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# HOLD ON BE STRONG

A Toolkit for Supporting Active Ageing, Well-Being and Digital Inclusion for Adults 60+



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# WELCOME INTRO

**Across Europe, populations are ageing and people are living longer. While this is a positive development, it also creates new challenges for communities, educators and policymakers.**

Many older adults, especially those no longer active in the labour market, face reduced social contact, limited learning opportunities and a higher risk of loneliness and exclusion.

Digitalisation has also changed daily life. Accessing services, communicating with family, managing finances and participating in community life increasingly require basic digital skills. For older adults who have had fewer opportunities to develop these skills, this can create additional barriers. These challenges can be even greater for older migrants and refugees, who may also face language barriers, cultural adjustment and limited social networks. Lifelong learning can help address these issues by offering older adults opportunities to build skills, strengthen social connections and remain active in their communities. Welcoming and supportive

learning environments can help older learners gain confidence and rediscover the joy of learning.


The Erasmus+ project Hold On Be Strong was developed to promote active ageing, well-being and digital inclusion among adults aged 60 and above, with particular attention to older migrants and refugees. The project brings together Tene-Learning in Spain and Welcome Home International (WHI) in Belgium, combining expertise in adult education, digital learning, community engagement and social inclusion.

As part of the project, a twelve-week holistic training programme was implemented in Tenerife, Spain, focusing on digital skills, well-being, creativity and social interaction. WHI also delivered a five-week course in Belgium, adapting the same holistic approach to the local community context.

This toolkit shares the methods, activities and lessons learned during the project. It is designed for educators, community organisations and volunteers working with older adults. Its aim is to support inclusive learning environments where older people can continue to learn, connect and participate actively in their communities.



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# Project Methodology

**The Hold On Be Strong project was developed using a holistic and inclusive adult education approach that recognises the diverse needs, experiences, and learning styles of older adults.**

Rather than focusing on a single area of learning, the project integrates several dimensions that contribute to overall well-being and social participation. These include digital literacy, emotional well-being, physical health, creativity, and social engagement.

This approach reflects the understanding that learning is not only about acquiring new knowledge but also about building confidence, strengthening relationships, and supporting personal development. For older learners, especially those who may face social isolation or barriers to participation, learning environments must be supportive, flexible, and meaningful. The project therefore adopted a methodology that combines holistic learning, inclusive adult education practices, inter-generational exchange, and community-based learning.



## Holistic Learning Approach

A central principle of the project is that well-being is shaped by several connected factors. Digital skills are important, but active ageing also depends on social interaction, emotional well-being, creativity and confidence. For this reason, the programme combined practical digital learning with mindfulness, gentle movement, creative activities and group discussion. Participants practised everyday digital tasks while also taking part in activities that reduced stress and supported social connection. This holistic approach made learning feel meaningful, supportive and relevant to daily life.

## Inclusive Adult Education Practices

The project used inclusive adult education principles to make learning accessible for participants with different educational backgrounds, language levels and life experiences. Because many participants had limited experience with formal education or digital tools, the workshops progressed gradually and used clear language, visual demonstrations and practical exercises. Peer learning was also encouraged, allowing participants to support one another, share experiences and build confidence together. Facilitators valued the knowledge, cultural perspectives and personal stories that older learners brought to the group, creating a

## Intergenerational Learning

Intergenerational learning was an important part of the project. Older adults and younger volunteers worked together, exchanging knowledge, experiences and perspectives. Younger participants supported older learners with digital tools, while older adults shared life experience, cultural knowledge and personal insights. This helped build mutual respect, reduce stereotypes between age groups, and create a more supportive learning environment where learning was shared rather than one-directional.

## Community-Based Learning

The project also highlighted the value of community-based learning. Instead of using formal classroom settings only, the workshops created welcoming spaces where participants could feel comfortable, supported and socially connected. This approach reduced barriers to participation, especially for older adults who may feel hesitant about returning to traditional learning environments. Through group discussions, shared activities and creative exercises, participants built new skills, strengthened relationships and developed a stronger sense of belonging.

# Workshop Design and Implementation

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The project implemented a twelve-week training programme in Tenerife, Spain, alongside a shorter five-week course delivered by WHI in Belgium. Both programmes were designed to support adults aged 60 and above in developing practical digital skills, improving overall well-being and strengthening social connections within their communities.

The workshops combined digital learning with well-being, creative and social activities. Sessions included practical tasks such as using smartphones, communicating online, accessing information and building confidence with everyday digital tools. These were balanced with activities such as breathing exercises, gentle movement, creative expression and group discussion to support emotional well-being and reduce stress.

Participants were encouraged to practise new skills during the sessions, ask questions freely and support one another through peer learning. Facilitators provided individual guidance when needed and adapted the pace of the workshops to ensure that participants felt comfortable and included.

Through this holistic and community-based approach, the project created a supportive learning environment where older adults could build confidence, develop useful skills, connect with others and remain active participants in their communities.

# Training Programme Structure

## Digital Skills and Online Communication



The programme helped participants build confidence with everyday digital tools, including smartphones, tablets and computers. Activities focused on practical tasks such as sending messages, making video calls, searching for information and staying connected with family and community members.

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## Mental Well-Being and Stress Management



Well-being activities supported relaxation, emotional balance and confidence. Participants practised breathing exercises, mindfulness and simple relaxation techniques, while also having space to reflect, share experiences and support one another.

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## Creativity and Storytelling



The programme included creative activities and storytelling exercises that encouraged participants to share experiences, express ideas and connect with one another. These activities supported confidence, social interaction and a sense of belonging within the group.

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## Physical Well-Being and Gentle Movement



The programme included gentle movement, stretching and breathing activities suitable for older adults. These activities supported mobility, relaxation and energy, while encouraging participants to stay active in a safe and accessible way.

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## Social Connection and Supportive



A key outcome of the programme was stronger social connection. Group discussions, shared activities and peer learning helped participants build friendships, reduce isolation and feel more confident taking part in community life. Facilitators adapted sessions to participants' needs and encouraged a welcoming, collaborative atmosphere.

# Workshop Modules and Practical Activities for Educators

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This section presents the workshop modules and practical activities developed for the Hold On Be Strong toolkit. The modules can be used by adult educators, community organisations, volunteers, and social workers who support older adults, including older migrants and refugees. They reflect the holistic approach used in the project, combining well-being, digital inclusion, creativity, social interaction, personal reflection, and practical life skills. The activities may be delivered as individual workshops or combined into a longer course, as demonstrated through the twelve-week programme in Tenerife and the five-week course implemented in Belgium by WHI.

The 12 workshop modules included in this toolkit are:

- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Pilates
- Art Therapy
- Financial Literacy
- Digital Skills (Gmail and ChatGPT for daily life)
- Team Building
- Goal Setting and Life Scan
- Ikigai
- Stress Management Fundamentals
- Physical Relaxation Techniques
- Time Management and Procrastination



# Module 1: Mindfulness

## OVERVIEW

If you frequently think about the past or you're anxious about the future, one way of stopping it is to practice mindfulness – to concentrate your attention only on the present and avoid distractions. The word “mindfulness” consists of two words: Mind and Fullness. It implies a mind that is fully present and fully engaged. It means being fully aware of your thoughts, emotions, and actions, paying close attention to what is going on right now without evaluating, explaining, or interpreting.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

Improve your focus and keep yourself present “in the moment.”

Develop greater resilience to adapt to sudden changes more calmly.

Apply the four fundamentals of mindfulness to manage distracting thoughts.

