



Participatory guidance Mahis

Participatory guidance

These materials discuss the principles and practices of social inclusion of young people from the perspective of a group instructor. The activities are built around functional inclusion and the instructor's opportunities to facilitate it.

The separate **Exercise bank** includes various exercises that can be applied to different phases of group activity based on needs and time.

Functional inclusion

Even in Finland, the distribution of wellbeing and health is becoming increasingly uneven. This is a form of social inequality, which contributes to the creation of health disparity through lifestyles and living conditions. As social status is often inherited, the development of inequality can already begin in early childhood and youth. Wellbeing is connected to social status and would appear to be more common among youths

whose financial and social situation is already stable. Correspondingly, youths in weaker positions are more likely to be exposed to factors that endanger health and wellbeing as adults as well. From the societal perspective, inequality is both an ethical and financial issue, which should be intervened with as a matter of vital importance. Adults and organizations who work with youths have the opportunity to contribute to this by increasing and facilitating the inclusion of youths.

Social inclusion can be thought of as consisting of three different dimensions. The first of these is related to material wellbeing and opportunities: when a young person is included in society, they have access to, among other things, sufficient means of subsistence, wellbeing, and education. The second dimension of inclusion is related to active agency and empowerment. The third dimension of inclusion can be understood as the feeling of being included, being part of a community, and being valued.

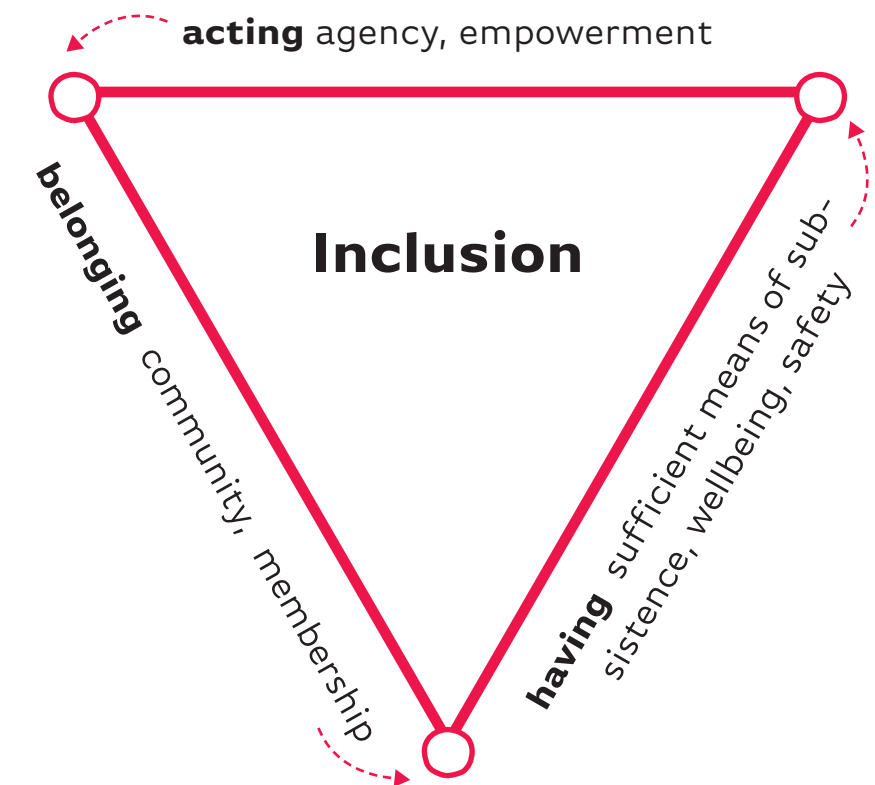


FIGURE APPLIED FROM
RAIVIO & KARJALAINEN 2012

According to Kiilakoski and Gretscher, inclusion fundamentally consists of a youth's experience of whether they have real power over matters that concern them. The promotion of inclusion means influencing political or social relationships. Political inclusion means the capacity to influence decision-making and democracy.

In the prevention of marginalization, the concept of inclusion refers to reinforcing social relationships and activities that are based on communality and taking group phenomena into consideration. In this case we can also use the term functional inclusion, which is more closely related to actions and activity at the grass roots level.

