



THE WELLBEING BOOKLET

for educators

Welcome words

Dear Educators,

how are you and your students feeling? Are you concerned about the well-being of your pupils?

Most probably you are reading these lines for a reason.

This booklet is the outcome of an Erasmus+ cooperation.

As we are more than pleased to offer our methods that we have carefully selected and developed during our 20-month Erasmus+ transnational cooperation. So feel free to use one or more of them in your pedagogical routine. Adopt them as needed to maintain and improve your own and your students' mental health and well-being. We hope you'll find the methods inspirational and practical.

Kind regards,

Introduction

Akureyri Junior College - Menntaskólinn á Akureyri - is an established upper-secondary educational institution in Northern Iceland. 570 students attend the school with a staff of around 75.

Károlyi István 12-grade Elementary and Secondary School of Újpest is located in the Hungarian capital, Budapest. It has 800 students and a staff of 89.

The two schools decided to cooperate in order to face the challenges and find answers to the post-traumatic results of the pandemic and better cope with the negative effects of our hectic lives.

As a result of this initiative they have applied for funding and successfully completed the Erasmus+ project entitled "Supporting Students' and Educators' Mental and Physical Well-being in Challenging Times"

The present booklet is the fruit of the teams' efforts to improve educators' and pupils' mental health and well-being. It contains the description of 8 methods and the necessary support material.

Regardless the fact that the methods have been developed as answers for the challenges revealed by the surveys of the Erasmus+ project, they are perfectly suitable for general use by anyone interested.

1: Mini vacation

- let the QR code take you away

Description

This method offers an opportunity for students to take a short break from the daily hustle by scanning a QR code of their choice. The goal is to provide students with different listening material that enables them to switch off, calm down, relax, and cheer up within a limited amount of time.

This method raises awareness of the students' feelings and provides the possibility of development in their well-being.

The QR codes are made available around the school and located in intimate corners. The QR codes include for example: relaxation, guided meditations, mindfulness, relaxing music, gong sessions, affirmations with positive messages and brown noise. The range of materials can be altered depending on students' feedback, preferences and circumstances.

Execution in the Hungarian school

The Hungarian school has created intimate hide-away corners on the second floor corridor of their building where the 8 classrooms of the secondary school department can be found. In these snuggle in spots students can sit alone or in a small group on bench-like seats. These places are surrounded from 3 sides, that is the back and the sides which lends a feeling of protection and isolation from the noise and hustle of the school corridor. On the walls we have stuck neatly designed boards with comforting illustrations and more importantly the QR codes leading to the audio materials.

In the initial stages of the introduction we have primarily allowed the split-class English as a Second Language groups in lesson time to discover the possibility and experiment with the material. This made it possible for us to inform, raise awareness and also teach students in what ways they can use the selected audio. In most cases we have devoted the full 45-minute lesson to the experience so that the students would not be urged to select a material that they wish to listen to or that they can listen to several options. In most cases the structure of the experience followed the steps of: informing the whole group - giving students freedom to discover the method alone or in pairs - individual written feedback - small group sharing and discussion - whole group reflections - individual feedback and ideas. Samples of the written feedback are included in the final report. All in all, the QR codes have been used by every lesson, students tend to use them if they have more time, a free class or in the afternoon hours.

1

Execution in the Icelandic school

In the Icelandic school the QR codes were distributed all around the school to provide the easiest access possible for the students. They are, for example, preseted on bulletin boards, next to sofas, in the wellbeing room, in the guidance counselors' offices as well as in the teachers' rooms.

The padlet behind the QR code is also available from the online material in method nr. 8.

The QR codes



2: Respect sleep

Description

The Icelandic school invited students to participate in an evidence-based sleep research joining an ongoing research by SleepImage. The research entailed raising awareness of the importance of good sleep as the basis of general health, both physical and mental. The students either joined an intervention group or a focus group. Both groups measured their sleep for 6 nights with a 4 week interval while the intervention group, -as the name suggests-, participated in a 4 week intervention in between.