Integrate mindfulness into routine daily tasks to reduce stress and enhance creativity.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Mindfulness is built on four fundamental steps:

**Noticing:** Tracking your thoughts, feelings, and sensations as they come and go, without getting carried away by them.

**Metaphor:** Imagine you're sitting on the side of the road observing cars passing by. You can smell the gasoline and hear the engines, but you stay outside the flow, not inside. The cars represent the flow of your thoughts and feelings.

**Acknowledging:** Accepting your thoughts, feelings, and sensations as-is, without judgment or evaluation (not labeling them as “right” or “wrong”).

**Re-centering:** Bringing your awareness back to the here and now when you get carried away in your thoughts. You do this by bringing your attention directly to your breath (breathe in, breathe out).

**Meditating:** A way to combine the first three fundamentals – our ability to notice, acknowledge, and re-center.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

**Technique:** Observe your environment & slow down

you can practice this at work, on your commute, or at home:

**Slow down:** Concentrate on completing one task at a time to the best of your ability. If you get distracted, don't feel guilty.

**Engage your senses:** Pay attention to what's going on around you right now. What objects are around you?

**Listen:** What sounds can you hear?

**Feel & smell:** What do you feel? How does the air feel against your skin? What smells are there?

**Accept your feelings:** If distracting or negative thoughts arise, simply notice the distraction and gently direct your attention back to the task at hand. Remember that these thoughts do not define you, they don't have to mean anything, and they will pass.

[Download the materials here Module 1](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine you are performing a routine task, like washing dishes or brushing your teeth after a stressful day. Usually, your mind might be wandering – worrying about deadlines or re-playing conversations. Instead, you decide to pay attention to the details of the task. You focus entirely on the sensation of the warm water on your hands or the taste of the toothpaste. When your mind inevitably wanders back to your daily pressures, you simply notice it, acknowledge it without judging yourself, and gently re-center your attention back to the warm water. You might find that you actually enjoy the activity more and feel more positive once you have completed it.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Think about a recent time when you were walking, commuting, or doing a routine task. Were you criticizing yourself? Were you replaying scenarios or conversations in your head? How can you use the “Noticing” and “Re-centering” techniques to anchor yourself in the present moment next time this happens?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Do a quick mindful check-in right now by asking yourself:

Am I fully engaged in this moment, or is my mind wandering?

Am I evaluating or interpreting my current feelings as “right” or “wrong”? How am I breathing? (Remember, mouth breathing is related to stress responses, so try to focus on breathing through your nose).

Action: Release yourself from external distractions. Notice where your mind goes, acknowledge it without judging, and take a few moments to bring your attention directly to your breath. Whenever your attention wanders away, just bring it back very gently.

## RECAP

Mindfulness is being fully present. It means concentrating your attention only on the present moment without evaluating or interpreting. Your thoughts are like passing cars. You are the observer on the side of the road; you don't need to get carried away inside the flow. Accept without judgment. Thoughts and feelings are not “right” or “wrong.” They will pass and they do not define you. Practice is always available. Routine tasks (like washing dishes) and mindful walking are perfect opportunities to build awareness and lower your stress levels daily.



# Module 2: Meditation

## OVERVIEW

Meditation is a simple but powerful practice that helps calm the mind, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being. While mindfulness focuses on being present in everyday activities, meditation creates a dedicated moment to pause, breathe, and reconnect with yourself. Even a few minutes of meditation each day can help reduce anxiety, improve focus, and support emotional balance.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

- Understand the purpose and benefits of meditation
- Use breathing techniques to calm your mind and body
- Develop a simple daily meditation routine
- Improve focus and emotional awareness through guided practice

## KEY CONCEPTS

Breath awareness:

Focusing on your breath is one of the easiest ways to anchor your attention and calm your nervous system.

Non-judgment:

During meditation, thoughts will come and go. The goal is not to stop thinking, but to observe thoughts without reacting or judging them.

Consistency over duration:

Short, regular meditation (5–10 minutes daily) is more effective than long, irregular sessions.

Body-mind connection:

Relaxing the body through stillness and breathing helps calm the mind.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

Technique: Simple Guided Breathing Meditation

Find a comfortable position: Sit upright or lie down in a quiet place.

Close your eyes: Gently close your eyes or soften your gaze.

Focus on your breath:

Breathe in slowly through your nose, then out through your mouth.

Count your breaths:

Inhale (1), exhale (2), continue up to 10, then repeat.

Notice distractions:

If your mind wanders, simply notice it and bring your attention back to your breath.

Continue for 5–10 minutes.

[Download the materials here Module 2](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine you are feeling overwhelmed before an important meeting or after a stressful day. Instead of reacting immediately, you take 5 minutes to sit quietly and focus on your breathing. As you slow down your breath, your heart rate decreases, and your thoughts begin to settle. When you return to your task, you feel calmer, clearer, and more in control.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

When was the last time you allowed yourself to sit quietly without distractions? How did it feel, and what made it difficult?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Take 3 minutes right now:  
 Sit comfortably  
 Close your eyes  
 Focus only on your breathing  
 Afterwards, ask yourself:  
 Did my mind wander?  
 How did my body feel before and after?  
 Do I feel more calm or focused now?

## RECAP

- Meditation helps calm the mind and reduce stress
- You don't need to stop your thoughts—just observe them
- Focus on your breath to stay grounded
- Short daily practice builds long-term benefits



# Module 3: Pilates

## OVERVIEW

Pilates is a gentle, low-impact exercise system focused on strengthening the body's core, improving flexibility, and correcting posture. For adults over 60, especially those adapting to a new country or lifestyle, maintaining physical mobility is just as important as mental resilience. This module introduces basic Pilates principles that help maintain joint health, prevent falls, and reduce back pain. By connecting your breath with slow, controlled movements, Pilates also serves as a form of physical relaxation, helping you release the tension that builds up from daily stress.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

Strengthen your "core" (abdominal and lower back muscles) to support your spine and improve daily balance.

Increase the range of motion in your joints to make everyday tasks easier and pain-free.

Use controlled breathing to supply oxygen to your muscles and calm your nervous system.

Safely perform basic, gentle mobility exercises at home or in a group setting.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**Centering (The Core):** All Pilates movements originate from the center of your body. A strong core acts like a corset, protecting your back and giving you stability.

**Control & Precision:** It is not about how many repetitions you do, but how well you do them. Slow, mindful movements prevent injury and build true strength.

**Lateral Breathing:** Breathing deeply into the sides and back of your ribcage, rather than shallow chest breathing, which helps engage your core muscles and reduces physical stress.

**Mind-Body Connection:** Focusing entirely on how your body moves in the present moment, which distracts the mind from anxious thoughts and promotes inner peace.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

**Technique:** The Morning Mobility Routine

You can do this routine daily, either sitting on a sturdy chair or standing:

**Posture Check:** Sit or stand tall. Imagine a string pulling the top of your head toward the ceiling. Relax your shoulders down and away from your ears.

**Ribcage Breathing:** Place your hands on the sides of your ribs. Inhale deeply through your nose, feeling your ribs expand sideways into your hands. Exhale fully through your mouth, feeling your ribs gently close. Repeat 3 times.

**Seated Spine Twist:** Sit tall. Inhale to prepare. As you exhale, gently twist your upper body to the right, looking over your shoulder. Inhale to return to the center. Exhale and twist to the left. This relieves stiffness in the back.

**Heel Raises (Balance):** Stand behind a chair, holding the back for support. Inhale and slowly rise onto your toes. Hold for 2 seconds. Exhale and slowly lower your heels with control. Repeat 5 times to strengthen ankles and prevent falls.

