MindFit

Enhancing Youth Mental Health & Well-being Through Sports

Complete Training Package

Six Stand-Alone Learning Modules



Prepared by the MindFit Partnership

July 2026

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About this training package

The MindFit Training Package supports youth workers, coaches, educators, trainers, and other practitioners to strengthen young people's mental well-being through inclusive sport and non-formal learning. It combines clear background knowledge with practical activities, reflection, and guidance for safe facilitation.

The package contains six modules. Together, they form a complete learning pathway. Each module also stands alone and can be selected according to the needs of the group, the experience of the facilitator, the available time, and the delivery setting.

How to use the package

- **Complete programme:** Deliver Modules 1 to 6 in sequence for a broad learning journey from understanding mental well-being to planning real MindFit sessions.
- **Stand-alone module:** Choose one module to address a specific need, such as inclusion, emotional regulation, or responding to distress.
- **Activity resource:** Select individual exercises or reflection tools and integrate them into an existing youth, education, or sport programme.
- **Team development:** Use the theory, scenarios, and discussion prompts for staff training, peer learning, or supervision.

Facilitation principles

- Explain the purpose, steps and expectations of each activity clearly before starting.
- Emphasise participation, learning and experience rather than performance, winning or comparison.
- Agree basic expectations for respect, supportive communication and the right to pause, pass, step out or change role.
- Use short instructions, practical demonstrations and visual cues where useful.
- Observe participation, energy, behaviour and group dynamics without labelling or diagnosing participants.
- Intervene when bullying, discrimination, humiliation, unsafe behaviour, exclusion or harmful pressure appears.
- Adjust the pace, challenge, rules, grouping or roles when the activity is not supporting safe and meaningful participation.
- Keep personal sharing optional and use neutral, non-clinical language.
- Use short reflection questions that connect the experience with learning, without pressuring participants to disclose personal information.
- Maintain a calm, structured and respectful environment throughout the session.

Important: Before delivery, facilitators should review the selected module, prepare materials, assess accessibility and safeguarding needs, and confirm the local support and referral routes available to participants.

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Inclusion and adaptation

- Consider barriers linked to access, mobility, ability, confidence, language, previous sport experience, culture, identity and group dynamics.
- Offer different levels of challenge and more than one meaningful way to participate.
- Adapt movement, space, time, equipment, team size, rules and roles according to the group's needs.
- Use simple language, demonstrations and visual signs to support multilingual and mixed-experience groups.
- Offer participant, observer, organiser, motivator, timekeeper or reflection roles where appropriate.
- Avoid unnecessary elimination, public ranking, public comparison, forced competition and activities that expose or single out participants.
- Encourage peer support and mixed-ability cooperation without making one participant responsible for another person's inclusion.
- Notice who joins easily, who remains at the margins and who controls most of the activity, then make small adjustments.
- Allow additional time for instructions, decision-making and reflection when needed.
- Respect different cultural expectations, communication styles, gender dynamics, comfort with physical contact and accessibility needs.
- Ask participants what supported participation and what made participation more difficult, then use the feedback to improve the next session.

Safeguarding and professional boundaries

- The facilitator's role is to notice, support, adapt and involve appropriate support—not to diagnose, investigate, counsel or provide therapy.
- Do not force disclosure or promise secrecy. Explain that safety concerns may need to be shared with the appropriate person.
- Take significant, repeated or sudden changes in behaviour, participation, mood, communication or safety seriously.
- Respond calmly, respectfully and, where possible, privately while protecting the young person's dignity.
- Use factual language when recording or sharing a concern: what was seen, heard or said, without interpretation or diagnosis.
- Follow the organisation's safeguarding and reporting procedure and involve the designated safeguarding or responsible person.
- Do not manage serious concerns alone. Seek guidance when uncertain.
- Where there is immediate risk or danger, follow the organisation's emergency procedure and seek urgent support.
- Record, store and share information only as required by the organisation's procedure and with the appropriate people.

Signposting and referral preparation

- Before delivering MindFit activities, the organisation should ensure that facilitators know:
- who the designated safeguarding or responsible contact person is
- which internal reporting procedure should be followed

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- which local youth, mental health, counselling or community support services are available
- which helplines or appropriate online support options may be shared
- what emergency procedure applies when someone may not be safe
- how concerns should be recorded and stored and
- how privacy and the limits of confidentiality should be explained.

Localisation requirement: The support and referral information should be adapted to the country, organisation and delivery setting and reviewed regularly so that it remains accurate.

The six modules

The sequence below moves from core understanding to applied facilitation. You may follow it in full or select the module that best fits your immediate purpose.

Module	Focus	Best used when
1	Understanding youth mental well-being in sport settings	Building shared understanding
2	Creating inclusive and psychologically safe sport environments	Strengthening inclusion and safety
3	Building self-esteem, self-confidence, and resilience through sport	Developing confidence and resilience
4	Emotional regulation and stress management through movement	Supporting calm and self-regulation
5	Noticing distress, responding supportively, and signposting	Handling concerns responsibly
6	Planning and facilitating MindFit sessions in real settings	Preparing practical delivery

Suggested delivery approach

Start each session with a short check-in and clear explanation of the purpose. Combine active participation with time for reflection. Close by summarising key learning, checking how participants feel, and signposting any relevant support. After delivery, record what worked, what should change, and any follow-up actions.

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Module 1. Understanding youth mental well-being in sport settings

Module snapshot

Field	Draft guidance
Module purpose	This module builds the foundational ability of youth workers, sports professionals, coaches, and trainers to recognise and interpret mental well-being in sport settings and work responsibly with young people. It introduces key concepts in youth mental well-being and explores how pressures such as school, social dynamics, family, and social media influence behaviour and participation. It also clarifies the practitioner's role, including the scope of support and boundaries.
Competency focus	• Basic mental health literacy in youth contexts • Understanding of key stressors and influencing factors • Awareness of the facilitator role and professional boundaries
Main target users	Youth workers/coaches/educators/trainers/organisations
Core delivery settings	Schools / NGOs / clubs / youth centres / community spaces
Suggested methods & tools	Experiential activities, Scenario-based learning, Guided reflection, Group discussion and decision-making exercises

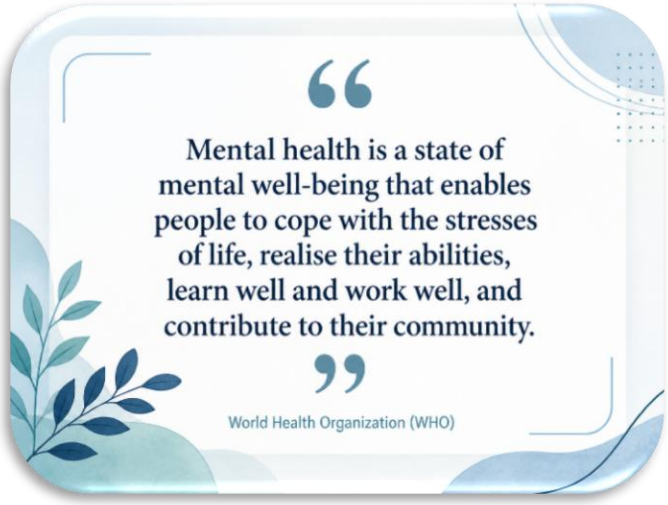
Learning objectives

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- **Explain** what mental well-being means and the idea of a mental health continuum
- **Describe** common experiences such as stress, anxiety, and loneliness, and what affects young people
- **Recognise** signs of stress, anxiety, and isolation in behaviour and participation
- **Interpret** behaviour as a reflection of underlying experiences, not just visible actions.
- **Distinguish** between the role of the facilitator and situations that require additional or external support
- **Demonstrate** a supportive and non-judgmental attitude when working with young people

Theoretical introduction

1.1 What is Mental Well-being?



Children and young people have varying mental health and well-being levels. Some feel confident and able to cope, while others face stress, anxiety, loneliness, or emotional distress. UNICEF notes that about 1 in 10 experience a mental health condition, but many lack support. The WHO defines mental health as a state enabling people to handle stress, realise abilities, learn, work, and contribute. It is influenced by personal experiences, family, community, poverty, violence, disability, inequality, and access to care.

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For youth workers, coaches, educators, and facilitators, this means that mental health should be understood as part of everyday practice.

Young people bring their emotions, pressures, relationships, and personal experiences into sport and youth activities. These experiences can affect how they participate, communicate, respond to feedback, manage mistakes, and connect with others.

This module, therefore, uses a practical and supportive understanding of mental health. It does not ask facilitators to diagnose or provide therapy.

What this means for you: Your role is not to diagnose or provide therapy. Your role is to notice, support, adapt and signpost.

1.2 Mental Health as a Continuum

Mental health is not fixed. Young people move between different states depending on their experiences and how supported they feel.

WELL-BEING → COPING → STRUGGLING → DISTRESS → CRISIS

At one end, a young person may feel confident, engaged, and connected. At other times, they may feel overwhelmed, withdrawn, or unable to cope. Movement along this continuum is normal, especially during adolescence.

Doing well	Coping	Struggling	Needs support
Feels connected, motivated, and able to join in.	Has stress or worries but can manage with support.	Finds it harder to participate, connect, or regulate emotions.	Distress is intense, ongoing, unsafe, or affects daily life.

What this means for you: Focus on noticing changes over time, rather than labelling behaviour.

