does not mean we have no value. Each person has their own path and it is important to focus on finding the environment in which they can truly develop.

5. Example: *"I don't think I'll ever be able to overcome my insecurities, I'll always be like that".*

Meaning: What I think of myself is the absolute truth.

Reasoning: Our perception of ourselves is not an absolute truth. What we think about who we are may be influenced by past experiences, others' opinions or moments of self-doubt. However, these perceptions are subjective and can change over time if we learn to question them.

6. Example: *"I always see my friends succeed, I will never get that far."*

Meaning: I must always compare myself with others to see if I am good enough.

Reasoning: Comparison with others distorts our view of ourselves. Continually comparing ourselves to others can cause us to lose sight of our own strengths and achievements. Everyone has their own path, and by focusing on our own, we can build a clearer vision of who we are.



7. **Example:** *"My boss told me I could do better, that means I'm not good enough".*

What it means: What others think of me defines my value.

Reasoning: Other people's opinions do not define our value. While outside opinions may influence how we feel, they should not be the criteria for defining who we are. Our worth does not depend on the perception of others.

8. **Example:** *"Since I changed jobs, I feel like I've lost my way. Maybe I am not the same."*

What it means: Change means losing my identity.

Reasoning: Change is part of the growth process. Experiencing change in our lives, whether personal, professional or emotional, does not mean that we are losing our identity. Continuous growth is a natural aspect of life, and accepting those changes allows us to maintain a flexible self-image.

9. **Example:** *"Whenever I face a problem, I feel unable to overcome it; I always stop at the first obstacle."*

Meaning: Difficulties weaken me and show that I am not strong.

Reasoning: Resilience in the face of adversity strengthens our self-concept. Facing and overcoming difficulties strengthens our resilience and helps us to recognise our inner strength. Difficult experiences should not weaken us, but teach us about our own ability to overcome.

10. **Example:** *"She is so good at what she does, I will never be able to keep up with her".*

Meaning: Only talented people succeed, and I am not talented.

Reasoning: Effort outweighs innate talent. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that only the talented can succeed, but the truth is that effort and perseverance are key to achieving our goals. By valuing ourselves for our efforts, rather than for what we are born good at, we develop a more positive self-concept.



11. **Example:** *"I'm fine the way I am, but deep down I know I can be better, should I change?"*

Meaning: I should be content with who I am and not try to change.

Reasoning: The balance between accepting and changing is essential. Accepting what we are, but also being open to improve and grow, allows us to maintain a realistic and balanced view of ourselves. It is not about settling for what we are, but accepting what we are while working to become better.

12. **Example:** *"I try so hard to make everyone happy, but I never seem to make everyone happy".*

Meaning: I need everyone to accept me in order to feel worthwhile.

Reasoning: We don't need to please everyone to be valuable. We want to be accepted by others, but we cannot live to please everyone. Accepting that not everyone will agree with us and that this does not diminish our value allows us to develop a freer and more autonomous self-concept.

13. **Example:** *"I can't stop depending on the approval of others to feel good about myself".*

Meaning: My well-being depends on others validating my emotions.

Reasoning: Emotional autonomy is key. Learning to manage our own emotions and not relying exclusively on external factors or other people to validate our feelings strengthens our self-esteem and gives us more control over our perception of ourselves.



APPENDIX 6

ASSERTIVE RIGHTS

Standing up for our rights and expressing our needs is fundamental to living a balanced life. However, sometimes we forget that we have the right to be heard and to act in a way that safeguards our well-being. Here is a list of assertive rights that will help you remember what is important to you, help you feel more confident in setting boundaries and encourage healthier and more respectful communication.