[Download the materials here Module 3](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine you wake up feeling stiff and achy, perhaps after a poor night's sleep or a stressful day of handling paperwork. Your first instinct might be to sit down and avoid moving. Instead, you take 10 minutes to perform your basic Pilates routine. You focus on your posture, take deep lateral breaths, and gently mobilize your spine and ankles. The slow, controlled movements lubricate your joints and send fresh oxygen to your brain. You finish feeling taller, more energetic, and physically prepared to handle the day's challenges with confidence.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Think about your daily posture. When you feel stressed or tired, do you notice your shoulders creeping up to your ears or your back slouching? How might practicing "Centering" and "Ribcage Breathing" change the way you physically carry your stress?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Do a quick posture and core check right now:

Sit upright and place one hand on your lower belly.

Take a deep breath in.

As you breathe out, gently pull your belly button in toward your spine (imagine you are trying to zip up a tight pair of trousers).

Hold this gentle tension while continuing to breathe normally into your ribs.

Action: Try to engage your core this way the next time you lift a heavy grocery bag or stand up from a low chair. Notice how it protects your lower back.

## RECAP

Movement is medicine: Gentle, controlled exercises keep joints healthy and prevent injuries.

Power from the center: A strong core is the foundation for good balance and posture.

Quality over quantity: A few slow, precise movements are better than many rushed ones.

Breathe to release: Mindful breathing during exercise lowers stress and energizes the body.



# Module 4: Art Therapy

## OVERVIEW

Art therapy is a creative approach to improving emotional well-being through artistic expression. It is not about creating perfect or “beautiful” art, but about using colours, shapes, and materials to express thoughts and feelings that may be difficult to put into words. Engaging in creative activities can help reduce stress, improve mood, and support self-discovery. Art therapy is accessible to everyone, regardless of artistic skill, and can be a powerful tool for relaxation and personal growth.

## KEY OBJECTIVES'

In this module, you will learn to:

Use creative expression as a tool to manage stress and emotions

Explore your thoughts and feelings through art

Develop self-awareness through visual reflection

Experience relaxation and enjoyment through creative activities

## KEY CONCEPTS

Expression over perfection:

Art therapy focuses on the process, not the final result. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to create.

Emotional release:

Creative activities can help release emotions such as stress, anxiety, or frustration in a safe and constructive way.

Non-verbal communication:

Art allows you to express feelings that may be difficult to explain with words.

Creativity and well-being:

Engaging in creative tasks can improve mood, increase focus, and promote a sense of accomplishment.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

Technique: Free Expression Drawing

Prepare your materials:

Use paper, pens, pencils, or colours—whatever is available.

Create a calm space:

Sit comfortably in a quiet environment.

Start without thinking:

Begin drawing freely. Don't plan—just let your hand move.

Focus on feelings:

Choose colours or shapes that reflect your current emotions.

Let go of judgment:

Avoid judging your drawing. There is no need to explain or analyse while creating.

Reflect afterwards:

Look at your drawing and notice what stands out.

[Download the materials here Module 4](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine you are feeling overwhelmed after a busy or stressful day. Instead of continuing to think about your worries, you take 10 minutes to sit down with paper and colours. You start drawing simple shapes or lines without a plan. As you continue, you notice your breathing slows down and your mind becomes calmer. By the end, you feel more relaxed and have a clearer sense of your emotions.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

How comfortable are you with expressing yourself creatively? Do you judge your work, or can you allow yourself to create freely without expectations?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Take 10 minutes to create a simple drawing:

Choose colours that match your current mood

Draw shapes, lines, or patterns freely

Do not aim for a specific result

Afterwards, ask yourself:

What emotions did I feel while creating?

Did I feel more relaxed or focused?

What do I notice about the colours or shapes I used?

Action: Try repeating this activity whenever you feel stressed or need a break.

## RECAP

Art therapy is about expression, not artistic skill

Creativity helps release stress and emotions

There is no right or wrong way to create

Simple creative activities can improve well-being

(Create a simple drawing or visual reflection and share your experience with the group or facilitator)



# Module 5: Financial Literacy

## OVERVIEW

Managing personal finances can be a significant source of stress, especially when adjusting to a new country, navigating unfamiliar banking systems, or living on a fixed income. Furthermore, the digital world has introduced new financial concepts like "Cryptocurrency" alongside new risks, such as online scams. This module aims to give you practical tools to manage your daily budget effectively, understand digital banking safely, and protect yourself from financial fraud so you can feel secure and in control of your resources.

## KEY OBJECTIVES'

In this module, you will learn to:

Create and manage a simple monthly budget to track income and expenses.

Understand the basics of digital banking and how to use it safely.

Recognize the concept of Cryptocurrency and understand its high-risk nature.

Identify common financial scams (phishing) and learn how to protect your money and personal data.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**The 50/30/20 Budget Rule:** A simple guideline to divide your income: 50% for Needs (rent, groceries, bills), 30% for Wants (hobbies, eating out), and 20% for Savings or emergency funds.

**Digital Banking:** Using an app or website to check your balance, pay bills, or transfer money without visiting a physical bank branch.

**Cryptocurrency (e.g., Bitcoin):** Digital money that operates independently of traditional banks. Important: It is highly volatile and frequently used in investment scams targeting older adults. It is essential to treat it with extreme caution.

**Phishing & Scams:** Fraudulent attempts by criminals to trick you into revealing your bank passwords, credit card numbers, or personal information via fake emails, SMS, or phone calls.

**Check:** If the message claims to be from your bank, close the message. Open your official banking app or call the official phone number on the back of your bank card to verify the claim.

**Protect:** Delete the fake message and block the sender's number.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

**Technique:** The "Stop, Check, and Protect" Method for Online Scams Because financial security brings peace of mind, use this method whenever you receive a message about money:

**Stop:** If you receive an urgent SMS, email, or phone call claiming your bank account is blocked, or offering a "guaranteed" investment (like crypto), do not panic. Scammers use urgency to make you act without thinking.

**Do not click:** Never click on links in unexpected messages, and never give a caller your password or PIN. A real bank will never ask for your password.

[Download the materials here Module 5](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine you receive a WhatsApp message from an unknown number claiming to be a financial advisor. They offer a “safe, guaranteed” way to double your pension by investing in cryptocurrency. They pressure you to act today. Because you have learned about financial literacy, you know that guaranteed high returns in crypto do not exist and that this is a classic scam. Instead of engaging, you apply the “Stop, Check, and Protect” method. You block the number and delete the message. By understanding how these systems work, you protect your savings and avoid a highly stressful situation.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

How do you currently track your monthly expenses? Do you feel anxious when dealing with online banking or unexpected messages about money? What is one step you can take today to feel more secure about your financial data?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Review your financial safety habits:  
Do I use the same password for my bank as I do for my email or social media? (If yes, you should change it to a unique, strong password).  
Do I know the official customer service number of my bank? Action: Take a piece of paper and write down the official phone number of your bank (find it on the back of your card or their official website). Keep this paper near your phone so you always have the real number to call if you ever receive a suspicious message.