1.3 What Affects Young People's Mental Well-being

Young people today face a range of pressures that can influence how they feel and behave. These pressures often interact with each other rather than appearing in isolation. Common influencing factors include:

- **school and performance pressure**, including exams and expectations
- **peer relationships**, including belonging, acceptance, or exclusion
- **family context**, including support, conflict, or instability
- **social media and comparison**, which can affect self-image and confidence
- **uncertainty about the future**, especially related to education and work

What this means for you: Behaviour in sessions is often influenced by experiences outside the activity.

1.4 Common Mental Health Experiences

Youth workers do not diagnose conditions, but they need to recognise common experiences that affect participation and behaviour.

Stress a response to pressure or demand. It is common in situations where young people feel evaluated or expected to perform.

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What it can feel like	Possible underlying experiences	What you may notice in sport
too much pressure, too many demands, not enough control.	school, exams, family problems, money worries, social media, conflict, and performance pressure.	frustration, tiredness, giving up quickly, reacting strongly to mistakes, and difficulty concentrating.

In practice: A strong behaviour during a game may reflect pressure, not just competitiveness.

Anxiety involves ongoing worry or fear, often linked to judgment or failure. It can reduce willingness to participate.

What it can feel like	Possible underlying experiences	What you may notice in sport
worry, fear, nervousness, tension, or feeling judged.	new groups, competition, body image, fear of failure, social pressure, uncertainty.	avoiding participation, freezing, repeated reassurance, reluctance to join teams and fear of making mistakes.

In practice: Low participation may reflect fear, not lack of interest.

Loneliness is the feeling of being disconnected from others, even in group settings. It is often less visible.

What it can feel like	Possible underlying experiences	What you may notice in sport
being unseen, disconnected, excluded, or without meaningful support.	bullying, exclusion, moving to a new place, language barriers, discrimination, and lack of trusted relationships.	staying apart, not choosing partners, low interaction, withdrawing after activities, being present but not connected.

In practice: Being present does not always mean feeling included.

All these experiences can appear at different points along the mental health continuum and may change depending on context and support.

1.5 Behaviour as a Reflection of Experience

In group settings, behaviour is often the most visible sign of what a young person is experiencing internally. However, behaviour can be easily misunderstood if it is viewed only at the surface level. Instead of reacting immediately, it is useful to consider what might be behind the behaviour.

BEHAVIOUR → POSSIBLE EXPERIENCE → FACILITATOR AWARENESS

What we see	What might be underneath
Refuses to join	Anxiety, embarrassment, fear of failure, or low confidence
Withdraws from the group	Anxiety, low confidence, sadness, feeling excluded, or not feeling safe to participate
Gets angry during a game	Frustration, pressure, shame, or feeling unsafe
Becomes aggressive	Feeling threatened, unsafe, overwhelmed, or unable to express frustration
Becomes over-competitive	Fear of failure, need for control, pressure to prove themselves
Shows low effort	Fear of judgment, low motivation, lack of belonging, or not feeling good enough

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Jokes all the time	Discomfort, insecurity, need for attention, or avoiding difficult feelings
Stays silent	Low confidence, language barrier, sadness, or fear of saying the wrong thing
Leaves the activity suddenly	Overwhelm, sensory overload, conflict, feeling unsafe, or needing space to regulate

A HELPFUL QUESTION IS: "WHAT MIGHT THIS YOUNG PERSON NEED IN ORDER TO FEEL SAFER, INCLUDED, AND SUPPORTED?"

What this means for you: Behaviour is not just something to manage; it is something to understand.

Understanding behaviour in this way supports more inclusive, supportive, and effective facilitation.

1.6 Sport as a Relational and Preventive Environment

Sport creates opportunities for interaction, challenge, and shared experiences that can influence young people's mental well-being. It brings young people together, encourages peer interaction, and creates shared moments. These experiences can shape how participants feel, engage, and relate to others within the activity. However, the impact of sport is not automatic; it also depends on how each individual experiences the activity.

SPORT ACTIVITY → EXPERIENCE → FACILITATION → REFLECTION → OUTCOME

- the activity creates the situation
- the experience differs between participants
- facilitation influences how participants feel and engage
- reflection supports meaning-making and awareness

Sport can support…	When the facilitator creates…
Belonging	inclusive teams and shared roles
Confidence	achievable challenges and encouragement
Stress relief	movement, play, and emotional release
Connection	cooperation, trust, and peer support
Emotional regulation	reflection after pressure, mistakes, and success
Resilience	safe opportunities to try again

What this means for you: Sport supports well-being when it creates positive experiences and connections, not just activity.

1.7 The Role and Limits of the Facilitator

Facilitators play an important role in shaping the environment and experience of young people. They are often in a position to notice changes in behaviour and provide support through their presence and approach.

Do's	Dont's
• **Notice** changes in behaviour, mood, participation, or connection. • **Listen** calmly and without judgment. • **Adapt** activities so young people can participate safely.	• Diagnose. • Provide therapy or counselling. • Force a young person to talk. • Promise secrecy if safety is at risk. • Ignore signs of harm or serious distress.

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• **Encourage** peer connection and belonging. • **Use** supportive, non-clinical language. • **Signpost** to trusted adults, safeguarding leads, or support services when needed.	• Handle serious concerns alone.

What this means for you: Your role is to support and observe, not to replace professional support.

1.8 Basic Safeguarding Boundaries

When working with young people, it is important to recognise when a situation may require additional attention or support. Basic safeguarding awareness includes:

- noticing significant or sudden changes in behaviour
- recognising when a young person may be struggling beyond the session context
- understanding the importance of not ignoring concerning signs

Facilitators are not expected to solve these situations, but they should be aware that some cases require referral or support from appropriate services.

What this means for you: When in doubt, it is important to seek guidance rather than manage the situation alone.

Key messages for practitioners

- Mental health is present in every session and is influenced by how activities are delivered
- Behaviour is often a signal of underlying experience, not just something to manage
- Sport can support or harm well-being depending on facilitation
- Small actions such as inclusion, tone, and feedback have a strong impact

Lesson plan

Lesson plan field	Draft content
Lesson/session title	Understanding Youth Mental Well-being in Sport Settings
Module link	Module 1 – Understanding Youth Mental Well-being in Sport Settings
Target group	Youth workers, coaches, educators, trainers, and organisations working with young people (16+)
Duration	115 minutes *(The session can be shortened by reducing the number of scenarios in Activities 2 and 3.)*
Setting	Indoor or outdoor sport space
Group size	12-24 participants. The session can be adapted for smaller groups of 6-10 or larger groups by creating more teams/stations.
Aim of the session	To help participants understand youth mental well-being in sport settings, recognise that behaviour may reflect underlying experiences, and clarify the facilitator's role and boundaries when supporting young people.
Learning objectives	By the end of the session, participants will be able to: • Explain mental well-being as a continuum that can change over time.

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	• Identify how stressors and influencing factors can affect behaviour and participation in sport settings. • Interpret behaviour as a possible reflection of underlying experiences, rather than only visible actions. • Distinguish between what is within the facilitator's role and when additional support may be needed.
Materials needed & Handouts	Balls or simple sport equipment, Cones, Zone signs (Doing well, Coping, Struggling, Needs support), Flipchart or whiteboard, Markers, Scenario cards
Preparation notes	• Review all activity instructions in advance • Prepare and print all scenario cards in advance • Set up space (safe, inclusive, no hazards) • Prepare four-zone layout (Activity 1) and three decision zones (Activity 3) • Prepare key concepts "mental well-being" and "behaviour as communication" • Review safeguarding considerations before the session • Remind yourself that the session is educational and reflective, not therapeutic.
Warm-up/opening	**Step 1 – Welcome & framing (5 min):** • Introduce the session purpose and set group agreement and expectations: ○ participation over performance ○ safe and respectful space/ right to step out if needed ○ sharing is optional **Step 2 – Light energiser (5 min)** Simple movement activity, such as walking passes, name-and-pass, or a simple circle ball.
Main activity 95 minutes	**Part 1 – Four-Zone Team Challenge (25 minutes)** Run the four-zone activity to introduce the mental health continuum. Participants complete a simple sport task, place themselves in one of the four zones, repeat the task with one small change, and reflect on how experiences may shift. **Part 2 – Freeze the Game: What Is Underneath? (35 minutes)** Participants work in small groups with sport-based scenario cards. Each group prepares a 10-second sport scene ending in a freeze-frame. Observers describe what they see, then discuss what might be underneath the behaviour before the hidden context is revealed. **Part 3: Sideline Decisions: What Is My Role? (35 minutes)** Participants use the three decision zones to discuss short sport-based scenarios. They decide whether the situation fits "Support within the session," "Adapt the activity," or "Seek additional support," and explain what may be within or outside the facilitator's role.
Reflection / debrief 10 minutes	• What is one key idea you are taking from today's session? • What did the activities help you understand about mental well-being, behaviour, and the role of the facilitator?