Functional inclusion consists of concrete actions, experiences, presence, and initiative. Inclusion also includes the opportunity to influence both your own life and the surrounding society.

In facilitating inclusion, it is important to ensure that participation and activities are voluntary and take place on various levels. Thus, an open imple-

mentation of inclusion also provides the option to refrain from participating.

Principles of acting as an instructor

The instructor plays a significant role in facilitating inclusion. A teacher, youth worker, coach, voluntary instructor or any adult who has the time and willingness to work with young people can be an inclusive instructor. Working with youths requires ability and maturity. Being present, the ability to listen, and courage are essential, as is a solution-oriented attitude.

In working with youths, the principles of inclusion include working on the young people's terms, confidentiality, pluralism, and openness. The starting point is that the youths are appreciated, and they are given an active role in planning, realizing, and evaluating the activities. The independence, values, and opinions of the youths are respected and instead of problems the focus is on finding and utilizing per-

sonal resources. In line with the principle of confidentiality, anything the youth might share will not be discussed with outsiders without the consent of the youth. The activities are based on mutual voluntariness and equality.



> Focus on

- solutions and goals
- the present and the future
- strengths and successes
- sharing things
- small steps
- reinforcing the good things
- rewarding

> Spend less time on

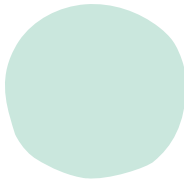
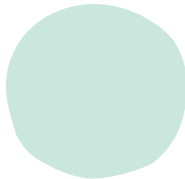
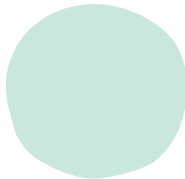

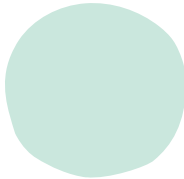
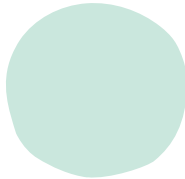

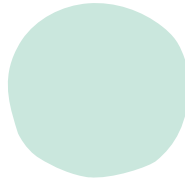
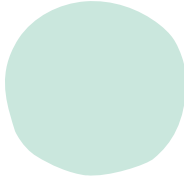

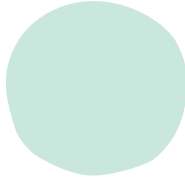
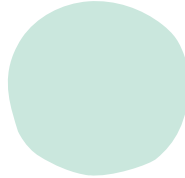

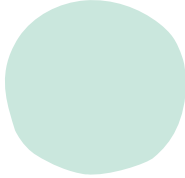
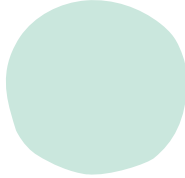
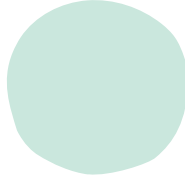
- problems and difficulties
- the past
- faults and shortcomings
- blaming others
- objectives of radical change
- punishments

Role of the instructor

Inclusive group activities are based on the needs and interests of the youths, supporting their personal goals. It is essential to ensure that each participant has the opportunity to be heard and seen as well as feel included. This can be furthered by becoming acquainted and grouping as well as by creating a safe atmosphere.

The instructor has a significant role particularly in the initial stages of the operation, and it will be adapted according to both the needs of the youths and the phases of the group. The instruction style consists not only the instructor's personal style, but also their interpretation of what each of the youths need at any given time. The below figure developed by Gerald Grown will help you understand how youths can be best supported by different styles of instruction. The figure presents various roles of the instructor and the youth, none of which is permanent and instead balancing between different roles is to be expected. The general goal is to step back from active instruction as the level of inclusion increases, providing assistance and support where necessary.