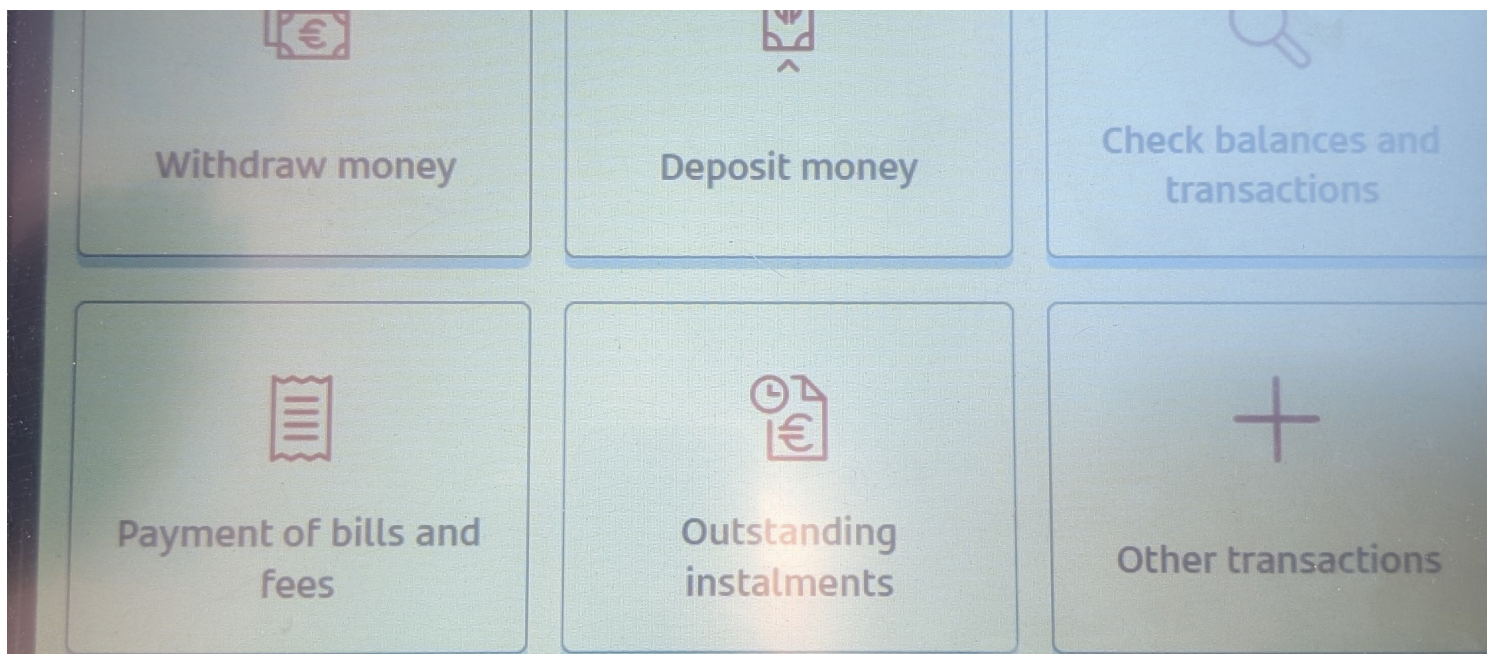
## RECAP

Budgeting brings peace: Tracking where your money goes gives you control over your life.

Crypto is high-risk: Understand that digital currencies are highly volatile; be extremely skeptical of anyone offering “easy money.”

Banks never ask for passwords: Never share your PIN, passwords, or verification codes with anyone over the phone or via text.

When in doubt, stop: Take your time, do not let anyone rush you into a financial decision, and always verify independently.



# Module 6: Digital Skills

## OVERVIEW

The digital world can sometimes feel overwhelming, but technology is fundamentally a tool meant to make your life easier and keep you connected to the people and services you care about. For many older adults, taking the first step to use new digital tools requires overcoming hesitation. This module will guide you through the practical, everyday use of Email (Gmail) and introduce you to Artificial Intelligence (ChatGPT) as a friendly, helpful assistant. These tools can help you overcome language barriers, organize your tasks, and stay connected with confidence.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

Navigate Gmail to send, receive, and organize emails effectively.

Understand what ChatGPT is and how it can act as your personal digital assistant.

Use ChatGPT to translate texts, write polite emails, or find information quickly.

Overcome the fear of making mistakes when using new digital applications.

## KEY CONCEPTS

**The Inbox (Gmail):** Your digital mailbox. You can use it to communicate with doctors, government offices, or family members.

**ChatGPT (Artificial Intelligence):** Think of ChatGPT as a highly knowledgeable librarian or assistant available 24/7. You can type a question or a request, and it will generate an intelligent, conversational response.

**Prompts:** The instructions or questions you type into ChatGPT. The clearer and more specific your prompt, the better the answer you will get.

**Digital Confidence:** The understanding that you cannot “break” the internet by clicking the wrong button. Mistakes are a normal part of the learning process.

## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

**Technique:** Using ChatGPT to Draft an Important Email

If you need to send an email in a language you are still learning, or if you simply don't know how to phrase something, you can use ChatGPT and Gmail together:

**Open ChatGPT:** Go to the ChatGPT website or app on your phone.

**Write the Prompt:** Tell the AI exactly what you need. For example, type: “I am an older adult living in Spain. Please write a short, polite email in Spanish to my doctor's office asking to reschedule my appointment for next Tuesday. Include a translation in English so I know what it says.”

**Review the Answer:** Read the text ChatGPT provides. It will usually give you a perfect template.

**Copy and Paste to Gmail:** Copy the Spanish text. Open Gmail, click “Compose” (the plus sign or pencil icon), paste the text into the message area, add the doctor's email address, and click “Send”.

[Download the materials here Module 6](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine you want to cook a traditional meal from your home country, but you can only find local ingredients in the supermarket. You also need to write an email to your landlord about a leaky faucet, but you are worried your language skills aren't good enough. Instead of feeling frustrated or stressed, you open ChatGPT. You type: "I have chicken, local potatoes, and paprika. Give me a simple recipe." In seconds, you have a recipe. Then you type: "Please write a polite email to my landlord in the local language explaining that the kitchen tap is leaking." Within five minutes, your dinner is planned, and your email is sent. You feel empowered, independent, and digitally connected.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

What is one daily task (like translating documents, writing formal letters, or finding recipes) that usually causes you frustration? How could having a free digital assistant like ChatGPT make that task easier and less stressful?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Let's practice a ChatGPT prompt right now. If you have access to ChatGPT on your phone or computer, try typing this exact sentence: "I am taking a course on well-being and digital skills. Give me 3 simple tips on how to remember my passwords safely without writing them on a piece of paper."

Action: Read the response. Notice how conversational and helpful the AI is. Practice asking it one more question about a hobby you enjoy (e.g., "What are the best indoor plants for beginners?").

## RECAP

Technology connects us: Tools like Gmail are essential for staying in touch and managing daily life in a modern society.

AI is an assistant, not a replacement: ChatGPT is a powerful tool to help you write, translate, and brainstorm, making tasks faster and less stressful.

Clarity is key: When using AI, giving clear, specific instructions (prompts) yields the best results.

Don't fear mistakes: The best way to learn digital skills is through hands-on practice. You are capable of learning at any age!



# Module 7: Team Building

## OVERVIEW

Team building focuses on strengthening relationships, trust, and communication between individuals working or learning together. In both professional and social environments, strong teamwork improves collaboration, reduces conflict, and increases overall well-being. Through simple activities and shared experiences, team building helps individuals feel more connected, valued, and confident in group settings.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

Improve communication and active listening skills

Build trust and cooperation within a group

Understand the importance of teamwork in daily life and work

Develop confidence in group participation and collaboration

## KEY CONCEPTS

Trust:

A strong team is built on trust. Feeling safe and respected allows individuals to share ideas and contribute openly.

Communication:

Clear and respectful communication is essential for effective teamwork. This includes both speaking and active listening.

Collaboration:

Working together allows individuals to combine strengths, solve problems, and achieve shared goals.