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	• What has become clearer to you about your role as a facilitator? • What is one thing you will pay more attention to in your own sport or youth work sessions?
Adaptation options	• **For time constraints:** reduce the number of scenarios in Activities 2 and 3 • **For limited space:** adapt activities to low-movement formats • **For smaller groups:** run activities in one group instead of subgroups • **For large groups:** create stations and rotate participants through each activity. • **For sensitive groups:** make personal sharing optional • **For mixed groups:** adjust the complexity of scenarios • **For lower-confidence participants:** reduce competition and focus on cooperation • **For multilingual groups:** demonstrate activities physically and use simple written signs. • **For low-mobility groups:** use seated passing, target throwing, role-play or discussion-based scenario work. • **For participants with lower confidence or limited sport experience:** reduce the performance element and emphasise participation, observation, and reflection. • **For participants who may feel uncomfortable acting or being observed:** allow observer, narrator, or group spokesperson roles
Safeguarding note	This session may raise awareness of stress, anxiety, loneliness, exclusion, or distress. Facilitator should: • Allow participants to step out at any time • Avoid exposing individuals or labelling behaviour • Monitor behaviour closely If distress appears: • allow participant to pause or step out, • check in calmly if appropriate, and • follow the organisation's safeguarding or support procedures. Serious concerns should not be managed alone.
Evaluation prompt	At the end of the session, ask participants to complete a short reflection • One thing I understood better • One behaviour I will look at differently • One thing I need more confidence or guidance on

Activity cards

Activity card 1	Content
Activity title	Four-Zone Team Challenge
Purpose	To help participants understand that mental well-being is not fixed and can change over time. The activity introduces the mental health continuum by showing that individuals may experience the same activity differently and move between different well-being zones.

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Module link	Module 1 – Understanding Youth Mental Well-being in Sport Settings/ **Competency focus:** basic mental health literacy in youth contexts
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers from 16 y.o. and above.
Duration	25–30 minutes
Materials	Ball or simple sport equipment, Cones, Four zone signs (Doing well, Coping, Struggling, Needs support), Open space
Instructions	**Step 1 – Set-up (5 minutes)** Create four zones in the sports space using cones. Label them: "Doing well," "Coping," "Struggling," and "Needs support." Explain to participants that mental health is not fixed. Young people may move along the continuum depending on what they are experiencing and how supported they feel. Divide learners into small teams (4-5 people) and introduce a **simple, low-skill sport activity**. For example, passing a ball 10 times without dropping it, a 3 vs 3 mini-game, or completing a relay with the ball. Tell participants that this is a simple activity. The goal is not to win, but to take part and observe how you experience it. Clarify that **everyone must be involved, that no one is judged on performance,** and that **mistakes are allowed.** **Step 2 – Round 1: Standard experience (5–7 minutes)** Run the activity **without any modification**. Tell participants to **play as they normally would** and pay attention to how **they feel,** how **they participate,** and how **others engage**. **Facilitator observes for:** • who is active vs passive • who takes initiative • group interaction (support/competition/exclusion) • behaviour (e.g. frustration, enjoyment, hesitation) ! Do NOT intervene unless necessary. **Step 3 – Round 2: Zone placement after Round 1 (8–10 minutes)** Pause the activity and ask participants to place themselves in one of the four zones based on how the activity felt. Invite a few participants to briefly share how it felt (no need to explain why). Sharing is optional. **Step 4 – Round 2: One small change to the activity (5–7 minutes)** Run the same activity again, but introduce one clear and simple change. Choose one of the following options depending on your group and context. **Possible variations (choose one):**

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	• **Time pressure:** "You now have 20 seconds to complete the task." • **Participation rule:** "Everyone must touch the ball before completing the task." • **Limited movement:** "Players can only move one step from their position." • **Reduced communication:** "You are not allowed to speak during the activity." • **Light competition:** "Try to complete the task faster than another team." Restart the activity and observe participants' behaviour as before. After a few minutes, bring the activity to a natural stop. **Step 5 – Zone placement (2–3 minutes)** Ask participants to take a moment to think about where they would place themselves now and then move there. **Step 6 – Reflection and closure (5–7 minutes)** Guide a short discussion, using the debriefing questions below.
Debrief questions	**1. Observation (What happened?)** • What differences did you notice between the two rounds? • Did anyone move between zones? **2. Experience (How was it lived?)** • How did the activity feel for you in each round? • Did everyone experience the activity in the same way? **3. Understanding (What does it mean?)** • What do the four zones represent? • What did the four zones help you understand about mental health? • Why is mental health better understood as a continuum rather than "good" or "bad"? • Can people move between these zones over time? **4. Transfer (Real-life connection)** • Why is it important to see mental well-being as something that can change? • Which of these zones could relate to experiences like stress, anxiety, or feeling isolated?
Adaptations	• **For younger participants:** use simpler zone labels (e.g. feeling good/okay/finding it hard/need help) • **For low-mobility groups:** use seated passing, target throwing, or a cooperative hand-eye coordination task. • **For large groups:** run several teams at the same time and ask each team to place a cone or object in the chosen zone. • **For limited equipment:** use paper balls, cones, water bottles, or any safe object for passing • **For sensitive groups:** keep sharing optional and avoid personal examples. Also, if participants are not comfortable responding individually, they can decide their zone as a group.

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Activity card 2	Content
Activity title	Freeze the Game: What Is Underneath?
Purpose	To help participants understand that behaviour in sport settings may reflect underlying experiences, not only visible actions, and to explore how stressors and influencing factors can shape participation and interaction.
Module link	Module 1 – Understanding Youth Mental Well-being in Sport Settings **Competency focus:** understanding of key stressors and influencing factors
Target age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers from 16 y.o. and above.
Duration	35–45 minutes
Materials	Open space, cones, simple sport equipment (ball, bibs), printed or written scenario cards, flipchart or whiteboard, markers
Instructions	**Step 1 – Set-up (5 minutes)** Divide participants into small groups (4–5 people) and explain to them that in this activity, they will observe short sport situations and explore what might be behind the behaviour they see. **Clarify:** • focus is on observation and understanding • there are no right or wrong answers • avoid jumping to conclusions **Step 2 – Scenario preparation (10 minutes)** Give each group one scenario card. Each card includes a **sports situation**, **visible behaviour**, and **hidden context**. (Activity Card 2: Scenario Cards) The group should show the sports situation and visible behaviour, but should not reveal the hidden context until after the observers have discussed. Ask each group to prepare a **10-second sport scene that ends in a freeze-frame.** The scene should be realistic and easy to recognise. **Step 3 – Observation (10–15 minutes)** Each group presents its 10-second sport scene and freezes at the key moment. Observers first describe only what they see: “What is happening?” Encourage: • clear, factual observation • no interpretation yet **Step 4 – Interpretation (10 minutes)** Then ask observers: “What might be underneath this behaviour?” Encourage several possible underlying experiences. **There should not be only one correct answer.** Examples may include pressure, fear of making mistakes, feeling excluded, tiredness, social comparison, language barriers, and lack of confidence.

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	Then ask the presenting group to reveal the hidden context on their card. Compare it with what was **observed, assumed** and what **was actually behind it.** **Step 5 – Reflection and closure (5–7 minutes)** Write two columns on a flipchart:| What we see | What might be underneath | Repeat with each group and capture examples on a flipchart. Close by reinforcing the key message that the same behaviour can have different underlying experiences. If we assume too quickly, we may misunderstand the young person.
Debrief questions	**1. Observation (What happened?)** • What behaviours did you notice? • Which behaviours were easiest to notice? Which were easier to miss? **2. Experience (How was it lived?)** • How did it feel to observe without knowing the full context? • Did different people see different things in the same situation? **3. Interpretation (What does it mean?)** • What underlying experiences might be influencing these behaviours? • How many different explanations could there be for the same behaviour? • Why is it important not to assume a single explanation? • Why can it be risky to assume that behaviours such as low effort, aggression, or withdrawal are simply "bad behaviour"? **4. Transfer (Real-life connection)** • How might similar situations appear in real sport sessions? • What stressors or influencing factors might young people bring into sport sessions? • How can the sports environment make these behaviours better or worse? • What should the facilitator keep in mind when observing behaviour?
Adaptations	• **For younger participants:** use fewer scenarios and simpler words (e.g. quiet, active, upset, trying too hard, giving up, left out) instead of complex scenarios • **For more active delivery:** ask groups to perform the full 10-second scene twice, once normally and once in slow motion. • **For low-mobility groups:** use seated role-play or discussion-based scenarios • **For large groups:** give two groups the same visible behaviour but different hidden contexts to show that the same behaviour can have different meanings. • **For limited equipment:** no equipment needed, use body language and positioning • **For sensitive groups:** remind learners not to analyse real participants personally. Use neutral language such as "this behaviour might suggest…" instead of "this person is…"

Activity card 3	Content
Activity title	Sideline Decisions: What Is My Role?