During the intervention, the students had two 40-minute lessons a week where they got education on the importance and effects of sleep as well as learning breathing techniques and meditation (Yoga Nidra for instance).

Both groups filled out detailed questionnaires about their sleep habits, nutrition and mental health. They also kept a sleep diary while measuring their sleep.

After the second time the students measured their sleep they all got access to the results and got invited to an interview to discuss the outcomes. Those with severe problems, such as sleep apnea and depression, got an interview with the school nurse.

The students in the intervention group showed a significant improvement in sleep habits and sleep quality after receiving this short intervention.

The results of this experiment and the format of the intervention education was then made available for the Hungarian school even though they did not participate in the research itself.

Equipment and resources

A sleep detecting device from the company “SleepImage” (FDA-cleared/EU-Medical Device Directive (CE-0413) compliant home sleep test) was borrowed for the time of the experiment. Please note that the sleep detecting devices will not be available for other schools that are interested in our project.

The questionnaires used were:

- Epworth sleepiness scale
- Insomnia severity index
- General anxiety disorder-7 scale
- Patient health questionnaire-9
- Beck’s depression inventory-II
- Morningness-Eveningness questionnaire
- A sleep diary focusing on bedtime, wake time, daytime napping and tiredness when waking up.

Execution in the Icelandic school

Because of the positive outcomes of the experiment, the Icelandic school has decided to continue this part of the project. The sleep experiment in fact, gained a life of its own in a way. The entire first year (around 180 students) was offered to take part in a similar sleep research, about half of the students accepted, but the whole of the first year has been provided with a 40-minutes class similar to the original intervention each week for the entire school year. This is part of an ongoing research with SleepImage.

The teacher responsible for the sleep research in the Icelandic school as well as the participating doctor on behalf of Sleep Image attended the *World Sleep Congress* in Rio in October, 2023 to introduce both the results of the sleep research and the intervention method itself.

The sleep congress



[The congress](#)



[The presentation on
the sleep research](#)

Execution in the Hungarian school

As for the Hungarian school, it can be concluded that the greatest difference between the levels of involvement in the realization and the implementation of the methods could be detected here. While the Icelandic partner has deeply investigated and got involved with the sleep project, the Hungarian project team has intentionally “reduced” the implementation to the level of raising awareness. All this happened in accordance with the mid-project evaluation and discussion and using the PDCA cycle. The details of this could be drawn from the above descriptions.



3: Wellbeing space/room

Description

A room or small corners around the school were designed and created, where students can go by themselves, or that teachers can use for their groups. These spaces were equipped with mats, blankets, beanbags, noise-canceling headphones, small boards, stress balls/rings etc.

The QR codes from method number one are also available here along with other exercises that can be used both individually and in a group.

Both schools created a small group of students that will share their ideas and needs for the room/spaces and those will be included in the preparation.

Execution in the Icelandic school

The Icelandic school was very fortunate and was able to dedicate an isolated room for this. We refurbished the room, painted it and we put a carpet on the floor to create a warmer atmosphere. We decorated it with flowers, curtains and photos on the walls. It is now equipped with mattresses, blankets, pillows, hanging chairs, beanbags, a bluetooth speaker and massage balls. The room is open for everybody in the school and it is available for group reservation. There are also organised meditations in the room during the final exams.



Execution in the Hungarian school

As for the Hungarian school, their places/rooms for socializing are rather limited. Therefore, creating a separate room for a single function was not possible. Therefore, they have decided to identify certain functions of the well-being room and redesign certain segments/spaces of the building to meet the requirements and fit the functions. As a result, three areas have been designated as "areas serving well-being and mid-day mini vacations", these are the following: the second floor corridor, the stairway leading to a non-existing attic, and room no. 4 downstairs. On the corridor we have created small seat-ins where students can hide/snuggle in from the busy classrooms. We have equipped and decorated the corridor with two large-size sofas, several giant bright coloured bean bags and pretty curtains. In the Christmas period we have also added lights and a nice star to ensure a more homely, festive feel.