Respect and inclusion:

Every team member brings unique experiences and perspectives. Valuing diversity strengthens the group.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

Technique: Simple Team Connection Activity

Form small groups:

Divide participants into groups of 2–4 people.

Introduce yourselves:

Each person shares their name and one interesting fact about themselves.

Active listening:

Each participant listens carefully and then introduces another person to the group.

Shared task:

Give the group a simple challenge (e.g. solve a problem, build something small, or discuss a topic).

Reflect together:

After the activity, discuss what worked well and what could be improved.

[Download the materials here Module 7](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine starting a new job or joining a new group where you don't know anyone. At first, communication may feel awkward, and collaboration can be challenging. Through simple team-building activities, such as introductions and small group tasks, you begin to understand each other better. Over time, trust develops, communication improves, and the group becomes more confident and effective.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Think about a time when you worked in a team. What helped the team work well together? What challenges did you experience?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Try a quick team reflection exercise:  
Do I listen actively when others are speaking?

Do I feel comfortable sharing my ideas in a group?

Do I respect different opinions, even when I disagree?

Action: In your next group interaction, focus on one improvement (e.g. listening more carefully or encouraging others to speak).

## RECAP

Teamwork is based on trust, communication, and respect

Active listening is as important as speaking

Collaboration helps achieve better results

Strong teams create supportive and inclusive environments

Work with a partner or small group to complete a simple task, then reflect on communication, roles, and cooperation within the group.



# Module 8: Goal Setting &

## OVERVIEW

Stress often occurs in the gap between the demands placed upon us and our capacity to meet them. To close this gap and manage our time and energy effectively, we must first understand exactly where we stand, and then decide where we want to go. The Life Scan (or Energy Audit) helps you assess your current capacity across different areas of your life, giving you clarity on where you are feeling depleted. Goal Setting then provides you with a long-term vision and short-term motivation to improve those areas. By investing a little time and effort into this process, you can build a more balanced, stress-resistant lifestyle.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

Conduct a “Life Scan” to identify the specific areas of your life that lack energy and resources.

Establish meaningful lifetime goals that reflect what you truly want (not what others expect of you).

Break down long-term visions into actionable, manageable short-term plans.

Apply the SMART framework to create powerful, trackable objectives.

## KEY CONCEPTS

The Energy Audit (Life Scan): A method to visualize your current capacity in various life categories (e.g., Time, Energy, Money, Health, Physical Exercise, Social Support, Fun, Creativity, Nutrition, Meaning).

The “Big Picture”: Lifetime goals give you a balanced coverage of all important areas in your life (career, financial, education, family, artistic, attitude, physical, pleasure, public service).

The SMART Mnemonic: A formula to make goals actionable rather than vague wishes:

S – Specific (or Significant)

M – Measurable (or Meaningful)

A – Attainable (or Action-Oriented)

R – Relevant (or Rewarding)

T – Time-bound (or Trackable)

Example: Instead of the vague goal “to lose weight,” a SMART goal is “to lose 2 kilos in two months.”

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

Technique: From Scan to Action Plan

Assess (The Life Scan): Write down the life categories mentioned above. Rate how energized you feel in each area on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 being totally empty, 10 being totally fueled).

Appreciate & select: Look at your numbers. Identify one or two areas where your score is the lowest and where you’d like to have greater capacity.

Set the lifetime goal: Brainstorm what you want to achieve in this specific area over the next 10 years. Make sure this is what you really want, not your employer or family.

Adjust (break it down): Break this large lifetime goal into smaller targets: a 5-year plan, a 1-year plan, a 6-month plan, and a 1-month plan.

Daily action: Create a daily To-Do list item that moves you toward that 1-month plan.

[Download the materials here Module 8](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine a professional who feels constantly overwhelmed and says they “have no time to enjoy life.” They decide to conduct a Life Scan. They score their “Career” and “Financial” categories at an 8/10, but notice their “Physical Exercise” and “Pleasure/Fun” are at a 2/10. They realize their energy is entirely unbalanced. Instead of making a vague promise to “relax more,” they use SMART goal setting to address the gap. They set a goal for the “Physical Exercise/Fun” category: “I will attend a 50-minute Pilates class twice a week, every Tuesday and Thursday, for the next month.” They add this to their weekly schedule and put “Pack gym bag” on their daily To-Do list for Monday evening. By linking the Life Scan to a SMART goal, they regain control and start rebuilding their energy.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

When you think about the goals you are currently working toward, whose goals are they? Are you pursuing objectives that you genuinely want to achieve, or are you fulfilling the expectations of your parents, family, or employer?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Do a rapid Life Scan right now. Pick just three categories: Health, Career, and Fun.

Rate each on a scale of 0 to 10 based on how energized you feel in them today.

Identify the category with the lowest score.

Action: What is the smallest action item you could implement right away – today – that would boost that specific score by just one point? (Remember, small wins trigger dopamine and help build new habits!).

## RECAP

Assess with a Life Scan: You cannot fix a stress gap if you don't know where your energy is leaking. Rate your life categories to find your baseline.

Goal setting saves time: It requires effort upfront, but knowing exactly where you are going saves an enormous amount of time and stress in the future.

Make it SMART: Vague goals lead to vague results. Ensure your goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Stay true to yourself: Make sure your goals align with the way you want to live your life.



# Module 9: Ikigai

## OVERVIEW

Many of us experience a deep sense of disillusionment or burnout when we feel our work is meaningless. “Ikigai” (生きがい) is a Japanese concept from the island of Okinawa – one of the world’s “Blue Zones” where people live the longest and happiest lives. It roughly translates to “a reason for being” or simply “the reason you get out of bed in the morning.” While Western psychology often uses the famous 4-circle Venn diagram to define Ikigai (balancing passion, profession, vocation, and mission), traditional Japanese philosophy focuses just as much on finding joy in small, everyday moments. Finding your Ikigai gives you a deep sense of well-being, helps you build resilience against stress, and prevents burnout.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

Understand the Ikigai framework (both the 4-circle model and the traditional Japanese pillars).

Discover how to slip into a state of “flow” and deep engagement in your daily life.

Identify your personal strengths and align them with a cause bigger than yourself.

Prevent emotional exhaustion by reconnecting with positive emotions and finding joy in small things.

## KEY CONCEPTS

To flourish and find your Ikigai, you need to balance several elements:

The 4 intersecting circles (the Western framework):

What you love (Passion & Mission)

What you are good at (Passion & Profession)

What you can be paid for (Profession & Vocation)

What the world needs (Mission & Vocation)

The joy of little things (the traditional framework): Ikigai isn’t just about grand career goals. It’s about being in the “here and now” (mindfulness) and appreciating the morning air, a good cup of coffee, or a conversation with a colleague.

Engagement & flow: When you are truly engaged in a task that uses your strengths, you experience “flow” – time seems to stop, and you concentrate intensely on the present.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

Technique: The Ikigai Mapping & “Starting Small”

Draw the map: Take a piece of paper and draw four overlapping circles (Love, Skills, Money, Need).

Fill the circles: Write down your hobbies, your strengths (use a Personal SWOT analysis), the skills you get paid for, and the causes you care about.

Find the overlaps: Look for activities that hit at least 3 (or all 4) of these areas. If your job covers “Skills” and “Money” but lacks “Love” and “Need,” you are likely experiencing a sense of emptiness.

Start small: You don’t have to quit your job to find Ikigai. Introduce one small thing you love into your workday. It could be bringing a plant to your desk, or spending 10 minutes mentoring a junior colleague to satisfy the need to help others.