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Purpose	To help learners understand the role and limits of the facilitator in sport settings. The activity supports participants in deciding what is within their role, when to adapt their approach, and when additional support or referral may be needed.
Module link	Module 1 – Understanding Youth Mental Well-being in Sport Settings **Competency focus:** awareness of the facilitator role and professional boundaries
Target age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers from 16 years old and above.
Duration	35–45 minutes
Materials	Cones or printed signs for three zones labelled "Support within the session", "Adapt the activity", "Seek additional support", Scenario cards, flipchart or whiteboard, markers
Instructions	**Step 1 – Set-up (5 minutes)** Set up three clearly marked zones in the space: "**Support within the session**", "**Adapt the activity**" **and** "**Seek additional support**". Explain that facilitators often need to make timely and appropriate decisions during sport sessions. There is not always one correct answer, and the focus should be on making **appropriate and safe decisions.** **Step 2 – Scenario work (10–15 minutes)** Divide participants into small groups (4–5 people). Give each group a sport-based scenario card. Each card describes something a facilitator might notice during a session. (Activity Card 3: Scenario Cards) Ask groups to read the scenario, discuss what may be within or outside the facilitator's role, and choose one of the three zones. **Step 3 – Decision and positioning (10–15 minutes)** Ask each group to move to the zone that represents their decision. Explain that some scenarios may fit more than one zone and that decisions may change depending on context, repetition, and safety. Ask each group to explain: • why they chose this zone • what may be within the facilitator's role • what may be outside the facilitator's role • and what factors could change the decision Encourage discussion if different groups choose different zones. Emphasise that the aim is not to find a single perfect answer, but to practise role awareness and sound judgement. **Step 4 – Role clarification (5–7 minutes)** On a flipchart, create two columns: | Within my role | Outside my role |

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	Ask participants to suggest what is within and what is outside their control. Guide the discussion to highlight the facilitator's role boundaries, including what they can notice, support, adapt, and when they should seek guidance. **Step 5 – Reflection and closure (5–7 minutes)** Summarise the key message. Facilitators play an important role in creating safe and supportive environments, but they are not responsible for resolving every situation on their own.
Debrief questions	**1. Observation (What happened?)** • What types of situations were discussed? • Were there differences in how groups responded? **2. Experience (How was it lived?)** • How did it feel to make decisions about these situations? • Did any situations feel uncertain or difficult? Which ones? **3. Interpretation (What does it mean?)** • What is the role of the facilitator in these situations? • Which situations felt clearly within the facilitator's role? • What are the limits of that role? • Why is it important not to diagnose or try to solve everything alone? • What factors might change your decision (e.g. repetition, intensity, safety, or context)? **4. Transfer (Real-life connection)** • How might these situations appear in your own practice? • What would you do differently after this activity? • When is it important to involve others or seek additional support? • What should a facilitator avoid assuming when a young person appears distressed or disengaged?
Adaptations	• **For younger participants:** simplify scenarios and focus on basic support decisions • **For more active delivery:** ask each group to act out the sport moment for 10 seconds before choosing a decision zone. • **For low-mobility groups:** conduct the activity through seated discussion • **For large groups:** place scenarios at stations and ask groups to rotate through, choosing a zone for each. • **For limited equipment:** use printed cards or read scenarios aloud • **For sensitive groups:** remind participants not to share personal stories unless they choose to. Keep the focus on professional judgement and safe practice.

Activity Card 2: Scenario Cards

Scenario 1: Withdrawal during passing

- Sport situation: The group is doing a football or handball passing drill.
- Visible behaviour: One young person stands slightly outside the circle, avoids asking for the ball, and looks down when the ball comes near.

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- Hidden context: They are new to the group and are worried others will laugh if they make a mistake.

Scenario 2: Aggression after a mistake

- Sport situation: A young person loses the ball during a small-sided game.
- Visible behaviour: They shout, blame a teammate, and kick or throw the ball away.
- Hidden context: They feel embarrassed and unsafe because others often criticise them when they make mistakes.

Scenario 3: Over-competitiveness

- Sport situation: The team is playing a target game where everyone should take turns.
- Visible behaviour: One young person takes over, demands the ball, ignores others, and gets angry when the team does not win.
- Hidden context: They are afraid of failing and feel they must prove they are good enough.

Scenario 4: Low effort in a relay

- Sport situation: The group is doing a simple relay race.
- Visible behaviour: One young person moves slowly, says "I don't care," and avoids trying fully.
- Hidden context: They are afraid of being judged, so they pretend not to care before anyone can say they failed.

Scenario 5: Joking during a demonstration

- Sport situation: The facilitator asks someone to demonstrate a movement or skill.
- Visible behaviour: The young person jokes, exaggerates the movement, and tries to make others laugh.
- Hidden context: They feel uncomfortable being watched and are using humour to hide insecurity.

Scenario 6: Silence during team selection

- Sport situation: Teams are being formed for a group challenge.
- Visible behaviour: One young person stays quiet, does not choose a partner, and waits to be placed somewhere.
- Hidden context: They feel excluded and are unsure whether anyone wants them in the group.

Activity Card 3: Scenario Cards

Scenario 1: Low confidence
A young person avoids receiving the ball and says, "I'm bad at this."

Scenario 2: Exclusion
During a team game, one young person is repeatedly left out, and no one passes to them.

Scenario 3: Frustration
A young person becomes angry after a mistake, shouts, and refuses to continue.

Scenario 4: Withdrawal
A young person who usually participates sits alone and does not want to join the activity.

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Scenario 5: Concerning comment
A young person says, “Nothing matters anymore,” and walks away from the activity.

Scenario 6: Repeated distress
Over several sessions, a young person appears tired, isolated, and less engaged than usual.

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Module 2. Creating psychologically safe and inclusive sport spaces

Module snapshot

Field	Draft guidance
Module purpose	This module helps youth workers, coaches and sports professionals create sport activities where young people feel safe, welcome and able to take part. It focuses on common barriers such as low confidence, fear of judgement, mixed abilities, language needs, limited access, exclusion and stigma. It also explains when to use competitive, cooperative, non-competitive and low-pressure activities.
Competency focus	• Inclusive facilitation and group safety • Recognising and reducing barriers to participation • Adapting activities for different abilities and needs • Choosing suitable competitive, cooperative and low-pressure approaches
Main target users	Youth workers / coaches / sports professionals / educators / trainers / volunteers
Core delivery settings	Sports clubs / schools / NGOs / youth centres / community and grassroots sport settings
Suggested methods & tools	Short input, group discussion, observation exercises, cooperative and low-pressure sport activities, and guided reflection

Learning objectives

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- **Create** welcoming, safe and non-judgmental activity environments.
- **Identify** barriers that may prevent young people from taking part.
- **Adapt** sport activities for different abilities, confidence levels and participation needs.
- **Use** competitive, cooperative, non-competitive and low-pressure approaches when appropriate.

Theoretical introduction

2.1 Psychological Safety, Inclusion and Belonging

Sport can support confidence, connection and well-being. However, these benefits do not happen automatically. The same activity may feel enjoyable to one young person and stressful or excluding to another.

Psychological safety means that participants feel able to join, make mistakes, ask questions and ask for support without fear of embarrassment or unfair judgement.

Psychological safety does not mean removing all challenge or competition. It means keeping the activity respectful, manageable and suitable for the group.

Inclusion means more than being present. Young people should feel accepted and have a meaningful way to take part.

Fair participation does not always mean that everyone completes the same task in the same way. Some participants may need a different role, level of challenge or way of contributing.

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For example, a participant with limited mobility may contribute through passing, scoring, decision-making or team strategy.

Confidence-sensitive and trauma-sensitive basics	
• Explain clearly what will happen. • Give participants choices where possible. • Offer different ways to take part. • Allow participants to pause, pass or step out. • Use calm, clear and respectful language.	• Do not force personal sharing. • Avoid public comparison or embarrassment.

What this means for you: An activity is inclusive when young people can take part with dignity, feel accepted and make mistakes without embarrassment.

2.2 Barriers to Meaningful Participation

Young people may face different barriers before or during an activity. Some barriers are easy to see, while others are less visible.

These barriers may especially affect young people with fewer opportunities, including those facing disability, financial difficulties, language barriers, discrimination, social exclusion or stigma linked to mental health, identity or ability.

Barrier	Examples
Access	Cost, transport, timing, inaccessible spaces or lack of equipment
Physical participation	Disability, injury, tiredness, mixed abilities or limited sport experience
Communication	Language differences, unclear instructions or difficult words
Confidence and emotions	Fear of judgement, anxiety, low confidence or negative past experiences
Group environment	Bullying, discrimination, fixed groups, exclusion or domination
Activity design	Elimination, public ranking, long waiting or only one way to succeed

Low participation does not always mean that a young person is not interested. They may not understand the instructions, may fear making a mistake or may not feel accepted by the group.

Barriers can also come from the rules, the space, the activity or the group culture. The aim is to improve the conditions for participation rather than expect the young person to manage every barrier alone.

Notice during the activity:

1. Who joins easily?
2. Who stays outside the main group?
3. Who controls most of the activity?
4. What creates pressure or uncertainty?
5. Does everyone have a meaningful way to contribute?

What this means for you: Instead of asking why a young person is not taking part, consider what may be making participation difficult.

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2.3 Balancing Challenge, Competition, Cooperation and Choice

Competition can be enjoyable and motivating. It can support effort, focus and teamwork. However, it may become unhelpful when winning is the only important result.

Competition can reduce inclusion when:

- mistakes lead to embarrassment;
- participants are publicly compared;
- the same young people always dominate;
- less experienced participants remain inactive;
- elimination keeps participants outside the activity;
- young people feel forced to compete.

The MindFit approach does not remove competition. It balances competition with cooperation, choice and reflection.

Non-competitive and low-pressure activities are useful when competition may increase fear of judgement, make skill differences more visible or stop some participants from taking part.

Facilitators can:

- recognise effort, teamwork and progress, not only scores;
- combine competitive and cooperative activities;
- offer different roles or levels of challenge;
- rotate responsibilities;
- avoid long elimination periods;
- allow participants to pause, pass or contribute differently;
- use shared team goals.

The facilitator should observe how the activity affects the group. When pressure, exclusion or domination appears, the activity should be paused, explained again or adjusted.

What this means for you: The aim is not to remove competition. The aim is to prevent challenge from becoming embarrassment, domination or exclusion.

Key messages for practitioners

- Inclusion means every participant has a meaningful way to take part.
- Low participation may signal a barrier, not a lack of interest.
- Competition should not create pressure, embarrassment or exclusion.
- Small changes to rules, roles or communication can improve participation.