THE INSTRUCTOR ▶	authority	motivator, guide	assistant	consultant, delegator
THE YOUTH ▼				
independent				
committed, needs encouragement				
interested, needs instructions				
dependent				

> Authority

- Provides specific instructions, supervises the performance, guides and instructs, is present, encourages everyone to participate
- Applied when the instructee is unfamiliar with the task, is not committed or does not trust themselves

> Guide

- Provides specific instructions, provides reasoning, explains, and specifies further, discusses and encourages, supports
- The instructee's personal motives are key
- Applied when the instructee is as yet unable to do something, but is enthusiastic or otherwise trusts their ability to perform an activity

> Assistant

- Encourages, cooperates and perhaps bounces ideas back and forth, summarizes, seeks to define and specify further,

- Uses images and metaphors, asks the instructee to express their thoughts
- The instructee's personal observations and feelings are key, the instruction consists of clarifying motives and objectives
- Applied when the instructee is able to do something, but is unwilling or uncertain

> Consultant

- Criticizes, finds reasons for disagreements, connects ideas to an overall context, asks for justification, examines and presents challenging questions, produces more specific answers, and checks if the work corresponds to reality
- The responsibility for decision-making and implementation is transferred to the instructee
- Applied when the instructee is able to perform and is committed to their task

Grouping

As the collective activities begin, it is important to ensure that the group provides everyone a safe, open, and confidential space where they are able to be themselves. Grouping requires time and constant attention throughout the activities. The objective is to increase familiarization, trust, safety, and the ability to communicate between the group members. Increasing trust and safety reduces the fear of failure, thus encouraging everyone to participate and express themselves.

The development of a shared group identity, social skills, and the ability to evaluate and reflect is also significant. The group identity is built through shared routines, habits, and symbols. A positive mutual dependence can also reinforce communality and team spirit. Dependence is created when all the members of the group have a mutual goal and purpose to their operation, toward which everyone is ready to work. Thus, both the group and its individual members are simultaneously responsible for joint success.

When the team spirit of a group is very strong, the

withdrawal of a member may result in anger and disappointment, which should be discussed among the group. In a best-case scenario, the group will become even tighter than before. Challenges may also be caused by a new member joining the group in the middle of its operation. Integration into the group may be facilitated by sufficient familiarization and time, as well as reviewing the existing mutual principles and approaches.

Group stages

Group activities may include various stages, the duration of which varies on a case by case basis. The stages may not always progress regularly from one to the next and there may sometimes be momentary steps backward.

Forming-storming-norming-performing-adjourning

During the initial stage **(forming)**, the boundaries of the group are yet to be created. The members may be curious but reserved, which means that uncertainty and observation of others is part of the process. At this stage, the group is defining its operation and structuring its approaches. The important thing here is to become properly acquainted and agree on the shared activities with the assistance of the instructor. It is very important that everyone is heard and has the courage to express their own opinions out loud. Versatile grouping and familiarization exercises are effective at this stage.

During the alignment and resistance stage **(storming)**, the members of the group have become acquainted, they have decided on a shared goal, and they have built a trust among the group. Courage and openness are increased, and the members are able to express even stronger opinions and critique. This stage is characterized by abundant communication, consensus, contentment, and helpfulness. Strong ideas and differing opinions can also lead

to conflicts, whose recognition and processing requires the instructor's assistance. Impartiality and solution-orientation play a key role in dissolving conflicts. During the commitment stage **(norming)**, the group find its norms and a shared approach. Ideas are transformed into action and the group members are able to take realities into consideration. The group can break down the reasons behind potential disagreements and develop its operation based on new ideas. The members can also ask the others to justify their opinions. The team spirit is strong, emotional reactions positive, and communication more profound than during the previous stages.

The effective operation stage **(performing)** is fruitful and functional. The group has clearly defined objectives and the members have specific roles. The group communicates fluently and is able to process criticism together in a receptive manner. The group members can review each other's ideas and opinions critically without it being considered threatening or personal. The group has mutual understanding and respect. Decisions are made together, and the individual needs of the members have been coordinated

with the needs of the group. The group is able to utilize the members' abilities and ideas.

During the conclusion stage **(adjourning)**, the group's emotions are a mix of sadness, wistfulness, and relief. The members may wish to organize further meetings to reduce the sense of finality of concluding the group. At this stage, the instructor should continue to ensure that the atmosphere in the group is safe. The operation of the group is best concluded with a final face to face meeting of the group.