[Download the materials here Module 9](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine a professional who is highly committed to their job and earns a good salary (What they are good at + What they get paid for). However, they feel a deep sense of fatigue and frustration – classic signs of burnout. They realize their work lacks Meaning (What the world needs) and Positive Emotion (What they love). Instead of making a career change, they apply the Ikigai principles. They start mentoring newcomers (serving a bigger cause) and taking a 15-minute mindful walk during lunch to connect with their love for nature. They also begin to focus on the traditional Japanese aspect of Ikigai: savoring their morning tea without rushing. By making these small adjustments, they begin to experience the state of “flow” again and reconnect with their Ikigai right where they are.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Look at the four circles of Ikigai. Which of these four areas is currently missing or neglected in your life? How does this absence affect your daily energy and stress levels?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Perform a quick “Meaning & Engagement” check-in:

Do I pursue hobbies and activities that help me slip into a state of flow, or do I let personal time slip away due to stress?

Can I list three small, simple things (like a morning routine or a specific task) that bring me joy every day?

Action: If you feel empty in the “Meaning” category, brainstorm one small act of kindness or volunteering you can do this week. If you lack “Joy,” schedule 10 minutes tomorrow strictly for an activity you love. Remember, small wins trigger dopamine, which provides the glue for new habits!

## RECAP

Ikigai is your reason for waking up. It’s the perfect balance of what you love, what you are good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for.

Joy in the little things. Ikigai is found not only in grand life purposes but in everyday mindfulness and small moments of peace.

Find your Flow. Make time for activities where time seems to stop.

Start small. Avoid trying to change everything at once. Small, consistent actions build the resilience you need to fuel progress toward your most important goals.



# Module 10: Stress Management Fundamentals

## OVERVIEW

Stress is an unavoidable part of modern life – from tight deadlines and long commutes to personal worries. But what exactly is it? Psychologically, stress is the gap between the demands placed on you and the capacity you have to meet them. When you feel “out of control,” stress occurs. However, not all stress is bad; a little stress can be highly motivational. The real problem arises when stress becomes chronic. Understanding the true nature of stress is the first step to mastering it, closing the gap, and building a more resilient, healthy lifestyle.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

Understand the difference between “eustress” (good stress) and “distress” (bad stress).

Recognize the physical and emotional symptoms of the “fight-or-flight” response.

Understand the three stages of general adaptation syndrome (GAS) and how they lead to burnout.

Apply the A-3 stress mastery formula and use a stress diary to track and manage your triggers.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Technique: Daily reflection journaling

While it is important to understand your stress triggers, focusing entirely on negative symptoms can sometimes increase anxiety. A powerful alternative is a daily reflection journal. Journaling helps you reflect on what you have learned, cements new concepts in your mind, and builds self-confidence. It is a proven way to manage stress more effectively by shifting your brain out of the “fight-or-flight” mode and building emotional intelligence. Take 5–10 minutes at the end of each day to calmly update your journal using these prompts:

Focus on growth: Ask yourself, “What did I learn today?” and “What inspired me?” This shifts your mindset from survival to development.

Acknowledge your strengths: Answer, “Where was I good at today?” Recognizing your own capacity helps close the “stress gap.”

Practice gratitude: Note “What went well today?” and “What am I grateful for?” Gratitude actively lowers cortisol (the stress hormone) and builds emotional resilience against future stressors.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

Technique: The Ikigai Mapping & “Starting Small”

Draw the map: Take a piece of paper and draw four overlapping circles (Love, Skills, Money, Need).

Fill the circles: Write down your hobbies, your strengths (use a Personal SWOT analysis), the skills you get paid for, and the causes you care about.

Find the overlaps: Look for activities that hit at least 3 (or all 4) of these areas. If your job covers “Skills” and “Money” but lacks “Love” and “Need,” you are likely experiencing a sense of emptiness.

Start small: You don’t have to quit your job to find Ikigai. Introduce one small thing you love into your workday. It could be bringing a plant to your desk, or spending 10 minutes mentoring a junior colleague to satisfy the need to help others.

[Download the materials here Module 10](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

Imagine you have a constantly aggressive or demanding co-worker. Initially, interacting with them triggers your alarm phase (fight-or-flight) – your heart races, and your breathing gets shallow. After a few weeks, you enter the resistance phase; you adapt to the situation and feel the immediate physical anxiety less, but your body is still working hard to build resistance to the stress hormones. Eventually, after months of this unresolved tension, you hit the exhaustion phase. You feel disengaged, deeply disillusioned, and have no energy to care anymore – this is burnout. By recognizing this cycle early through a stress diary, you can assess the situation, appreciate your feelings, and adjust by setting boundaries or seeking support before exhaustion hits.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Think about the major and minor stressors in your life right now. Which ones are acute (temporary) and which ones are chronic (ongoing)? Are you currently ignoring any small, chronic “hassles” that might be secretly pushing you toward the “exhaustion” phase?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Review this list of common stress symptoms:

Physical: Headaches, muscle tension, fatigue, shallow breathing, insomnia, cold hands.

Emotional: Irritability, anxiety, memory lapses, indecisiveness, social withdrawal.

Action: Identify the top 3 symptoms you typically experience when under pressure. Write them down. Next time you notice one of these “red flags” in your body or mood, pause, use the A-3 formula (assess, appreciate, adjust), and log the event in your stress diary.

## RECAP

Stress is a gap: It's the perceived difference between your demands and your capacity to handle them.

Perception matters: The exact same situation can be a great, motivating experience for one person and a distressing one for another.

Watch for chronic stress: Short-term stress can help you focus; unresolved, long-term stress leads to exhaustion and burnout.

Reflect to build resilience: Managing stress isn't just about avoiding triggers; it's about building your emotional capacity. Using a daily reflection journal helps you focus on your strengths, practice gratitude, and calm your nervous system.



# Module 11: Physical Relaxation Techniques

## OVERVIEW

Imagine having a particularly stressful day – several important deadlines, sick colleagues, and urgent tasks piling up. Your heart may race, and your breathing might become fast and shallow. These physical reactions are the result of your body's “fight-or-flight” response preparing you for a perceived threat. While occasional short-term stress is normal, too much of it hinders your ability to think clearly and work well. Physical relaxation techniques help you quickly reduce muscle tension and manage acute stress, allowing you to calm down and perform at your best when under pressure.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

Analyze your breathing patterns and switch from shallow chest breathing to deep belly breathing.

Apply the deep breathing technique to slow down your heart rate and lower blood pressure.

Use progressive muscular relaxation (PMR) to consciously release physical tension.

Practice centering to ground yourself and redirect negative energy.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Deep breathing (diaphragmatic breathing): Bringing air deep into your lungs by expanding your lower belly, rather than shallowly breathing from your chest and shoulders. It is one of the best ways to relieve stress.

Progressive muscular relaxation (PMR): The principle that when you intentionally tense a muscle group tightly for a few seconds, it becomes much easier to relax those muscles completely afterward.

Centering: An ancient visualization technique rooted in Aikido that helps you focus on your physical center of gravity, keeping you stable and grounded when stress hits.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

Technique 1: The complete breath (with balloon visualization)

Position yourself: Sit comfortably. Put one hand on your belly near your bellybutton, and the other on your chest.

Visualize: Imagine a small balloon, about the size of a grapefruit, placed just under your bellybutton.

Inhale: Slowly breathe in through your nose. Imagine inflating this balloon. Notice the hand on your belly rise; the hand on your chest should move very little. Do not use your shoulders to help you breathe.

Exhale: Breathe out slowly through parted lips, making a gentle whooshing sound. Notice the hand on your belly falling.

Repeat: Pause slightly and repeat this cycle for a few minutes until you feel peaceful.