As for the stairway we have simply added a great number of seat cushions in 4 fresh styles.

Downstairs we have equipped the classroom with yoga mats, tennis balls, exercise balls and an air conditioner. This room we can only use if there are no lessons. All these developments have proved to be a huge success. Both teachers and students enjoy that there are designated areas for recreation.



4: Moving for well-being “Boosters”

Description

Standing up and doing some stretching and exercises during the day is likely to boost your energy, mood, and concentration.

Teachers and students are encouraged to take a short break during a lesson at least once a day that is dedicated to exercises and stretching in order to energize the brain and body.

Teachers were provided with a set of exercises that they either conducted themselves or got students to be in charge.

Equipment and resources

No equipment is needed for these exercises and a set of exercises can be chosen freely.

- [Physical Activity Breaks for the Workplace, Resource Guide](#)

Execution in the Hungarian school

The Hungarian school introduced mid-lesson movement in the form of a set of exercises by showing the methods to subject teachers and encouraging them to motivate their students to participate on a regular basis.

The freedom given to the individual educators to decide which set of exercises to use at which part of their lesson has proved to work well. As teachers have involved the students in the decision making most cases the students had to take the responsibility and have become aware of the importance and benefits of the boosters.

Apart from the above collection, in some of the classes in the Hungarian school students have begun to contribute to the collection by adding their own favorite sets of stretching and easy to follow warm-up exercises. As the routine has evolved, in a great number of cases the students have also asked to conduct the workout which they have enjoyed thoroughly.

In some language classrooms movement has been given an additional function of supporting learning. Some English rhymes, tongue twisters and sentence stress patterns, for example, are taught by walking around in the corridors and bouncing balls or performing small jumps.

All in all, the Hungarian students and teachers move more, that is for sure.

Execution in the Icelandic school

The Icelandic school devoted 5 minutes each day for a set of simple exercises, often introduced by a Youtube video. A new set was offered every two weeks and usually 2-3 sets of exercises were introduced at the same time so teachers could choose what they felt was most needed each day to make the students move and refresh each day.

Collection of the exercises used in the Icelandic school



5: The motivational teacher

Description

A collection of exercises, card games, methods, and practices that teachers can use with their classes with the intention of strengthening the group, the relationship between students, the way they connect and communicate, and promoting the students' and the teachers' personal development.

Equipment and resources

- Cards and games, for example
 - The Greater Me Cards (by Dr. Leanna Lopez and Dr. Samuel Kelly)
 - Strengths Cards (by Dr. Ilona Boniwell)
 - The Strength Game (by Lousie Tidmand and Ivan Jakobsen)
 - At My Best – Strength Cards
 - 24/7
- Breathing exercises and techniques
 - The Leaf – breathing and movement for instant stress relief especially for situations where one wouldn't or cannot communicate/share what the challenge is. Standing up you focus on your breathing; you take deep and slow breaths down to the belly. On the third breath, as you inhale, raise your palms to form a leaf at the height of your heart. As you exhale, imitate with your hands a falling leaf, gently descending and dancing in front of your body down to the height of your belly or even lower. You can repeat this several times, until a changed, relaxed state is reached.
 - [Box breathing exercise](#)
 - [How breathing exercises can calm anxiety](#)
 - [Free resources - Institute of Positive Education](#)
 - [5 Simple Mindfulness Practices for Daily Life](#)