Interaction and providing feedback

In inclusive activities, functional interaction both between the instructor and the youths and among the youths themselves is significant. Asking questions, listening, providing feedback, and empathizing with others is important, as we cannot read each other's minds. This is something the instructor should remind both themselves and the group of. Becoming an active participant and speaker often requires practice. Expression of thoughts and emotions can

be reinforced by learning communication skills using exercises from the **Exercise bank** included in these instructor's materials, for example.

Interaction often includes providing and receiving feedback in some form, and in an openly confidential atmosphere feedback flows in both directions. You should remember that most communication is nonverbal. In addition to words, you should also pay attention to the message sent by your demeanor. Nonverbal communication is supported by the **SOFTEN** principle.



SOFTEN – the building blocks of nonverbal

Smile

positive facial expressions, smile to express interest

Open

openness of your body position, turning to face others

Forwards

tilting forward, toward the person you are talking to, leaning forward

Touch

short distance to the other person, appropriate proximity

Eye contact

positive eye contact with the other person

Nod

approving gestures such as nods, positive gestures in general

Providing and receiving feedback is important for both maintaining motivation and achieving goals.

Feedback and recognition may be provided constantly during the activities, where it comes most naturally. Sometimes separate feedback discussions may also be needed.

Feedback should be appreciative and constructive, and it is advisable to include positive observations and acknowledgements. Critical and corrective feedback provided with an encouraging tone may be similarly motivational. With such feedback, you should make sure that the timing is also suitable for the recipient. It is also important to take notice of the approach or the performed task.

› When providing feedback

- Calm the situation and ensure that the timing is also suitable for the recipient of the feedback.

Remind the recipient that they may write down the feedback they receive to return to it later if they wish.

- Remember and remind that providing feedback means appreciation and helps us grow.
- Speak clearly and unambiguously. Choose the words and expressions you use carefully. Avoid excessive symbolism.
- Be honest and focus on the essentials.
- Focus your feedback on the action, not the person or assumptions.
- Praise and encourage trying, learning, and progress.
- Avoid standard, pre-prepared answers.
- Listen to what the recipient of the feedback has to say and aim toward reciprocal discussion. Ensure that you both have the same understanding of the issue and are talking about the same thing.

Learning on your own terms

Learning is most often connected to the idea of a school or educational institution. In addition to school, nonformal learning is constantly taking place in other places as well. Nonformal learning is characterized by voluntariness or spontaneity and the fact that it is not done in the pursuit of a degree or certificate and instead the action and the skills learned during it are important in themselves.

› Inclusive group activities teach:

- Social skills and information
- Planning, communication, interaction, and evaluation skills
- Project skills, manual skills, working life skills
- Personal development
- Perseverance and goal-orientation
- Operating as a member of a group

- Utilizing personal activity for learning
- Identifying personal skills and utilizing them further

Inclusive and activating youth activities provide natural opportunities for learning during free time, for example through group activities organized by social clubs, municipalities, and parishes. The most important things in such group activities are fun, togetherness, and positive experiences, but they also provide the opportunity to learn various skills and information. At their best, the activities provide the opportunity to also reach youths who may not receive experiences of success at school.

Reflection

Analysis requires activity, practice, and thinking. Reflecting on the activity and thought is also important, as it allows you to see the significance of your

actions both for yourself and the community. In addition to the personal activity of a single youth, it is also advisable to reflect on the operation of the entire group and the interaction within it.

The instructor's ability to focus the youths' attention to the skills learned during the activity and the opportunities enabled in other parts of their lives is critical in reflection. The achieved progress is made visible and the youths are encouraged to think of the significance of the lessons for themselves and the entire group, as well as how they could be used in the future. More deeply a lesson is experienced and understood, the better it can be applied to new situations in the future.

The youth's personal insight on the things they do, experience, and learn is key in reflection. At its best, these insights bring joy of learning, which creates confidence, courage, and the willingness to continue to develop one's self in the future.