Lesson plan

Lesson plan field	Draft content
Lesson/session title	Creating Psychologically Safe and Inclusive Sport Spaces
Module link	Module 2 – Creating Psychologically Safe and Inclusive Sport Spaces

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Lesson plan field	Draft content
Target group	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	120 minutes. A shorter version can use two barrier stations and two activity formats.
Setting	Indoor or outdoor sport space
Group size	12–24 participants
Aim of the session	To help participants create safe and inclusive sport activities by using choice, reducing barriers and choosing suitable activity formats.
Learning objectives	By the end of the session, participants will be able to: • Create welcoming and psychologically safe sport environments. • Identify and reduce barriers to participation. • Adapt activities for different abilities, confidence levels and needs. • Choose suitable competitive, cooperative and low-pressure formats.
Materials needed & Handouts	Balls, cones, targets or bibs, paper and markers, station signs, 1–5 rating cards and Module 2 Activity Cards 1–3.
Preparation notes	• Set up the activity areas and check that the space and equipment are safe and accessible. • Review the activity cards and the organisation's safeguarding procedure. • Do not simulate disability or distress, or require personal sharing.
Warm-up/opening	**Welcome and warm-up (10 minutes)** Introduce the session and agree on respect, participation over performance, and the right to pause or change role. Run a simple passing or movement task with two or three ways to take part.
Main activity	**100 minutes total** **Part 1 – Reset and Rejoin (30 minutes)** Run Activity Card 1. Participants complete a cooperative challenge, use the Reset Zone and practise Pause – Offer – Rejoin. Link the experience to choice, confidence and psychological safety. **Part 2 – Remove the Barrier (35 minutes)** Run Activity Card 2. Participants play barrier stations, identify what reduces participation, make one change and test the new version. Link the experience to inclusive activity design. **Part 3 – Three Ways to Play (35 minutes)** Run Activity Card 3. Participants compare competitive, cooperative and personal-challenge formats, rate pressure and participation, and add one inclusion rule. Link the experience to choosing a format that fits the group and purpose.
Reflection / debrief	**Final debrief (10 minutes)** • What helped people feel safe and able to take part? • What barriers did you notice? • Which change improved participation the most? • What will you use in your own sessions?

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Lesson plan field	Draft content
Adaptation options	• Limited time: Use two barrier stations and two activity formats. • Small or large groups: Work as one group or create duplicate stations. • Limited space, equipment or mobility: Use seated passing, target tasks or simple improvised materials. • Language, confidence or sensitivity needs: Demonstrate tasks, use short instructions, begin cooperatively and keep sharing optional.
Safeguarding note	Allow participants to pause, pass or step out. Avoid public embarrassment, labels and forced sharing. Intervene if bullying, discrimination or unsafe behaviour appears, and follow the organisation's safeguarding procedure.
Evaluation prompt	Ask participants to complete three prompts: • One thing I learned. • One change I will try. • One area where I need more practice.

Activity cards

Activity card 1	Content
Activity title	**Reset and rejoin**
Purpose	To help participants experience how choice, clear instructions and a safe way to pause can support confidence and psychological safety during sport.
Module link	Module 2 – Creating Psychologically Safe and Inclusive Sport Spaces **Competency focus:** Group safety, inclusive facilitation and confidence-sensitive practice
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	30–35 minutes
Materials	Balls or other safe passing equipment, cones, one sign marked RESET ZONE
Instructions	**Step 1 – Prepare the activity and explain the reset option (5 minutes)** Set up a simple cooperative passing challenge. Mark one area as the Reset Zone. • the group will work towards a shared target • mistakes are normal • anyone may pause, change role or use the Reset Zone • nobody needs to explain why they need a pause • participants may return when they feel ready. Introduce the three actions: **Pause – Offer – Rejoin** • **Pause:** Reduce or stop the pressure. • **Offer:** Give simple choices. • **Rejoin:** Allow the person to return in a comfortable way. **Step 2 – Run the first challenge (5 minutes)**

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Activity card 1	Content
	Ask the group to complete a simple task, such as making 15 passes without dropping the ball, moving the ball through three gates or ensuring every participant receives the ball. Keep the focus on cooperation, not speed. **Step 3 – Add a manageable challenge (5 minutes)** Add one small change, for example, introduce a second ball, reduce the playing space, change the passing order, or add a simple time target. Remind participants that they can use the Reset Zone, change roles or ask for the challenge to be reduced. Do not deliberately create confusion, embarrassment or distress. **Step 4 – Practise Pause – Offer – Rejoin (7 minutes)** When a participant chooses to pause, or when the facilitator pauses the activity for practice, ask the group to use the three actions. Possible offers include taking a short break, observing for one round, moving to a different role, using an easier distance or returning without the time target. The participant chooses the option. The group continues without drawing unnecessary attention to them. **Step 5 – Repeat the challenge (5 minutes)** Run the task again. Ask participants to notice whether having these choices changed how they experienced the activity (confidence, willingness to try, fear of mistakes, group support and participation).
Debrief questions	• What increased pressure during the activity? • What helped you stay involved? • How did having the option to pause or change role affect your experience? • What can a facilitator offer when someone appears overwhelmed? • How can Pause – Offer – Rejoin be used in your own sessions?
Adaptations	• **For younger groups:** Use the words Stop – Choose – Return. • **For low-mobility groups:** Use seated passing, target throwing or rolling activities. • **For limited space:** Use a circle-passing or tabletop coordination challenge. • **For large groups:** Run the activity in smaller teams, each with its own Reset Zone. • **For sensitive groups:** Do not ask participants to act distressed or share personal experiences. • **For experienced sports groups:** Keep the physical challenge higher, but maintain choice and the right to pause.

Activity card 2	Content
Activity title	**Remove the Barrier**
Purpose	To help participants recognise how sport rules, instructions and group roles can create barriers, and to practise making activities more inclusive.
Module link	Module 2 – Creating Psychologically Safe and Inclusive Sport Spaces **Competency focus:** Recognising participation barriers and adapting activities for mixed groups
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	35–40 minutes

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<table>
<tr><th>Activity card 2</th><th>Content</th></tr>
<tr><td>Materials</td><td>Balls, cones, targets, bibs or other simple sport equipment; four station signs; paper and markers</td></tr>
<tr><td>Instructions</td><td>
Step 1 – Prepare four sport stations
Set up four short tasks. Each task should contain one common participation barrier.
<table>
<tr><th>Station</th><th>Sport task</th><th>Barrier</th></tr>
<tr><td>1. Target Knockout</td><td>Participants throw at a target</td><td>A participant leaves the activity after missing</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. Fastest Team Wins</td><td>Short relay or movement task</td><td>Only speed is rewarded</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. Follow the Instructions</td><td>Passing pattern</td><td>Instructions are long and only spoken</td></tr>
<tr><td>4. Captain’s Game</td><td>Small team possession game</td><td>One person makes all decisions and roles do not change</td></tr>
</table>
The barriers should come from the activity design. Do not ask anyone to imitate a disability, language difficulty or personal problem.

Step 2 – Play the first version (10–12 minutes)
Divide participants into small groups. Groups rotate through the four stations and play each task for approximately two minutes. Ask participants to notice who joins easily, who waits or becomes inactive, who controls the activity, and what makes participation difficult. Do not discuss the barriers yet.

Step 3 – Scan the barriers (7 minutes)
After the rotation, assign each group one station. Ask the participants what the barrier was, who might find this activity difficult, whether the barrier came from the person or from the activity, and what the effect on participation was.
Groups identify the main barriers: access, physical participation, communication, confidence and emotions, group environment and activity design.

Step 4 – Change the activity (8 minutes)
Each group makes one or two practical changes, e.g. remove elimination, allow immediate re-entry, offer different distances, rotate the captain, offer more than one role. The activity should remain active and keep its main purpose.

Step 5 – Test the new version (7 minutes)
Groups play the adapted station. Ask participants to observe:
• Did more people have a meaningful role?
• Did the activity remain enjoyable?
• Was the challenge still present?
• Did the change support the whole group?
</td></tr>
</table>

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Activity card 2	Content
Debrief questions	• Which barriers were easiest and hardest to notice? • How can rules or instructions reduce participation? • Why should low participation not automatically be seen as low motivation? • Which small change improved participation the most while keeping the activity's purpose? • What barrier appears most often in your own setting, and what could you change first?
Adaptations	• **For limited time:** Use two stations instead of four. • **For younger groups:** Use simple labels: rules, people, words, equipment. • **For low-mobility groups:** Use seated target games, rolling, throwing or tabletop tasks. • **For limited equipment:** Use paper balls, bottles, chairs or floor markings. • **For large groups:** Create duplicate stations. • **For experienced facilitators:** Ask groups to address two barriers at the same time. • **For sensitive groups:** Discuss the activity design, not real participants or personal difficulties.

