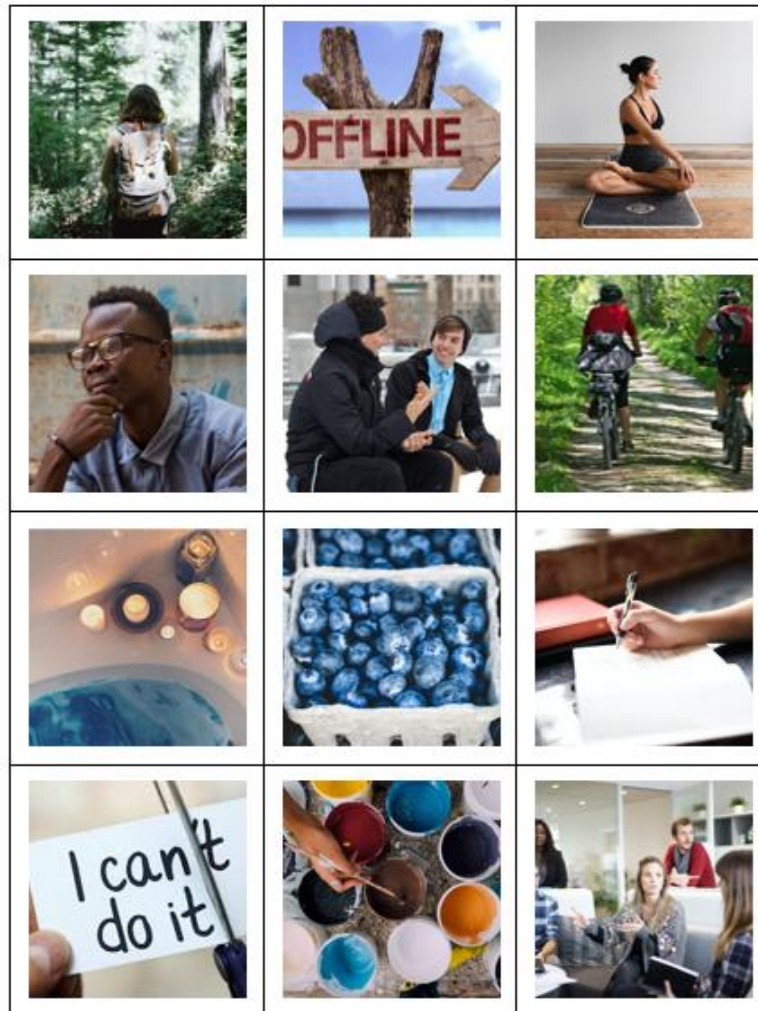


# Peer Group Project: Bingo for Mental Health



## Peer group 2:

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Disclaimer! ⚠ If you are not feeling well, seek professional help.

## Background

On the basis of the pandemic, we have seen that health is the most important thing, because if we don't have health, we won't be able to change the world.

All that has surrounded the pandemic of the Covid19 has generated many different mental health problems the most common have been Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Covid-19 is creating a prolonged stressful situation over time, which continually causes us psychological discomfort because the stressful event continues in our lives. When we live in a stressful or hostile context, emotional stress reactions are natural, it is an adaptive response to an event that exceeds our resources. Studies related to the analysis of response to traumatic experiences show us that the percentage of people who end up developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is not high, 75% of people exposed to a traumatic event recover without developing this disorder.

The pandemic has caused a lot of mental health problems, which is why we think it is really important to promote good mental health. To help guides and scouts, and ourselves, to focus on mental health during the week, we are introducing the mental health bingo. The bingo will provide an easy list of exercises you can include in your daily routines. Due to the gamification aspect it will help the kids to come back to the list every day.

## The Bingo

The simplest way to play the Bingo is to go to our Bingo Page ([click here](#)) and start improving your mental health. Pick one box every day and follow the instructions. If you are doing the Mental Health Bingo with your group, everybody can start doing exercises and one week later, when you meet again, you can compare who did what and might find a winner.