Reflection requires time and repetition. Sometimes it may occur in the form of a quick question or ex-

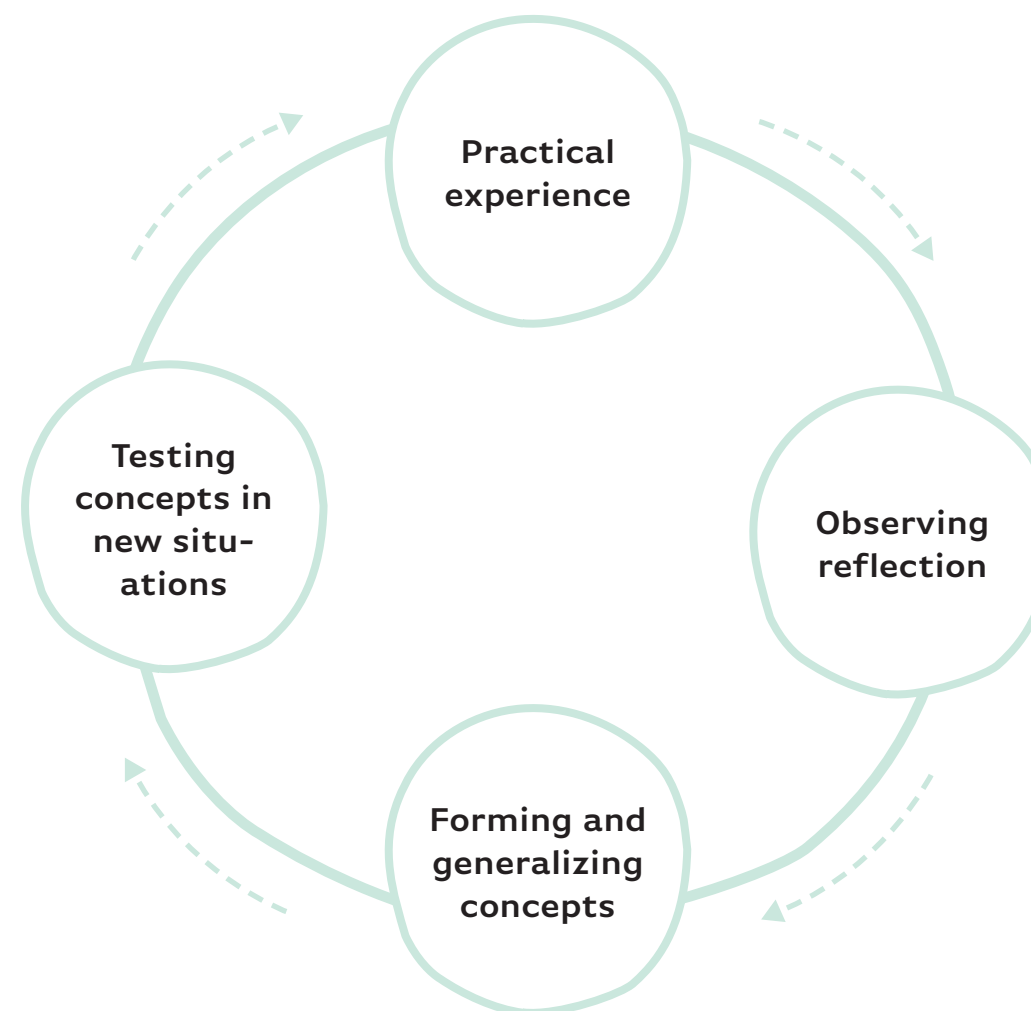
change of ideas after an event or exercise, but every so often you should set aside time for longer discussions. In addition to discussion, various functional exercises can also be used for reflection.

Reflection is not the goal but a tool. It can be a useful medium for gaining new perspectives, adapting behaviors, and applying experiences, which can also be used to realign your activity.

> **Methods of reflection:**

- Feedback discussions
- Learning diary
- Self-evaluation
- Group reflection
- Discussion in pairs

Reflective cycle



> **Essential for inclusive instructors**

- Pay attention to creating and maintaining a safe atmosphere
- Help the youth recognize their strengths and areas of development
- Be present and available
- Acknowledge individual needs
- Encourage toward personal activity
- Be goal-oriented and focus on the good
- Encourage the youth to reflect
- Establish a dialogical connection and be ready to negotiate
- Be brave and trusting!