Activity card 3	Content
Activity title	**Three Ways to Play**
Purpose	To help participants experience how competitive, cooperative and personal-challenge formats affect pressure, confidence and participation.
Module link	Module 2 – Creating Psychologically Safe and Inclusive Sport Spaces **Competency focus:** Choosing suitable competitive, cooperative, non-competitive and low-pressure approaches
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	35–40 minutes
Materials	Balls or safe sport equipment, cones, targets, three station signs: Compete, Cooperate, Personal Challenge; pressure and participation rating cards from 1–5
Instructions	**Step 1 – Prepare three versions of one sport task (5 minutes)** Choose a simple task, such as target throwing, passing through gates, dribbling around cones or ball-control challenges. Set up three formats. **Station A – Compete:** Two teams try to achieve the highest score or finish first. **Station B – Cooperate:** The full group works towards one shared target. **Station C – Personal Challenge:** Each participant chooses a level and tries to improve their own result. Results are not compared publicly. Explain that there is no "best" format. The purpose is to notice how each one affects the experience. **Step 2 – Rotate through the formats (12 minutes)** Participants spend three to four minutes at each station. Keep the basic sport task similar so participants can compare the formats. After each round, ask participants to rate:

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Activity card 3	Content
	• **Pressure:** 1 = very low pressure; 2 = low pressure; 3 = moderate pressure; 4 = high pressure; 5 = very high pressure. • **Opportunity to participate:** 1 = very limited opportunity; 2 = limited opportunity; 3 = some opportunity; 4 = good opportunity; 5 = full opportunity to participate. Ratings relate to each participant's experience of the activity format, not to individual ability. There are no right or wrong answers. **Step 3 – Compare the experience (5 minutes)** Ask participants to discuss in pairs: • In which format did they feel most confident? • In which format did the group communicate most? • Which format created the most pressure? • Did everyone have a meaningful role? Collect a few short responses. **Step 4 – Match the format to the group (7 minutes)** Give each small group one situation: • a new group with low confidence • an experienced sports team • a mixed-ability youth group • a group where some participants fear judgement • a group experiencing tension or exclusion. Ask the group to select one suitable format, or a combination of two formats and explain their choice in one or two sentences. **Step 5 – Make competition more inclusive (7 minutes)** Each group adds one inclusion rule to the competitive format, e.g. teams gain points for cooperation, teams gain points for encouragement or fair play, participants return immediately after elimination, etc. Test one or two of the new rules briefly.
Debrief questions	• How did the three formats feel different, and which created the most pressure? • Which format gave everyone the best chance to contribute? • When can competition be positive, and when can it create fear, domination or exclusion? • Which inclusion rule improved the competitive activity the most? • Which format, or combination of formats, would you use with your target group, and why?
Adaptations	• **For limited time:** Run the competitive and cooperative formats, then explain the personal-challenge option. • **For younger groups:** Use the labels Against another team – Together – Beat your own result. • **For low-mobility groups:** Use seated passing, rolling or target activities. • **For limited space:** Use throwing, balancing or hand-coordination tasks. • **For large groups:** Run several parallel sets of stations. • **For low-confidence groups:** Begin with cooperation or personal challenge before introducing competition.

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Activity card 3	Content
	• **For sensitive groups:** Do not ask participants to publicly explain personal ratings or confidence levels.

Module 3. Using sport to build self-esteem, confidence and resilience

Module snapshot

Field	Draft guidance
Module purpose	This module helps youth workers, coaches and sports professionals use sport activities to strengthen young people's self-esteem, confidence, resilience, teamwork and sense of belonging. It focuses on achievable challenges, strengths-based facilitation, useful feedback and recognition of effort, progress and contribution.
Competency focus	• Strengths-based facilitation • Resilience-building through activity • Team-building and positive reinforcement
Main target users	Youth workers / coaches / sports professionals / educators / trainers / volunteers
Core delivery settings	Sports clubs / schools / NGOs / youth centres / community and grassroots sport settings
Suggested methods & tools	Cooperative games, progressive challenges, strengths spotting, peer feedback and guided reflection

Learning objectives

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- Distinguish between self-esteem, self-confidence, competence and belonging.
- Use sport activities to create achievable experiences of progress and contribution.
- Support resilience through manageable challenges, adaptation and repeated attempts.
- Give specific feedback that reinforces strengths, effort and learning.
- Use teamwork and peer support to strengthen confidence and belonging.

Theoretical introduction

3.1 Self-esteem, Confidence, Competence and Belonging

Sport activities can give young people opportunities to try, improve, contribute and connect with others. These experiences may support personal development, but self-esteem, confidence, competence and belonging do not mean exactly the same thing.

Concept	Practical meaning
Self-esteem	How positively a young person values and sees themselves
Self-confidence	Their belief that they can manage a particular task or situation

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Concept	Practical meaning
Competence	Feeling capable of learning, improving and using skills effectively
Belonging	Feeling accepted, connected and valued within a group

The American Psychological Association defines self-confidence as trust in one's abilities and belief in being able to meet the demands of a task. Self-determination theory identifies competence and relatedness as basic psychological needs connected to feeling effective and connected to others. UNICEF also explains that adolescents can strengthen self-esteem by recognising their strengths and achievements and understanding how they are valued by others. (APA, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2000; UNICEF, 2025)

Competence is not limited to physical ability. A young person may demonstrate competence by communicating, solving a problem, encouraging a teammate, changing strategy, asking for help or staying involved after a mistake.

A participant does not need to be the fastest or most technically skilled to make a valuable contribution. Confidence and belonging can grow when young people recognise:

- "I can learn and improve."
- "I have strengths I can use."
- "My contribution matters."
- "A mistake does not define my ability or value."

What this means for you: Help young people recognise strengths and contributions beyond winning and physical performance.

3.2 Building Confidence and Resilience Through Challenge

Sport does not automatically build confidence. Confidence is more likely to develop when young people face a challenge that requires effort but still offers a realistic possibility of progress.

CHALLENGE → EFFORT → ADAPTATION → PROGRESS → CONFIDENCE

A challenge can be adjusted through its distance, time, rules, equipment, roles or level of support. Progress may involve improving a result, but it may also mean trying a new role, communicating more effectively, remaining involved for longer or finding a better strategy.

The American Psychological Association defines resilience as the process and outcome of adapting successfully to difficult or challenging experiences through mental, emotional and behavioural flexibility. Resilience therefore does not mean never struggling, hiding disappointment or continuing at all costs. (APA, 2026)

In practice, resilience may involve:

- trying again with a different approach;
- breaking a challenge into smaller steps;
- asking for or accepting support;
- learning from an unsuccessful attempt;
- taking a pause and returning when ready.

Facilitators should not deliberately create failure or distress to "teach resilience." The learning should come from manageable challenges and naturally occurring mistakes, followed by opportunities to adjust and continue.

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What this means for you: Build resilience by helping participants identify options and next steps, not by simply increasing pressure.

3.3 Strengths-based Facilitation, Feedback and Reflection

Strengths-based facilitation directs attention towards abilities and qualities that participants already demonstrate or are beginning to develop. These may include persistence, courage to try, communication, cooperation, problem-solving, adaptability, initiative, fairness, patience and willingness to ask for or offer support.

This approach does not ignore mistakes. It treats them as information that can support learning and improvement.

Positive reinforcement means responding to useful behaviour in a way that makes it more likely to continue. In MindFit activities, reinforcement should be specific and connected to observable actions rather than based only on general praise. (APA, 2018)

General praise	Specific feedback
"Great teamwork."	"You listened to the different ideas before the team chose its strategy."
"You are talented."	"You adjusted your technique after each attempt."
"Well done."	"You continued encouraging the group when the first plan did not work."

Research by Mueller and Dweck found that children praised for effort responded more constructively to later difficulty than children praised for intelligence. Feedback should therefore focus on actions, strategies, persistence and progress rather than fixed labels such as "talented" or "naturally good." (Mueller & Dweck, 1998).

A simple feedback structure is:

NOTICE → NAME → NEXT STEP

- Notice: Describe what the participant did.
- Name: Identify the strength or strategy demonstrated.
- Next step: Suggest how it could be used or developed further.

Example: "You changed the passing order after the first attempt. That showed problem-solving. In the next round, involve the whole team in choosing the strategy."

Reflection reinforces this learning. After an activity, facilitators should help participants identify the strengths they used, the strategies they changed, the support they received and the progress they made. Detailed debrief questions are provided in the activity cards and lesson plan.

What this means for you: Help participants understand which strength they used and how they can build on it.

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3.4 Teamwork, Peer Support and Belonging

Team activities can strengthen confidence when young people experience themselves as useful members of the group. This is more likely when activities include shared goals, meaningful roles, mutual support and recognition of different contributions.

UNICEF identifies cooperation and teamwork as important adolescent competencies and connects positive self-esteem with recognising personal strengths and feeling valued and respected by others. (UNICEF, 2025)

Facilitators can support this by:

- sharing responsibilities rather than relying on one participant;
- recognising communication, encouragement and problem-solving;
- rotating roles so that different strengths become visible;
- encouraging support after mistakes;
- asking participants to identify actions that helped the group.

Peer feedback should be specific rather than based on forced compliments. Useful prompts include “You helped the group by…”, “One strength I noticed was…” and “The group improved when you…”.

What this means for you: Teamwork builds belonging when different contributions are visible and valued.

Key messages for practitioners

- Sport builds confidence when participants experience manageable challenge, progress and recognition.
- Competence includes social, personal and teamwork skills, not only physical performance.
- Resilience means adapting, seeking support and trying again—not simply enduring pressure.
- Feedback should be specific and linked to observable actions.
- Teamwork strengthens belonging when different contributions are recognised.
- Reflection should focus on strengths, strategies, progress and learning.

Lesson Plan

Lesson plan field	Draft content
Lesson/session title	Building Confidence, Resilience and Belonging Through Sport
Module link	Module 3 – Using Sport to Build Self-esteem, Confidence and Resilience
Target group	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	105 minutes. A shorter 85-minute version can use one Strength Scout rotation and two rounds of The Team Link.
Setting	Indoor or outdoor sport space
Group size	12–24 participants. Participants work mainly in teams of 4–6 people.