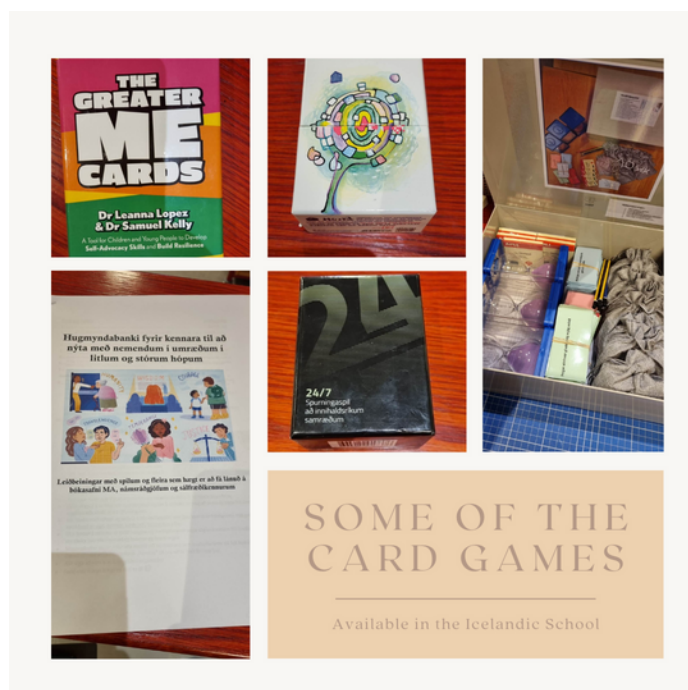
- Here we have examples of motivational quotes that can be displayed on the school information screen, sent as an email to all students and staff or displayed on the schools' social media. Some of them reflect values that are important to the school community. Moreover, a discussion of these values can be highly beneficial for students as well as staff.
 - [Positive Quotes - BrainyQuote](#)
 - [Geðorðin 10](#)
- Organizing formal learning in nature as much as possible. The essence of the method is that educators consider the possibility of conducting a lesson in nature, outdoors. By nature, we simply mean the natural environment outside the classroom. In the case of the Icelandic school, it could be for example the Botanical Garden or different green areas around the school and in the case of the Hungarian one a nearby park. This method is suited for example by the following work formats or types of tasks for example: individual preparation, pair or small group discussion possibly while taking a short walk, group work in a different position being seated than in the classroom. We have collected the following benefits:
 - [Health Benefits of Getting Outside](#)
 - [Children & Nature Network](#)
 - [Nature as a fantastic classroom for learning](#)
 - [A Classroom with No Walls: The Power of Outdoor Learning](#)
 - [Space and Place: Perspectives on outdoor teaching and learning](#)
 - [Secondary school students' experience of outdoor learning: a Swedish case study](#)
 - [Top 5 Benefits of Outdoor Learning](#)
- Other useful sites:
 - [Activities - Your Mental Wellbeing](#)
 - [Self-Empowerment: 7 Ways to Empower Yourself](#)
 - [Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset](#)
 - [GRIT: Traits that Matter for School, Work, and Life](#)
 - [FLOW by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly - Animated book summary](#)
 - [E2 - Dr. Paul Nadler - Venture outside of your comfort zone](#)
 - [Motivation: What moves us, and why?](#)
 - [How to Cope With Loneliness: 9 Strategies to Try](#)
 - [The High 5 Habit - Animated Book summary](#)
 - [21 Mindfulness Exercises & Activities For Adults](#)
 - [Overcoming Obstacles](#)

Execution in the Icelandic school

The above listed online materials have been made available to all teachers by the Icelandic team. (The topics here include ways for teachers to reduce stress; educational material; ideas for teachers to work outside the classroom, other materials.) Motivational quotes have been presented on the school's Instagram and the info screen. A collection of board games with educational purposes has been bought and made available, with instructions, for all teachers. In addition, teachers have been informed of the benefit of offering the students different work formats, for example doing classes outside in nature.

Execution in the Hungarian school

The Hungarian team has informed the school staff both about the method and what they have collected to support, especially form teachers. We have informed every member of staff about the selected links and the collection of board games that has been purchased. The links have proved to be useful and are continuously being discovered and adapted by form teachers who speak English. The board games are broadly used and treasured. For easy access we have placed them in the school library so any colleague can borrow and return whichever they wish to use and whenever they need them.