1. You have the right to make mistakes, as they are part of learning.
2. You have the right to have your own opinions and beliefs.
3. You have the right to change your mind, opinion or attitude at any time.
4. You have the right to express criticism and protest unfair treatment, always in a respectful manner.
5. You have the right to try to change what you are not happy with.
6. You have the right to ask for help or emotional support when you need it.
7. You have the right to feel and express pain without being judged.
8. You have the right to ignore the advice of others if you disagree.
9. You have the right to say "no" without feeling guilty or selfish.
10. You have the right to be alone when you need to be, even if others want your company.
11. You have the right not to justify yourself to others; a simple "no, thank you" is enough.
12. You have the right not to take responsibility for other people's problems.
13. You have the right not to anticipate the wants and needs of others or to have to sense them.
14. You have the right to be treated with dignity and to protest if you feel you are not being treated with dignity.
15. You have the right to have your needs be as important as those of others.
16. You have the right to experience and express your own feelings, and to be the sole judge of them.
17. You have the right to stop and think before you act.



18. You have the right to ask for what you want and take "no" for an answer.
19. You have the right to do less than you are capable of doing, as you cannot always perform at your best.
20. You have the right to decide about your body, your time and your property.
21. You have the right to ask for what you need without feeling that you are a burden to others.
22. You have the right to change direction in your life if you are dissatisfied with the direction you are taking.
23. You have the right to disengage and set boundaries in relationships, even if this means distancing yourself from people close to you.
24. You have the right to say "I don't know" and to ask for time to reflect before giving an answer.
25. You have the right to protect your personal time and choose how you spend it, without feeling obliged to meet the expectations of others.
26. You have the right to be yourself, without having to conform to the expectations of others.
27. You have the right to be treated equally, regardless of your gender, age, race or any other personal characteristic.
28. You have the right to ask for forgiveness when you feel you have made a mistake, without being burdened with unnecessary guilt.



APPENDIX 7

MANIPULATIVE STRATEGIES IN TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

1. Emotional blackmail: This strategy is based on manipulating the other person's feelings through threats or feelings of guilt, in order to get them to act according to the manipulator's wishes.

Example: "If you don't do what I ask you to do, I will be very sad and I don't know what I would do without you".

2. Gaslighting: This consists of manipulating someone to make them doubt their own perception of reality, which can lead to the victim feeling insecure or confused.

Example: "That never happened, you are imagining things. You are crazy.

3. Silent treatment: Silence is used as a form of punishment or control, avoiding any form of communication with the person to make them feel distress or guilt.

Example: Ignoring someone completely after a disagreement, not responding to their attempts to talk.

4. Excessive victimhood: The manipulator constantly presents him/herself as a victim to avoid taking responsibility or to receive attention and sympathy.

Example: "I am always the one who suffers, I am never understood, everything happens to me".

5. Isolation: This consists of reducing or eliminating the victim's social relationships, preventing them from maintaining contact with friends, family or acquaintances in order to make them more dependent on the manipulator.

Example: "I don't understand why you need to go out with your friends, you already have me".

6. Jealousy and excessive control: The manipulator uses jealousy to exert control over the victim, limiting their freedom and generating distrust.

Example: "Why did you take so long to respond to that person? I'm sure you like him/her.



7. Devaluation and humiliation: The manipulative person constantly ridicules or belittles the victim, undermining their self-esteem and confidence.

Example: "I don't understand how you're so stupid, you can't do anything right".

8. Conditional love: The manipulator offers affection only if the victim meets his or her expectations or desires, using love as a tool of control.

Example: "I love you, but only if you do what I ask."

9. Competition and rivalry: The manipulator creates a constant sense of competition, constantly comparing the victim to others and encouraging rivalries.

Example: "Look at how your friend is doing, why can't you be more like him/her".

10. Triangulation: The manipulator introduces a third person into the conflict to create jealousy, rivalries or confusion in the victim.

Example: "My ex always understood me better than you, that's why I feel closer to him/her".

11. Projection: Negative feelings, desires or behaviours that are actually the manipulator's own are attributed to others to deflect blame or responsibility.

Example: "You are always being jealous, you are the one who doesn't trust me".

12. Emotional exhaustion (psychological exhaustion): Through small but constant emotional demands, the manipulator exhausts the victim, leaving them emotionally drained.