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Lesson plan field	Draft content
Aim of the session	To help participants use sport activities to build confidence and resilience, recognise strengths and create teamwork experiences where everyone feels involved and valued.
Learning objectives	By the end of the session, participants will be able to: • Support resilience through setbacks, adaptation and repeated attempts. • Recognise strengths demonstrated through sport. • Give specific, strengths-based feedback. • Use connection rules to strengthen teamwork, peer support and belonging.
Materials needed and handouts	Balls and equipment for a simple team sport, cones, bibs, paper and markers, mission and setback cards, Strength Cards, and Module 3 Activity Cards 1–3.
Preparation notes	• Review the three activity cards. • Choose a team sport suitable for the group and available space. • Prepare the mission, setback and Strength Cards. • Set up small-sided playing areas. • Check that equipment and space are safe and accessible. • Keep setbacks team-based and avoid singling out individual mistakes.
Warm-up / Opening — 10 minutes	Introduce the session's purpose and agree on: • participation and learning over performance • respectful communication after mistakes • the right to pause or change role • feedback based on actions rather than comparisons. Run a short movement and ball activity. Ask participants to notice one action that helps another person participate.
Main Activity — 85 minutes	**Part 1 – The Comeback Playbook — 30 minutes** **Run Activity Card 1.** Teams receive one mission and play a short round. Pause the game, introduce the relevant setback and allow teams to agree on one change before trying again. Link the experience to resilience, adaptation and recognised progress. **Part 2 – Strengths Replay — 25 minutes** **Run Activity Card 2.** Each team selects a Strength Scout. After the first round, the scout gives one specific piece of feedback using the NOTICE → NAME → NEXT STEP structure. Link the experience to confidence and strengths-based feedback. **Part 3 – The Team Link — 30 minutes** **Run Activity Card 3.** Teams play three short rounds using connection rules that require participants to involve and create opportunities for one another. Link the experience to teamwork, peer support and belonging.

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Lesson plan field	Draft content
Reflection / Debrief — 10 minutes	1. What helped the teams respond constructively to setbacks? 2. Which strengths became visible during the activities? 3. What helped people feel that their contribution mattered? 4. What would you apply for in your own sport or youth-work sessions?
Adaptation Options	• **Limited time:** Use one Strength Scout rotation and two Team Link rounds. • **Smaller or larger groups:** Work as one group or create parallel games with teams of 4–6. • **Limited space, equipment or mobility:** Use seated handball, rolling-ball activities, balloon volleyball or small possession games. • **Language or confidence needs:** Demonstrate rules, use visual cards and allow player, observer, motivator or team-organiser roles.
Safeguarding Note	Avoid public comparison, individual blame and deliberately created humiliation. Allow participants to pause, pass or change role. Intervene if feedback becomes personal, negative or discriminatory, and follow the organisation's safeguarding procedure when required.
Evaluation Prompt	Ask participants to complete three short prompts: • One strength I recognised. • One facilitation approach I will use. • One area where I need more practice.

Activity cards

Activity card 1	Content
Activity title	**The Comeback Playbook**
Purpose	To help participants experience how confidence and resilience can grow when a team faces a setback, pauses, changes its approach and tries again.
Module link	Module 3 – Using Sport to Build Self-esteem, Confidence and Resilience **Competency focus:** Resilience-building through activity
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	30–35 minutes
Materials	Ball and basic equipment for a small team sport, cones, bibs, mission and setback cards, paper and markers
Instructions	**Step 1 – Set up the game (5 minutes)** Divide participants into small teams and choose a simple team sport, such as roundnet, football, basketball, volleyball, etc. Explain that the activity is not only about winning. Each team will receive a mission, face a setback and then decide how to respond.

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Activity card 1	Content
	Introduce the process: **PLAY → PAUSE → CHANGE → TRY AGAIN** **Step 2 – Choose a team mission (3 minutes)** Give each team one mission. The same mission can also be used for all teams. • Complete one play involving at least three different players. • Give one useful instruction or encouragement after every mistake. • Recover and continue within ten seconds after losing the ball or a point. • Use two different strategies during the round. Clarify the mission before starting and check that participants understand what they are trying to achieve. **Step 3 – First round (7 minutes)** Run a short game. Teams play normally while working towards their mission. The facilitator observes: • how participants react to mistakes; • how responsibility is shared; • whether communication remains supportive; • whether teams change their approach when something is not working. **Step 4 – Setback and team huddle (5 minutes)** Pause the game. Select the setback that best reflects what happened during the first round. • Only one or two players are involved. • Mistakes are affecting the team's communication. • The team is slow to continue after losing the ball or a point. • The first approach is not working. Give teams two to three minutes to discuss: 1. What is happening? 2. What will we change? 3. How will we support each other? Each team agrees on one clear change for the next round. Examples may include changing positions, involving another player, using a more supportive phrase, reorganising more quickly or trying a different tactic. **Step 5 – Comeback round (7 minutes)** Restart the game. Teams continue working towards their original mission while applying the change agreed. Remind participants that progress may include: • involving more team members • communicating more positively • recovering more quickly • changing an unsuccessful strategy • continuing confidently after a mistake. **Step 6 – Team reflection (5 minutes)** Ask each team to briefly discuss:

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Activity card 1	Content
	• What setback did we face? • What did we change? • What improved? Invite each team to share one example of progress.
Debrief questions	1. How did the setback affect the team's confidence or behaviour? 2. What did your team decide to change? 3. What helped the team continue after mistakes? 4. What progress did you notice, even if the final result did not change? 5. How could this activity be used to build resilience in your own sessions?
Adaptations	• **For limited space:** Use a small possession, end-zone or passing game. • **For low-mobility groups:** Use seated handball, balloon volleyball or a rolling-ball activity. • **For participants with limited sport experience:** Simplify the rules and focus on communication, movement and teamwork. • **For lower-confidence participants:** Allow roles such as player, observer, motivator or team organiser. • **For large groups:** Run several games at the same time. • **For multilingual groups:** Print or display the missions and setbacks using simple language and visual symbols. • **For sensitive groups:** Keep all setbacks team-based and avoid identifying or blaming individual participants.

Activity card 2	Content
Activity title	**Strengths Replay**
Purpose	To help participants recognise strengths shown during sport and practise giving specific feedback that supports confidence and learning.
Module link	Module 3 – Using Sport to Build Self-esteem, Confidence and Resilience **Competency focus:** Strengths-based facilitation and positive reinforcement
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, trainers, educators, sports professionals and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	25–30 minutes
Materials	Equipment for a simple team sport, cones, bibs and Strength Cards or a printed strengths list
Instructions	**Step 1 – Explain the activity (5 minutes)** Divide participants into small teams and choose a simple team sport, such as roundnet, football, basketball, volleyball, etc. Explain that the focus is not only on points or technical ability. Participants will observe strengths shown through actions during the game.

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Activity card 2	Content
	Introduce the **NOTICE → NAME → NEXT STEP** feedback structure outlined in **Section 3.3: Strengths-based Facilitation, Feedback and Reflection**. **Step 2 – Choose a Strength Scout (2 minutes)** Each team chooses one participant to act as the Strength Scout. The scout observes the game and identifies one clear example of a strength shown by a teammate. **Step 3 – First round (5 minutes)** Play a short game. The Strength Scout watches for actions such as: • continuing after a mistake • encouraging a teammate • changing an approach • communicating clearly • creating an opportunity for another player. **Step 4 – Strengths Replay (4 minutes)** Pause the game. The Strength Scout gives one short and specific piece of feedback using the **NOTICE → NAME → NEXT STEP** structure. The feedback should be linked to an observable action rather than general praise or a fixed label. **Step 5 – Rotate and play again (5 minutes)** Choose a new Strength Scout and restart the game. Participants are encouraged to use the strength identified during the first round or notice another strength in their actions. **Step 6 – Final reflection (4 minutes)** Pause the game and repeat the feedback process. Ask each team to identify: • one strength that helped the team • one strength that supported another participant • one strength they would like to use more often.
Debrief questions	1. Which strengths were easiest or most difficult to notice? 2. How did specific feedback feel different from general praise? 3. What did you learn about your contribution to the team? 4. Did the feedback influence what you tried in the second round? 5. How could you use this approach in your own sessions?
Adaptations	• **For participants with limited sport experience:** Focus on communication, encouragement and teamwork rather than technique. • **For lower-confidence participants:** Give feedback privately or in pairs. • **For low-mobility groups:** Use seated handball, rolling-ball games or balloon volleyball. • **For larger groups:** Run several small games, each with its own Strength Scout. • **For multilingual groups:** Use simple Strength Cards with words or symbols.

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Activity card 2	Content
	• **For sensitive groups:** Avoid comparisons and fixed labels such as “best” or “most talented.”

Activity card 3	Content
Activity title	**The Team Link**
Purpose	To help participants experience how teamwork, peer support and belonging develop when team members actively involve and create opportunities for one another.
Module link	Module 3 – Using Sport to Build Self-esteem, Confidence and Resilience **Competency focus:** Team-building, peer support and belonging
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, trainers, educators, sports professionals and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	25–30 minutes
Materials	Equipment for a simple team sport, cones and bibs
Instructions	**Step 1 – Set up the game (5 minutes)** Choose a simple team sport, such as roundnet, football, basketball, volleyball, etc. Divide participants into teams of 4–6 people and explain that the activity focuses on shared success. Team members should create opportunities for one another rather than rely on the strongest or most experienced players. **Step 2 – Round 1: Everyone contributes (5 minutes)** Play a short round using the following rule: **A goal or point counts only when every team member has contributed to the play.** Contribution may include passing or receiving the ball, creating space, communicating, supporting a teammate or completing another agreed action. **Step 3 – Team link check (3 minutes)** Pause the game and ask each team: • How was participation shared across the team? • What could the team change to involve people more effectively? Ask each team to agree on one small change before continuing. **Step 4 – Round 2: Create for someone else (5 minutes)** Restart the game using the following rule: **A goal or point counts only when one participant creates the opportunity for another teammate.** This could include making a useful pass, creating space, offering support or helping another participant complete the play. **Step 5 – Round 3: Team choice (5 minutes)** Keep participants in the same teams and ask each team to choose one connection rule: • A different participant starts each new play.