6: Learning to live together

Description

In order for all students and staff members to feel well in school it is important to be aware of how different groups and every single member of the community can feel accepted, welcome, that is included. It is necessary to work on changing the school culture in a way that everybody feels valued and can flourish on their own terms. The UNICEF values can serve here as a guideline, a possible source of inspiration.

Equipment and resources

- UNICEF core values
- UNICEF Values Charter Poster
- The Icelandic Violence prevention School

Execution in the Icelandic school

The Icelandic school collaborated with the Violence Prevention School (Ofbeldisforvarnarskólinn), which is an independent organization in Iceland. The collaboration involved teachers and other school staff participating in a course on violence prevention. In the course, staff were taught ways to intervene in negative interactions, for example teasing, bullying or gender-based violence. Three methods were introduced; to interfere, share the responsibility or intervene. All the first year students also learned to apply these methods in and thus became better equipped to deal with various difficult situations that may arise in communication. From now on, this education will be integrated into the curriculum every year. In addition, educational material was developed that teachers can use with their students if needed. The three ways have thus become an integral part of the school's work.

Execution in the Hungarian school

In the Hungarian school this method has been thoroughly discussed in the department of form teachers with the participation of the school psychologist as well. They have decided and realized to conduct in class sensitization occasions organized and realized by the school psychologists. The methods of interfering, sharing responsibility and intervening have been dealt with in years 9 and 10. An external professional has also been invited to lead workshops on assertive communication and inclusion. The general approach of these in-class educational learning occasions has been theoretical input blended with hands-on experience to ensure that students do get a first hand, personal experience.

Unicef Core Values



7: Thinking outside of the box - how to use spaces differently

Description

This method focuses on how students can benefit from different studying positions than being seated in a classroom. Evidently, the image of children and teenagers sitting in lessons is a universal stereotype of a student, something we seem to accept as normal. However, this can be a source of stress and discomfort, especially for students with different needs and disorders. Giving students the opportunity to study in various spaces and positions can improve their attention, motivation, and well-being. The sources we have collected include highlights on how the environment affects well-being.

- [Changing the School Environment to Increase Physical Activity in Children](#)
- [Effect of Study Environment towards Learning](#)
- [A classroom for the 21st century: where are the best places for learning?](#)