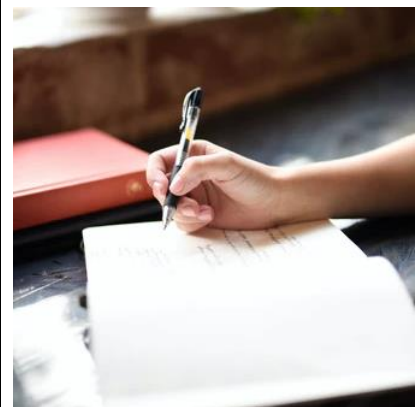
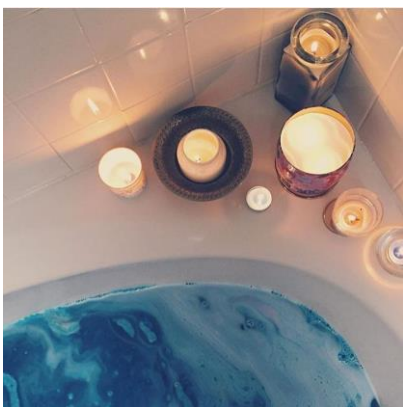
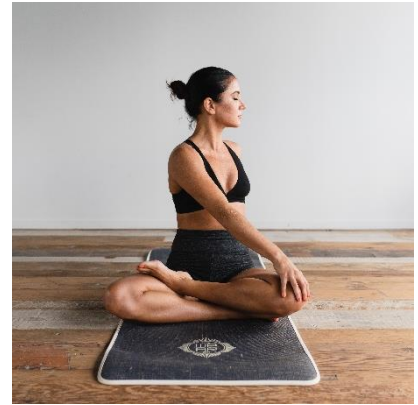
We recognise that not everyone has the technology or internet access to support an app, so our Mental Health Bingo can also be customised and printed out to be shared with your local Scout or Guide group. Let young people create a list of ideas, mix them up, and set them off on their own individual journeys! Encourage your young people to support each other and share their ideas, while learning the importance of checking in with their mental health along the way.

See our suggested activities below. They are the same as the online-bingo linked. Additionally, check out our [youtube-video](#) about the bingo-concept!

## Way forward

The Bingo is an easy activity to implement which helps the participants to stay engaged and motivated. The current version can be played using pen and paper. Nevertheless, this is just a starting point. Further activities or activity types could be added. Due to the nature of the Bingo, an app, which makes the game itself as well as the connected information available on a cellphone could be easily implemented and would improve the user experience.





# Activities

## **SURROUND YOURSELF BY NATURE**

Outdoor activities help you to improve your mental health. Due to studies people may reduce feelings of time pressure and mental stress. As we are doing many activities like school, work, university from home, we are not requested to leave the house and spend time outdoors. To improve your wellbeing, start today, go outside.

### **Examples:**

- Bike ride
- Hike
- Work in the garden

## **DIGITAL DETOX**

Due to the lockdown and its effects on homeschooling or working from home, we are spending hours and hours online in our professional and in our free time. Being always connected and communicating with others is creating a lot of stress because we feel the need to be constantly available to our friends, coworkers and family even when we're not in the same room as them. Reserve some time away from the computer or cellphone to digital detox. This can be a few hours a day or maybe the entire weekend. Spend some time to appreciate the world beyond the screen and give your eyes and your mind a break from the constant *ping* of messages.

## **RELAXING TECHNIQUES**

- Breathing
- Body scanning
- Progressive muscular relaxation
- Safe place
- Relaxation activities

### **Benefits**

Without a doubt one of the most powerful tools is relaxation techniques. These are things that you are aware of that make you feel good or relaxed. For example doing a self-massage, putting on some music or contemplating a landscape or a photograph. It'll also be great for you to do activities that make you have fun and distract you, not everything should be obligations! Laughing is a powerful weapon that lowers blood pressure, relieves pain and serves as an antidepressant.

Many directed meditation sessions can be found online. These will talk you through the process in a calming voice. All guidelines and instructions can be difficult to follow at first, but don't be in a hurry, little by little calm will come, practicing those exercises that appeal to you the most. Follow the instructions without worrying about whether you're doing them right or wrong, better or worse. It isn't a race or a competition. If you feel overwhelmed because you don't have time, reflect on the need to stop and listen to your needs. You don't have to spend hours and hours, with a few minutes to start is enough, and from there go keeping some time of the day that is for you.

When you start, it is normal to find it difficult to maintain concentration, and during relaxation techniques doubts and worries arise and your mind goes elsewhere. Don't judge yourself, look at these thoughts as if they were not yours and, when you feel ready, redirect your attention back to the breath.

## **MINDFULNESS**

Our attention is pulled in so many directions that we never take the time to fully experience one thing at a time. Do some activities mindfully, concentrate on everything that you're doing, but really concentrate. For example, if you're eating, don't watch a video or think about what you will do after. Be present. See how your food looks, all the different flavours it has, how it smells ... This technique isn't only meals, but chose a moment or activity everyday to be absolutely present, such as when you are having a shower or when you are removing your makeup/cleaning your face. Just pick a moment of the day to stop thinking about everything you have to do and be present and enjoy that moment.

### **Steps you can follow:**

1. Identify your emotions
2. Don't control them, accept them.
3. Hear your emotions and body, why are you feeling like that?

