



# KICKIN' THE PAIN AWAY (GENTLY)

OCHOZ U BRNA,  
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A project to discuss  
mental health  
problems related to  
COVID-19





During this youth exchange, in which we discussed mental health problems related to COVID-19,

we used some methods that can be useful to discuss those problems while having fun and relaxing.

## BONFIRE GATHERING

This activity can be done after working hours. It is useful as it builds up connection between participants, giving them an occasion to share their stories about COVID-19 times. If one of the participants knows how to play an instrument, it is also possible to write a song together, or play something to create the right atmosphere for sharing intense memories.



It is recommended to have this activity at the start of a workshop or project, as it is highly connective and helps the participants get in the mood to discuss serious topics in a relaxed and harmonic environment. This will be surely useful for the next sessions, in which the participants may feel very deep emotions. The participants who take part to this kind of activity show a higher concentration later, as they feel they already started bonding with the others and already gave an emotional investment.

## LET THE MEMES DO THE TALKING

### Horoscope:

Something positive will happen to you this month!



**A FUN AND ENGAGING ACTIVITY, SUITABLE FOR ANY KIND OF GROUP**

This aim of this activity is to talk about the COVID-19 situation in a funny way and with the eyes of the people of the internet. We asked our participants to look for memes about COVID-19 not only in English, but also in their own language and then we used a projector to show them to the whole group. This allowed us to discuss various cultural differences in how countries faced the crisis posed by the virus and how the people reacted in general, while having a laugh. Given the nature of some of the memes, the discussion was extended also to mental health issues and coping mechanisms. This activity is highly encouraged in a group of young people, as it is not only funny and informative, but also needs no reinforcing of the attention span of the participants, as it is very interesting and engaging.



## SHOWTIME!

## AN ACTIVITY ABOUT EXPRESSION AND REFLECTION



To help our participants to express their emotions and experiences during COVID-19 times, we used this particular activity. We asked the participants, who were divided in groups of different countries, to come up with a little show that expressed what they felt during quarantine times or what they saw in society that influenced them in their daily decisions. There were no rules of presentation, they were free to express their feelings and creativity through theater, singing, dancing, even some drawings or whatever they felt the most comfortable with. The results can really impress: people can laugh, cry, feel goosebumps and reflect on things, while having an opportunity to show their talents and discuss about mental health issues and quarantine in an incredibly engaging way.

## WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

In this activity, we asked our participants to sit somewhere (preferably, in the open and with nature around would be best, if the weather allows) comfortably, and to reflect and answer to themselves to 2 main questions: 1) What stops you from achieving the things that make you happy? 2) Which fears do you have when thinking about the realisation of those things? Are those related to COVID-19?

The last question is particularly important for the next activity that is presented.

## FACE YOUR FEARS - BE BRAVE

After having the participants reflect on the questions, we asked them to choose a partner between the participants with whom they felt the best connection. Then we did some connective exercises: we asked them to look in each others' eyes for 2 minutes, then one of the participants in each couple expressed the fears precedently examined, while the other would actively listen. Then, the other participant would do the same.

After both of them expressed their fears, they would together find a solution to overcome that fear, conquer it and make it an advantage. At the end of the exercise, if they felt like it, they could express their gratitude to the partner by some kind of gesture: a shake of hands, a hug, or just saying thank you. This allowed the participants to talk about their COVID-19 related issues and release some tension towards them.

## OUTDOOR AND INDOOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Physical activities can really help in releasing stress, negative emotions and overcome awkwardness in the group. For this reason we encouraged our participants to have fun activities in the open and inside the meeting room.

The activities ranged from soccer, volleyball and other sports to yoga and more reflective activities. This was encouraged through the free activities and free initiatives sessions. This kind of activities help the people bond and talk about their personal feelings with the others, helping the cooperation during the rest of the sessions.

## COOLING OUT SESSION

After the end of sessions it is highly recommended to have a cooling out session, especially if the topics discussed during the day were particularly emotional or heavy to digest.

This session is used for two main tasks: reflect on the things people learned during the day and relax. For this reason we had meditation sessions with some music in the background, and then mixed groups of participants would talk with the group leaders about the day, thus receiving information to make their stay and experience even better.

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