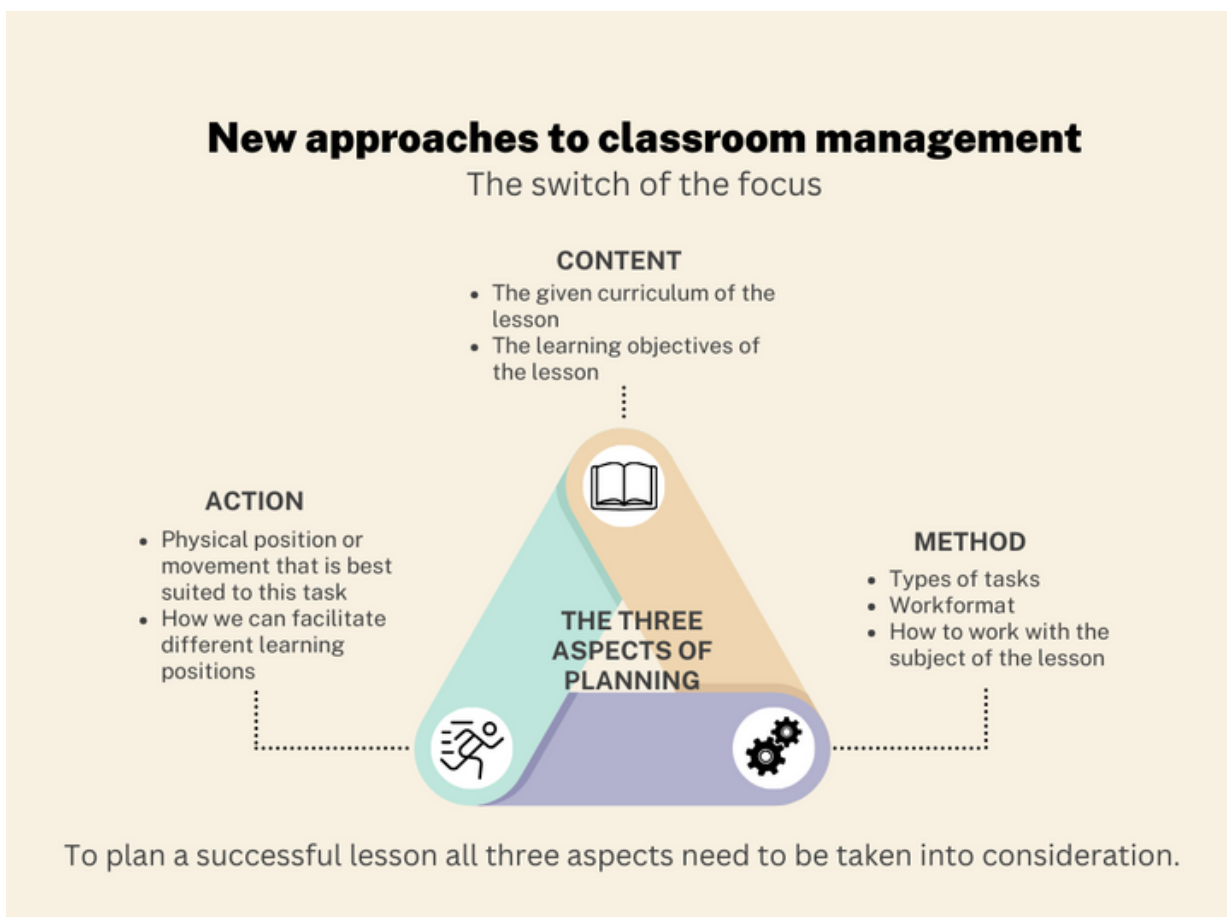
Putting this method into practice is relatively easy. As the below triangle model suggests educators should be aware of the harmony of content- method and actions. What is meant by actions is the following: learning can take place not only in the classroom, in a seated position, but different areas in the school can be used in versatile ways, for example:

- Using the corridors with white/glass boards for small group or individual investigations or learning where students stand, mingle, and discuss. These boards also help make learning visible.
- Using bean bags for more comfort while reading, having a group discussion etc.
- Taking a short walk while having a discussion in pairs or small groups.
- Using sofas or cushions instead of a classical chair and desk while working on a project.
- Having standing tables where students can work, both individually and in groups.

- Sitting on the school lawn while jotting down notes, reading or discussing.
- Using headsets while working for example on a bean bag.
- Using hammocks or swings.
- Use some standing chairs for studying (for example [NILSERIK Standing support, beige/Vissle dark grey - IKEA](#))
- The use of VR glasses can make learning more interesting and visual.

All these facilities/equipment could be used both during classes and after. When a different learning environment is given as a possibility, students may discover their own personal preferences and are more likely to think outside of the box. This further adds to the benefits as it raises awareness of the importance of using more senses, the individual learning methods, and the fact that spaces can be used differently. Last, but not least, it develops their creativity.

The triangle model



Execution in the Icelandic school

In the Icelandic school several steps have been taken in order to make teachers and students think outside the box successfully and use spaces differently. 8 high tables and chairs were purchased and placed in one classroom to enable students to stand more during their studies. These furniture are suitable for 4-6 students per piece and they are also meant to promote and facilitate group work. 4 glassboards were also installed around school, giving and they give the students more opportunities to stand while studying. They are placed outside of the classroom and are therefore always accessible to the students.

In addition to the new furniture bought, the teachers were educated on the benefits of studying in various positions and spaces and have been encouraged ever since to offer students those opportunities. Students are, when suitable, encouraged to exit the classroom while working on projects and have the possibility to study for example in the school library, in sofas and cushions around the school. There are also four VR glasses available at the school library for teachers to be used with their classes.