### **Understanding anxiety**

Anxiety is a response to stress but may carry on after the factors causing stress have been resolved. Individuals may feel anxiety on a short-term basis, for example if they go to a job interview or have to give a presentation in front of lots of people. It becomes a problem when anxiety cannot be related to any particular situation or becomes long-term, overwhelming people and interfering with everyday life.

Anxiety has an adaptive function in human beings, it is useful for alerting us of any danger we perceive, the problem is when instead of mobilising us, it paralyzes us, and hampers our functioning normally, when it remains constant over time and interferes with everyday activities.

It is very important not to fight against it, but accept that it is with us. To understand it better, anxiety normally goes associated with distort thoughts (I do everything wrong), what we have to do is to realise what those thoughts are, evaluate them in an objective way, and then try to think in alternatives more realistic (I sometimes do things wrong, but also sometimes I do them right).

## **SOCIALISE WITH PEOPLE YOU LOVE**

**WHO:** Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

We are social beings, that's why it is also important to take care of our social health. Sometimes if you're feeling low, a chat with a friend can lift your spirits and leave you feeling much better. Depending on guidance in your area you could invite a friend over, go out for coffee, go for a walk together, call them, or even just send a text message. Remember to adhere to local rules and don't arrange meetups if you or anyone else has symptoms of COVID-19.

Feeling listened and understood is can be an emotional unleash. We may not be able to find a solution to what generates sadness, but sharing our worries is a way to feel less isolated.





If you are the one feeling well, spread the love and reach out to loved ones. Reaching out to friends in a time of need can be difficult, even if you're not lonely right now try getting in touch with someone you haven't spoken to for a while, it might just make their day. Or write a nice comment to a person at home. It could be a parent, a sibling etc. (It will help your mental state and also the other person's).

Research suggests writing love letters make you happy, especially when you are the one writing them. Engaging in any activity that is love-related activates important parts of our brain including the ones responsible for emotion, attention, motivation, and memory. Dr Steve Toepfer from Kent State University states that by habitually making thoughtful love letters, or notes “you’ll feel happier, you’ll feel more satisfied, and if you’re suffering from depressive symptoms, your symptoms will decrease.” ([Source 1](#); [Source 2](#))

## **DOING EXERCISE**

Being active helps you to improve your mental health. Studies have shown that people who exercise will reduce feelings of time pressure and mental stress. Due to our sedentary lifestyle such as sitting at our desk at school, work or university, we need to reserve time to be active and exercise. To improve your wellbeing, it is important for you to act today by exercising regularly.

Physical activity leads to the brain producing more serotonin which is a chemical in the body that lifts our mood and makes us feel better. In addition, exercise keeps the body fit and helps weight loss which makes you feel more positive. There is some evidence that being outdoors also lifts a person’s mood so exercising outside may bring more benefit for well-being.

### **Examples:**

- Do yoga
- Go running
- Go on a bike ride
- Do pilates

## **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**

Not only is taking a bath or shower important for our personal hygiene which sometimes seems difficult to maintain when we are feeling low in mental health but relaxing in a bath is also good for your mental health. Taking a moment out of your busy schedule to soak in warm water helps reduce stress. Giving yourself a moment to let go of the outside world to focus on just feeling the warm water and breathing. You can add some candles and essential oils to enhance the relaxation feeling with warm light tones and aromatherapy.

## **TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH**

**WHO:** Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Mental and physical health are really related one to another. To have good mental health it is really important to take care of our bodies. To have a good physical health it is necessary to:

- Eat good food, healthy food
- Do exercise
- Get enough sleep

In times of stress it is very easy to turn to comfort food and ready meals, lose motivation for exercise and to have erratic sleeping patterns. The key to changing your lifestyle is to do so in little steps, and try not to feel guilty about the odd takeaway or lie in every now and then. The internet is a fantastic source for healthy recipes, including homemade versions of your favourite fast food that are better for your body and your wallet - why not try something new for dinner? Swap sugary drinks for water, save for one glass of juice or smoothie. Exercise is good for reducing stress, it releases endorphins which make you feel accomplished, and tires you out ready to sleep! Limiting screen time an hour or two before bed can help you fall asleep more quickly, so try switching off your phone and reading, colouring or doing a puzzle before bed instead.

Nutrition is very important, the food we eat affects the development and day to day maintenance of the body. A balanced diet helps to keep the body healthy and provides the proteins, vitamins, minerals and other elements the body requires to maintain and repair itself. It is known that some deficiencies (e.g. of certain vitamins) can affect mood and poor diet can leave people feeling tired and lethargic which will lead to low moods. Keeping a healthy weight is important in feeling better physically but also for good self-esteem and self-confidence. A healthy, balanced diet will help individuals maintain a healthy weight.