Example: "I can't take it anymore, you always have problems that need attention and I feel exhausted".

13. Minimisation of feelings: The manipulator downplays the victim's feelings or needs, making them feel that their emotions are not valid.

Example: "You shouldn't feel that way, that's silly".



14. Empty promises: Promises of change or improvement are made that are never fulfilled, keeping the victim waiting for something that never comes.

Example: "I promise I'll change this time, you'll see. It won't happen again."

15. Rewriting history (distortion of facts): The manipulator alters past events to make the victim doubt what really happened.

Example: "I never told you that, you imagined it. I would never do something like that."

16. Creating emotional dependency: The manipulator fosters emotional dependency in the victim, making him/her believe that without him/her he/she cannot live or function properly.

Example: "Without me, you wouldn't be able to handle anything. I am the only one who understands you".

17. Destructive comparisons: The victim is constantly compared to others, generating insecurity and self-doubt.

Example: "Your sister is always so perfect, why can't you be more like her?"

18. Emotional sabotage: The manipulator puts obstacles or creates situations so that the victim cannot achieve personal goals or accomplishments.

Example: "I told you you wouldn't make it, you always fail at everything you try."

19. Covert threats: Although not expressed directly, the manipulator hints that something bad will happen if the victim does not do what he/she wants.

Example: "Surely if you don't do this, everything will fall apart".

20. Reward and punishment game: The manipulator rewards the victim for behaviour that favours him/her, and punishes when he/she does not.

Example: "If you listen to me, I'll take you to that place you like so much, but if you don't, you'll never go out again."



21. Blaming for no reason (making the victim feel bad for no reason): The manipulator blames the victim for no valid reason, making them feel constantly indebted or responsible for other people's problems.

Example: "This is your fault, if you hadn't done that, everything would have been fine".

22. Calculated indifference: The manipulator acts with indifference towards the victim in order to punish them or make them feel that their presence or opinion does not matter.

Example: Not replying to messages or calls, showing complete disinterest.

23. Inverted emotional dependency (making oneself indispensable): The manipulator makes the victim emotionally dependent on him/her by offering support only when it benefits him/her.

Example: "You couldn't live without me, you owe everything you do to me".

24. Public or private ridicule: The manipulator humiliates the victim, either privately or publicly, to make him/her feel inferior or less valuable.

Example: "Are you going to do that? Everyone would laugh if they knew, why aren't you more like everyone else?"

25. Fostering insecurity (undermining self-esteem): The manipulator creates an atmosphere of constant insecurity, in order to undermine the victim's confidence.

Example: "I don't know how you can think you're capable of doing that, you'll never make it".

This list includes many of the most common tactics of emotional manipulation, but each relationship is unique, so manipulators may employ a combination of strategies. Recognising these patterns is the first step towards emotional liberation and building healthier relationships.



APPENDIX 8

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ORGANISING A BALANCED DIET

Healthy eating does not have to be complicated. You don't need to count calories, follow strict diets or buy special products. Eating in a balanced way is really about going back to basics: fresh, varied food, and minimal planning to help you make better choices without improvising.

This appendix offers you a clear and simple way to organise your diet, even if you have no previous knowledge. We have structured it in three parts: what to eat, how to distribute it, and an example of a weekly menu. Before going into detail, it is important to understand what each food group is for, as this will help you to make better choices and to understand why it is necessary to include them in your daily diet.