Technique 2: Progressive muscular relaxation (PMR)

Tense: Flex a specific group of muscles as tightly as possible (for example, pull your shoulders up toward your ears, or clench your fists).

Hold: Keep them in a state of extreme tension for five seconds.

Release: Relax the muscles completely. You might find it helpful to breathe out slowly and mentally whisper the word “relax” as you let go.

[Download the materials here Module 11](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

You have a major job interview or a high-stakes presentation in 10 minutes. You are waiting in the lobby, and your nerves are taking over. Your jaw is clenched, your shoulders are hunched, and your breath is caught in your chest. Instead of letting the panic escalate, you do a quick sequence: you tightly squeeze your hands into fists, pull up your shoulders, hold for five seconds, and release (PMR). Then, you place a hand on your stomach and take five slow, deep belly breaths, visualizing your negative energy gathering in your center and leaving your body (centering). When your name is called, your physical tension has dropped, and your mind is clear and ready.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Take a moment to analyze the way you breathe right now. Are you a “chest and shoulder breather” who takes shallow breaths, or a “breath holder” who stops breathing entirely when distracted by your screen or lost in thought?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Do a rapid 1-minute body scan right where you are sitting. Start from the top of your head and work your way down to your toes, asking yourself: Is my brow furrowed or are my eyebrows knitted? Is my jaw clenched? Are my shoulders hunched? Are my thigh or calf muscles tight? Action: If you notice discomfort or tension in any of these areas, intentionally squeeze that muscle for five seconds, then mentally let it go, saying to yourself: “My body is relaxed.”

## RECAP

Stress is physical: The “fight-or-flight” response immediately alters your heart rate, breathing, and muscle tension.

Belly over chest: Proper diaphragmatic breathing is one of the most powerful tools to signal safety to your nervous system.

Tense to relax: PMR uses intentional, extreme tension to force your muscles into a state of deep relaxation.

Find your center: Visualization and grounding techniques help redirect negative energy, returning you to a state of inner calm and focus.



# Module 12: Time Management & Procrastination

## OVERVIEW

“Time management” refers to the way you organize activities and plan how long you spend on each of them. Good time management enables you to get more things done in less time and protects you from stress. However, many people fall into the trap of spending all day “firefighting” or procrastinating - ignoring an unpleasant but important task in favor of one that is easier. By mastering prioritization and learning how to protect your focus, you can clear enough time to do what is truly essential for your success.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn to:

Prioritize tasks using Eisenhower’s urgent/important principle and the action priority matrix.

Identify the root causes of your procrastination and apply strategies to overcome it.

Manage daily interruptions and set boundaries to protect your focus.

Understand the myth of multitasking and how to schedule your day effectively.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Important vs. urgent: Important activities lead to achieving your professional or personal goals. Urgent activities demand immediate attention and are usually associated with achieving someone else’s goals.

The action priority matrix: A system to score tasks based on their impact and effort. You should focus on “quick wins” (high impact, low effort) and “major projects” (high impact, high effort), while avoiding “thankless tasks” (low impact, high effort).

The procrastination trap: Waiting for the “right mood” or feeling overwhelmed because you think you have to complete a task perfectly from start to finish.

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## STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE / GUIDE

Technique: The 10-minute anti-procrastination strategy

Often, the hardest part of any task is simply starting it. Use this strategy to overcome the initial block:

Commit to the task: Pick the high-priority task you have been avoiding. Write it down.

Lower the bar: Tell yourself that you are only going to work on this project for exactly 10 minutes. Remove the high expectation that you need to finish it.

Minimize distractions: Turn off your email and phone alerts, and close unnecessary browser tabs.

Start: Work for 10 minutes. Usually, once you break the mental barrier of starting, you will find the momentum to keep going.

Promise a reward: If you complete a difficult task, reward yourself with a treat, such as a coffee break or a short walk. Make sure you notice how good it feels to finish things!

[Download the materials here Module 12](#)

## REAL-LIFE SCENARIO

You have a major analysis due by the end of the week. Because it feels overwhelming and time-consuming, you keep putting it off. Instead, you fill your day with low-priority tasks, like writing emails or chatting with colleagues who stop by your desk. By Thursday, your stress levels are incredibly high. Instead of continuing to panic, you use the time management toolkit. You realize the analysis is a “major project.” You set your chat status to “unavailable” to block invalid interruptions. Then, you tell yourself you will only open the Excel file and look at the data for 10 minutes. By removing the pressure to finish the whole report at once, you easily start the work, get into a state of flow, and complete a large portion of it before lunch.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Think about the items that have been sitting on your to-do list the longest. Are you procrastinating because the tasks are truly unpleasant, or because you are waiting for the “perfect time” to tackle them?

## INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY / SELF-CHECK

Take your current to-do list and evaluate it using Eisenhower’s principle. Identify one task that is “urgent but not important” (a distraction or someone else’s priority). Identify one task that is “important but not urgent” (a long-term goal). Action: Ask yourself if you can delegate or reschedule the “urgent but not important” task. Then, schedule your “important but not urgent” task for the time of day when your energy levels are at their peak.

## RECAP

Focus on what is important: Overcome the natural tendency to focus on unimportant urgent activities.

Just start for 10 minutes: Procrastinators often feel overwhelmed by the end goal. Focus only on starting, and the rest will follow.

Manage your interruptions: Use “available” and “unavailable” statuses, and don’t be afraid to politely tell people you only have five minutes to talk.

Do one thing at a time: Avoid multitasking. Schedule specific times for specific tasks to keep your brain focused and efficient.



# Case Studies and Participant Experiences

One of the most valuable aspects of the Hold On Be Strong project was the opportunity to witness the personal journeys of the participants. The workshops not only supported the development of digital skills and well-being practices but also created a space where individuals could reconnect with learning, share experiences, and build new relationships.

Participants came from diverse backgrounds and life experiences. Some had previously worked in demanding professions, while others had experienced migration, displacement, or social isolation. Despite these differences, the workshops created a shared environment where participants could support one another and develop new confidence.

The following examples illustrate how the programme influenced participants' lives and learning experiences.



## Rediscovering Digital Confidence

For many participants, one of the most important outcomes of the programme was gaining confidence in using digital tools. At the beginning of the workshops, several participants expressed hesitation or anxiety about using smartphones or computers.

Through patient guidance, hands-on practice, and peer support, many participants gradually became more comfortable using technology in their everyday lives.

One participant explained:

“Before the workshop I was afraid to use my smartphone. I worried that I would break something or press the wrong button. Now I can send messages to my family and even make video calls.”

Another participant shared how learning digital skills helped maintain family relationships:

“My grandchildren live in another country. After learning how to make video calls, I can now speak with them every week. It makes me feel much closer to them.”

These experiences highlight the importance of creating supportive learning environments where participants can practise new skills without fear of making mistakes.

## Building Social Connections

Beyond the acquisition of digital skills, the workshops played a significant role in strengthening social connections among participants. Many older adults experience reduced social interaction, particularly after retirement or relocation to a new community.

The regular meetings provided a consistent opportunity for participants to meet, share experiences, and develop friendships. Group discussions, collaborative activities, and informal conversations created a welcoming atmosphere where participants felt comfortable expressing themselves.

One participant described the importance of the group environment: “I joined the workshops because I wanted to learn something new, but I stayed because of the people. We laugh together and support each other.”

Another participant reflected on the sense of belonging that developed during the programme:

“Sometimes older people feel invisible in society. Here we felt seen and valued.”

These comments demonstrate how community-based learning environments can play an important role in reducing feelings of isolation.