A healthy lifestyle is also good for mental health. Smoking, alcohol and drugs all have an impact on mood and mental well-being. Though they may make people feel happier for a short while, they may feel very low when the effects wear off and long-term or excessive use of alcohol and drugs may lead to mental health issues. Nicotine, for example, has been shown to interfere with the levels of dopamine in the brain and can switch off the brain's mechanism for making dopamine. Dopamine is a chemical which supports positive feelings so lack of it may cause depression.

Rest and sleep is also essential for good mental health. The body needs to rest in order to repair itself. A lack of rest or sleep puts pressure on the body and makes people feel unwell. It can also lead to issues with memory and thinking processes, cause individuals to be irritable and behave in ways that are out of character and trigger anxiety and depression.

## **WRITING/JOURNALING**

Even in moments when you don't have anyone available to talk and express yourself to there will always be someone available: yourself. So take paper and pen and write down how you feel and what needs you have at the time. Let all your emotions out, without filters, or fear of prejudice. Writing can become very therapeutic, since we are shaping what we feel, identifying sensations, organizing thoughts, making our experiences more aware...

**Here there are some questions you can answer to yourself in your journal/notebook:**

- How am I feeling?
- Why do I think I am feeling like this?
- How is my body and mind reacting to this sensations?
- What would I need to be better?
- What am I grateful for?
- List of good things that has happened to me today (at least 3)
- What can I do good today/what could I have done better?
- One good thing about myself.

If you are feeling negative, you can tear up, set fire to or throw your paper in the (recycling) bin afterwards, as a cathartic release. If you have followed the questions, keep your entry to look at next time you're feeling

down, see how your situation has changed, and remind yourself of the good things that have happened or you felt about yourself.

## **CHALLENGE YOURSELF INTO DOING SOMETHING NEW**

Is there something that you have always wanted to try out? Is there a new skill that you have always wanted to develop or something that you really want to learn but haven't dared to try? Maybe you think you are too old to try new things or you simply haven't had the time.

Now is the time to prioritise time for yourself to learn a new skill or finally make time for some activity that you have always wanted to try out.

Start by making a list of everything you have always wanted to try out. Then you are going to look at the list and put a numbers on the items. Which activity or skill do you want to learn or do the most? Then you are going to pick your favorites and write a new list with everything you need to accomplish doing the activity or learning a new skill.

You can do it!!

## **DO SOMETHING YOUR REALLY LIKE**

Do something you really like and that you know that relaxes you, it could be playing an instrument, singing, doing manual work, painting...

## **LEARN ASSERTIVENESS**

### **What is assertiveness?**

Assertiveness implies being able to express our thoughts, feelings, emotions and decisions firmly, respecting ourselves and others. Therefore, if we are assertive, we do not allow others to decide for us and ignore our ideas, contributions and values. By doing this we are communicating passively. We can also, on the contrary, impose our ideas without taking anyone into account. This is what is known as aggressive communication. How to improve your communication?

**Learning assertive communication techniques**, that is, allowing you to respect yourself and others, is essential to achieve your goals or objectives and to feel good with yourself and with others.

1. Understand that no one can read your mind  
If you want people to take into account your wants and needs, say what they are, expressing yourself in a way that others do not feel attacked or offended. It is the only way people can really know what you want.
2. Identify what you want and seek to achieve it.  
Start by identifying your own needs, wants, goals, or objectives. Don't expect anyone to identify them, much less satisfy them, for you. Find a way to get what you want without harming others, and if you need help ask openly.
3. Use phrases with "I"  
If you use sentences in first person, you reaffirm your ideas, opinions, emotions, wishes and rights. In addition, you will let others know what you think without sounding like an accusation.
4. Learn to listen.



Communicating assertively implies knowing how to listen correctly and actively. This is only possible with an open attitude towards the message that the other person transmits to us. Remember: others have the right to think and feel differently than you do.

5. Apprendre à dire "non"
6. Learn to be aware of your right to say "no" without feeling guilty or obliged to give explanations and excuses. In the same way, others also have the right to say "no" to you.

### **Benefits**

- Increases self-esteem and security.
- It helps you have more confidence in who you are and what you express.
- Improve your emotional well-being.
- It makes you mature since in communications flows respect and not the search for reason.
- Help build healthy and constructive social relationships and avoid attracting toxic people (or worse, becoming one yourself). Allow you to achieve your personal goals, thus avoiding emotional distress.
- It enables you to set your own limits. It helps you judge your own needs, set your priorities, and make your decisions.
- It makes it easier to understand mistakes, both your own and those of others. Assertive communication makes us more human.