- **Vegetables and fruits:** they provide vitamins, minerals and fibre that help keep the body healthy, strengthen the immune system and aid digestion. They are also low in calories and high in water, so they contribute to hydration.
- **Proteins** are essential for repairing tissue, building muscle and maintaining the proper functioning of organs and the immune system. They are found in lean meats, fish, eggs, pulses, nuts and dairy products.
- **Carbohydrates:** are the main source of energy for the body. They are found in foods such as wholegrain cereals, rice, pasta, wholemeal bread, potatoes and pulses. It is preferable to choose wholegrain versions because they provide more fibre and help keep energy levels stable.
- **Healthy fats:** Although often associated with something negative, healthy fats are necessary for proper brain function, vitamin absorption and hormone production. They are found in foods such as olive oil, avocado, nuts and oily fish.
- **Water:** is vital for all body functions, such as temperature regulation, nutrient transport and waste elimination. Staying hydrated is essential to feel good and avoid confusing thirst with hunger.
- **Dairy or dairy alternatives:** provide calcium, protein and vitamins important for bone health and overall body function. You can choose low-fat yoghurt, milk or cheese, or fortified plant-based alternatives if you prefer to avoid animal products.

On this basis, you can better understand why it is important to include a variety of foods and balance the amounts to cover all these functions in your daily life.

1. What to eat: the basic food groups and their function

Food group	How much to include	Practical examples
Vegetables	At least twice a day	Salad, broccoli, carrot, courgette, peppers, tomato, chard, spinach
Fresh fruit	2-3 pieces per day	Apple, banana, mandarin orange, melon, grapes, pear, berries
Pulses	3-4 times a week	Lentils, chickpeas, beans, peas. Also in creams or vegetable burgers.
Wholegrain cereals	In 2 of the 3 main meals	Wholemeal bread, brown rice, oatmeal, wholemeal pasta, couscous, quinoa
Animal or vegetable protein	1 serving per day, varying sources	Chicken, fish, egg, tofu, tempeh, lean meat, pulses, seitan
Nuts and seeds	1 small handful per day	Almonds, walnuts, sunflower, chia or flax seeds
Dairy or plant-based alternatives	1-2 servings per day	Plain yoghurt, milk, cottage cheese, vegetable drink with calcium
Healthy fats	Daily, in moderation	Extra virgin olive oil, avocado, nuts
Water	Between 1.5 and 2 litres a day	Natural water. You can add lemon, cucumber or herbs for flavour.



2. How to organise your daily meals

To maintain a balanced diet, you don't need complicated recipes. Here is a simple way to structure your day:

Breakfast: energy food + some protein + fruit.

Example: oatmeal with plain yoghurt and strawberries.

Mid-morning (if you're hungry): healthy snack.

Example: fruit, handful of nuts, wholemeal toast.

Lunch: Vegetable + protein + carbohydrate.

Example: lentils with vegetables and brown rice.

Snack (optional): something light and nutritious.

Example: plain yoghurt with banana or homemade milkshake.

Dinner: light and balanced meal.

Example: spinach salad with boiled egg and wholemeal bread.

Tip: if you don't have time to cook every day, you can prepare some meals in advance (batch cooking) and keep them in the fridge or freezer. fridge or freezer. This way you will have healthy options on hand during the week.



3. Example of a basic weekly menu.

This example is designed for people who want to start eating better without complication. You can adapt it to your tastes, intolerances or needs.

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Monday	Wholemeal toast with avocado and fruit	Lentils with rice and tomato salad	French omelette with steamed vegetables
Tuesday	Oatmeal with banana and walnuts	Baked chicken with sweet potato and broccoli	Cream of pumpkin soup with boiled egg
Wednesday	Wholemeal bread with tomato and fresh cheese	Chickpeas sautéed with vegetables and rice	Salad with tuna, corn and spinach
Thursday	Natural yogurt with oatmeal and fruit	Wholemeal pasta with vegetables and tofu	Vegetable soup + wholemeal bread with cheese
Friday	Oatmeal omelette with apple	Baked fish with potato and salad	Scrambled eggs with mushrooms and courgette
Saturday	Baked oatmeal with vegetable milk and cinnamon	Veggie burger with salad	Cream of lentil soup with wholemeal bread
Sunday	Wholemeal bread with oil and tomato	Vegetable paella or vegetable fideuá	Free and light dinner

Remember that you don't have to be perfect. If you eat differently one day, that's fine. The key is consistency and flexibility. Little by little, you will incorporate healthier habits without having to make an effort.



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