One of four glass boards



The high tables and chairs
(not a permanent location)

Execution in the Hungarian school

This method has proven to be the most revolutionary and maybe the most cherished by the students in the Budapest school. Hardly ever before have students spent lesson time in the corridors, in the main lobby, outdoors on the school grounds or in the nearby park.

On the teachers' professional part, planning lessons has also become different. Since when planning a lesson, the learning objectives, the tasks and the methods used are now not only considered in relation to the work formats but the place of realization can be selected as well.

Two classrooms have been equipped with 4-4 white boards allowing students to work in small groups in a standing position, solving a problem or brainstorming. Mostly the language lessons have been revolutionized. Students enjoy moving around more. They show more interest, tend to be more devoted and are really looking forward to having the freedom to stand, move around, take a stroll, go down to the main lobby, finish a task there and return. What has surprised the participating educators is the fact that students in these groups enjoy the freedom they are given and have become more cheerful, enthusiastic. Most importantly it is also remarkable that they have developed a greater sense of responsibility for personal growth and how lesson time should be used the most efficiently.



8: Self-help material online

Description

A collection of material the students and staff can use for self-empowerment, for example links to information and exercises on self-help, time management, self-image, life management, study techniques, social-emotional learning and generally anything that contributes to the subject matter of well-being.

Equipment and resources

Time management

- [9 Quick Tips for Students Struggling with Time Management](#)
- [Best Time Managements Tips](#)

Self-image:

- [Self-Confidence Activities for Students](#)

Life management:

- [What exactly is The High 5 Habit?](#)
- [The 5 Second Rule](#)
- [15 things to do if you're feeling lonely](#)
- [5 Activities That Teach Teenagers A Positive Mental Attitude](#)
- [5 Simple Mindfulness Practices for Daily Life](#)

Study techniques:

- [Test Anxiety](#)
- [Strategies to overcome procrastination](#)
- [Overcoming Obstacles](#)

Social-emotional learning:

- [18 Best Self-Esteem Worksheets and Activities](#)

Self help:

- [Mental Self-Care Cheat Sheet by Tracking Happiness](#)
- [10 Tips for Keeping Positive in Difficult Times](#)
- [5 Activities That Teach Teenagers A Positive Mental Attitude](#)
- [5 Simple Mindfulness Practices for Daily Life](#)

Execution in the Icelandic school

The school made some changes to its website in order to put this method into practice. Even though there are a lot of ideas listed above, we also focused on finding material in Icelandic. This part of the website has been introduced to teachers/staff at school and students as well. Even though we have an excellent team of school counselors, there are always students that have difficulty reaching out for help. Therefore the key idea is that these students can find ways to help themselves more easily. It will be an ongoing process to find new ideas and material and make it accessible online.

The Icelandic site: [Viskubrunnur / The fountain of wisdom](#)

Execution in the Hungarian school

The Hungarian school has found this method the most challenging regardless of the fact that the materials to be presented on their site are neatly arranged for uploading. They are considering developing their website and do not have an assigned person at the institution who would be responsible for the site. Hopefully by the time the project commences the material will be accessible.



Closing words

We hope that by publishing the above methods we have somehow contributed to our common mission, that is improving our students', colleagues' and our own mental health and general well-being. As we have initiated the project during critical times, we can evidently state that it is possible to dream and manifest in challenging times. It is possible to focus on our hopes and mission and realize our goals whatever the circumstances may be.

The reason why we recall these memories and mixed emotions is that we, educators, face more and more challenges in the form of critical situations, difficulties, more and more complex expectations and demands. We would love to spread the word that instead of being overwhelmed or unable to proceed, there is always a way. That is by incorporating small conscious steps/practices into our daily routines we all can manage and pass on these life-management tricks to the next generation as well.

Finally, we would love to hear from you. Let us know how you are doing, if you have tried any of the methods described, if you use any others in your classes or personal lives. Please let us know.

All the best,

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