## Learning Through Shared Experiences

Storytelling and group discussions allowed participants to share their personal histories and cultural perspectives. These moments often created powerful exchanges of knowledge and understanding among participants.

Participants from migrant backgrounds were able to share stories about their journeys, traditions, and life experiences. These discussions enriched the learning environment and helped participants recognise the diversity within the group.

One participant shared:

“When we talk about our lives, we discover that we have experienced many similar challenges. It makes us feel stronger together.”

Another participant explained how the storytelling activities helped them reconnect with their own memories:

“I realised that I have many stories to share. Talking about them reminds me how much I have experienced and learned.”

These conversations helped participants appreciate the value of their life experiences and strengthened their confidence in contributing to the group.



## Inter-generational Learning in Practice

An important element of the project was the involvement of younger volunteers who participated in certain activities. These interactions created opportunities for intergenerational learning and collaboration.

Younger participants often supported seniors with digital tools, while older participants shared their life experiences, cultural knowledge, and perspectives on social change.

One participant commented:

“Young people understand technology very quickly. They helped me learn how to use my phone. In return, I shared stories about my life and experiences.”

This exchange created a positive learning dynamic where both generations felt valued and respected.

The presence of younger volunteers also helped create a relaxed learning atmosphere. Participants felt comfortable asking questions and exploring new technologies when supported by patient and encouraging mentors.



## A Renewed Sense of Confidence

Perhaps the most significant impact of the programme was the renewed sense of confidence reported by many participants. Learning new skills, engaging in creative activities, and participating in discussions helped individuals feel more capable and connected.

Participants often expressed pride in their achievements, particularly when they successfully used digital tools for the first time or shared their stories with the group.

One participant summarised their experience by saying:

“This programme reminded me that learning does not stop with age. We can still grow, discover new things, and support each other.”

The experiences shared by participants illustrate the powerful role that inclusive adult education can play in supporting active ageing, social participation, and personal well-being.

Through activities that combine digital learni



## Lessons Learned

The Hold On Be Strong project provided valuable insights into how adult education initiatives can support older adults, particularly those from migrant and refugee backgrounds, in remaining active, connected, and confident in a rapidly changing society.



**Through the implementation of the training programme, workshops, and community activities, the project team gained important experience about what works well in programmes designed for adults aged 60 and above, as well as the challenges that educators and organisations may encounter.**

Reflecting on these experiences is an important part of the learning process. The lessons presented in this section aim to support educators, community organisations, and policymakers who wish to develop similar initiatives promoting digital inclusion, well-being, and social participation among older adults.

## What Worked Well

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**One of the strongest aspects of the project was its holistic learning approach, which combined digital skills with well-being, creativity and social interaction. Instead of focusing only on technology, the programme recognised that learning is closely linked to emotional confidence and social connection.**

Participants responded positively to this balance. Mindfulness exercises, storytelling and group discussions helped create a relaxed and motivating environment for digital learning.

The project also succeeded in creating a supportive and inclusive space. Older learners were encouraged to ask questions, learn at their own pace and support one another. Peer learning was especially valuable, as participants often felt reassured by others facing similar challenges.

Regular workshops also helped build community and belonging. For many participants, the sessions became both a learning opportunity and a social space. Finally, intergenerational learning added value to the programme. Younger volunteers supported participants with digital tools, while older learners shared life experience, cultural knowledge and personal insights.

## Challenges Encountered

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**While the project achieved many positive outcomes, several challenges were also identified during the implementation of the programme.**

A key challenge was the different levels of digital literacy among participants. Some already had experience with smartphones or computers, while others were using digital tools for the first time. Facilitators therefore had to adapt the pace and provide extra support where needed.

Language and communication barriers also affected participation, especially for participants with migrant or refugee backgrounds. This was addressed through simple language, visual demonstrations and practical examples.

Consistent attendance was sometimes difficult due to health issues, caregiving responsibilities or transport barriers. Flexible planning and a supportive atmosphere helped participants stay engaged when possible.

Finally, some participants initially lacked confidence in their ability to learn new skills at an older age. Patience, encouragement and positive reinforcement were important throughout the workshops.

## Recommendations for Future Programmes

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**Based on the Hold On Be Strong project, future programmes should use holistic learning approaches that connect digital skills with well-being, creativity and social participation. This can help increase motivation and make learning more meaningful for older adults.**

Educators should also use inclusive teaching methods that respond to different learning speeds and backgrounds. Step-by-step guidance, peer learning and enough time for practice can help participants build confidence gradually.

Creating a welcoming and community-oriented learning space is also essential. Participants are more likely to engage when they feel respected, comfortable and supported.

Future programmes should include intergenerational learning where possible. Collaboration between younger volunteers and older learners can strengthen digital skills, build relationships and encourage knowledge-sharing between generations.

# Recommendations for Organisations

**The Hold On Be Strong project demonstrates how inclusive adult education initiatives can support older adults in strengthening digital skills, improving well-being, and maintaining meaningful social connections.**

The experiences gained during the project offer valuable insights for organisations that wish to develop similar programmes in their own communities.

Community organisations, NGOs, and adult education providers play a crucial role in creating accessible learning opportunities for older adults. By adapting the approaches used in this project, organisations can support active ageing while promoting digital inclusion and social participation.

The following recommendations highlight practical steps that organisations can take when planning and implementing programmes inspired by the Hold On Be Strong model.



## Creating Accessible Learning Environments

Successful programmes for older adults should begin by creating calm, welcoming and accessible learning spaces. Participants may feel uncertain about returning to learning or using digital tools, so facilitators should use clear language, practical demonstrations and enough time for practice. These environments should also encourage social interaction through group discussion, shared activities and informal conversation. This helps participants feel respected, connected

## Adopting a Holistic Learning Approach

Programmes should address more than technical skills. The Hold On Be Strong project showed that combining digital learning with well-being, creativity, movement and social activities can increase engagement and confidence. A varied programme can include digital skills training, creative workshops, mindfulness exercises and group discussions. This recognises that learning is closely connected to emotional and social well-being.

## Encouraging Peer Learning and Collaboration

Peer learning helps make the learning process less intimidating. When participants support one another, they often feel more comfortable asking questions, sharing experiences and learning at their own pace. Intergenerational learning can also strengthen the programme. Younger volunteers can support participants with digital tools, while older adults share life experience, cultural knowledge and personal perspectives. This creates mutual

## Building Practical Skills, Partnerships and Long-Term Impact

Digital tools should be taught through practical everyday tasks, such as communicating with family, accessing information online and using digital services. Hands-on practice is essential, and mistakes should be treated as part of the learning process. Strong partnerships with NGOs, adult education providers, local authorities and volunteer groups can help reach more participants and share resources. To ensure long-term impact, organisations should develop toolkits, educational materials and video resources that can continue to support active ageing and lifelong learning beyond

# Conclusion

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Across Europe, ageing populations are creating new challenges and opportunities. Supporting older adults to remain active, connected and engaged is important for both individual well-being and social cohesion.

The Hold On Be Strong project shows how inclusive adult education can support this goal. By combining digital learning, well-being activities, creativity and social interaction, the project helped older adults build confidence, strengthen social connections and stay active in their communities.

A key lesson from the project is the importance of welcoming and flexible learning environments. When participants feel respected, supported and encouraged, they are more willing to try new skills and take part in learning activities.

Community-based learning also helps reduce social isolation. Group workshops create opportunities for friendship, dialogue and belonging, making them valuable not only for learning but also for social connection.

The project demonstrates that even small-scale initiatives can have meaningful impact. With the right support, older adults can continue to learn, contribute and participate actively in community life.