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Activity card 3	Content
	• The participant who has had the fewest opportunities is involved in the next play. • The same participant cannot score twice in a row. • The team completes one planned action involving the whole group. Check that each team understands its chosen rule, then run one final short round. Observe how the rule affects participation, peer support and teamwork. **Step 6 – Team reflection (5 minutes)** Ask each team to identify: • one action that helped another participant contribute; • one moment when the team felt connected; • one change that improved teamwork. Reinforce that belonging grows when participants feel noticed, involved and valued within the group.
Debrief questions	1. Which rule created the strongest sense of teamwork, and why? 2. What helped participation become more evenly shared? 3. How did creating an opportunity for another participant affect the team? 4. When did your contribution feel useful or valued? 5. How could you use connection rules in your own sport or youth-work sessions?
Adaptations	• **For participants with limited sport experience:** Use simple rules and focus on passing, positioning, communication and support. • **For lower-confidence participants:** Use teams of four or five to create more opportunities for involvement. • **For low-mobility groups:** Use seated handball, balloon volleyball or a rolling-ball game. • **For mixed-ability groups:** Agree on different ways participants can contribute. Contribution should not depend only on touching the ball or scoring. • **For larger groups:** Create several small-sided games rather than increasing the number of participants in each team. • **For multilingual groups:** Demonstrate each connection rule and display it using simple words or visual symbols.

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Module 4. Emotional regulation, stress management, and reflection through sport

Module snapshot

Field	Draft guidance
Module purpose	This module builds the ability of youth workers, coaches and sports professionals to integrate emotional check-ins, movement-based regulation strategies, calm-down routines and guided reflection into sport and physical activities. It helps practitioners support young people to notice emotions and body signals, manage everyday stress and make meaning from their physical experiences. The approaches are practical, choice-based and non-clinical.
Competency focus	• Integrating emotional check-ins and body awareness into sport activities • Facilitating movement-based regulation and calm-down routines • Using guided reflection to support emotional learning and meaning-making
Main target users	Youth workers / coaches / sports professionals / educators / trainers / volunteers
Core delivery settings	Sports clubs / schools / NGOs / youth centres / community and grassroots sport settings
Suggested methods & tools	Mood and energy check-ins, movement and breathing routines, rhythm, body-awareness exercises, cool-down activities, guided reflection, journaling prompts and debrief questions

Learning objectives

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- Explain how emotions and everyday stress may affect participation and behaviour in sport activities.
- Integrate brief emotional and energy check-ins before, during and after physical activities.
- Facilitate simple movement-based regulation and calm-down routines.
- Guide reflection that connects physical experience with emotions, body signals, responses and learning.
- Help young people identify regulation strategies that may be useful in sport and everyday situations.

Theoretical introduction

4.1 Emotions and Stress During Sport Activities

Sport activities can create different emotions. Participants may feel excited, nervous, frustrated, embarrassed, disappointed, confident or proud. These emotions may change during the same activity, especially with competition, mistakes, uncertainty or group pressure.

Stress is a natural response to situations that feel difficult or demanding. It can affect concentration, breathing, energy, muscle tension and behaviour. People experience stress differently, so the same activity may energise one participant and pressure another. The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that stress affects both mind and body and that practical coping strategies can support well-being.

During a sport activity, facilitators may notice that participants lose focus, rush decisions, become frustrated after mistakes, remain highly energised after an intense game or struggle to move from activity to discussion.

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These signs do not have one fixed meaning. The facilitator does not need to decide exactly what a participant is feeling. The practical task is to help participants notice their own mood, body and energy.

Physical activity can support positive emotions and well-being, but the effects are not automatic or the same for everyone. The activity, intensity, group environment and facilitation all matter.

What this means for you: Include short moments where participants can notice how they feel and whether they need to adjust their energy, focus or pace.

4.2 Integrating Regulation and Calm-Down Routines

A regulation routine is a short sequence that helps participants adjust their physical and emotional state. It may reduce tension, restore focus, manage high energy or support the transition towards reflection.

The aim is not always to make everyone completely calm. One participant may need to slow down, while another may need light movement to remain engaged. Regulation means finding a manageable state for what comes next.

Routines can be used before an activity to focus, during it to reset after pressure or confusion, and afterwards to support reflection or closure. WHO guidance recognises physical activity, relaxation, breathing and grounding as approaches that may support stress management.

MOVE → SLOW → NOTICE

MOVE	Continue with light movement, such as walking, stretching or shaking out tension.
SLOW	Gradually reduce the pace and intensity.
NOTICE	Invite participants to notice their breathing, energy, tension or focus without requiring them to share.

Facilitators should offer options rather than require one method. Breathing should be gentle and optional. Participants may keep their eyes open, remain moving or choose another routine.

What this means for you: Avoid moving directly from an intense activity to a long discussion. Use a short transition to help participants adjust their body and attention first.

4.3 Using Emotional Check-Ins Safely

An emotional check-in is a brief way for participants to notice and communicate their mood, energy, tension or readiness. Its purpose is to build awareness and inform practical activity decisions. It should not require participants to explain personal experiences.

Simple check-ins may include choosing a number from 1 to 5 for energy, selecting a colour or mood card, showing energy through one movement, choosing one word or responding privately. Participants should always be able to pass.

A check-in can be used before an activity, during it to decide whether to continue or change pace, and afterwards to notice change.

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CHECK → CHOOSE → ADAPT

CHECK	Participants notice and indicate their current state.
CHOOSE	They select an available option, such as continuing, slowing down or taking a brief pause.
ADAPT	The facilitator uses the overall group response to adjust the pace or next step.

The UNICEF-WHO Helping Adolescents Thrive framework supports adolescents in recognising emotions, understanding how feelings affect them, and practising strategies that influence thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. It emphasises participation and choice rather than counselling or treatment.

What this means for you: Ask only for the information needed to support the activity. Participants should be able to communicate their state without explaining why they feel that way.

4.4 Reflection and Meaning-Making Through Sport

Physical activity creates an experience. Reflection helps participants understand what happened, how they responded and what they may learn from it. Without reflection, participants may remember whether they won, lost or enjoyed the activity but miss how pressure affected them, what helped them refocus or how the experience relates elsewhere.

Reflection is central to non-formal education because learning develops through active participation, experience and self-reflection. A practical sequence is:

EXPERIENCE → NOTICE → LEARN → TRANSFER

EXPERIENCE	What happened during the activity?
NOTICE	What did you observe in your emotions, body, energy or behaviour?
LEARN	What helped, and what made the experience more difficult?
TRANSFER	Where could this strategy or learning be useful again?

Participants may respond in pairs, through movement, cards, drawing, journaling, positioning in the space or silent individual reflection. The Council of Europe experiential-learning approach similarly uses debriefing to help participants reflect on an experience, identify learning and consider how to apply it afterwards.

Facilitators should not assume that a routine worked for everyone. Instead of asking, “Did this make you calm?”, ask, “Did you notice any change?” This allows different experiences to be recognised without judgement.

What this means for you: Use reflection to connect movement with emotions, responses and practical learning, not only to ask whether participants enjoyed the activity.

Key messages for practitioners

- Movement may support emotional regulation, but it does not automatically calm everyone.

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- Check-ins should guide facilitation, not assess or diagnose participants.
- Different participants may need different levels of movement and different reset strategies.
- Reset routines should be short, optional and suitable for the activity and group.
- Reflection helps participants turn a sport experience into practical learning.
- Personal sharing should remain optional, and facilitators should stay within a non-clinical role.

Lesson Plan

Lesson plan field	Draft content
Lesson/session title	Emotional Regulation, Stress Management and Reflection Through Sport
Module link	Module 4 – Emotional Regulation, Stress Management and Reflection Through Sport
Target group	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	120 minutes. A shorter version can omit the participant-led practice in Activity Card 1 and use two reset strategies in Activity Card 2.
Setting	Indoor or outdoor sport space
Group size	12–24 participants.
Aim of the session	To help participants integrate emotional check-ins, regulation routines and guided reflection into sport activities.
Learning objectives	By the end of the session, participants will be able to: • use short check-ins to understand participants' energy and readiness; • adapt the pace or format of an activity based on participants' responses; • facilitate different movement-based reset strategies; • help participants connect sport experiences with emotions, body signals and practical learning; • use reflection without requiring personal disclosure.
Materials needed & Handouts	Equipment for Roundnet, football or basketball; balls; cones; bibs where needed; three signs: **Slower pace**, **Current pace**, **More active pace**; four reflection signs: **Experience**, **Notice**, **Learn**, **Transfer**; paper and pens if available; Module 4 Activity Cards 1–3.
Preparation notes	• Select Roundnet, football or basketball according to the group, space and available equipment. • Prepare small playing areas so that everyone remains active. • Display the pace and reflection signs. • Review the three activity cards in advance. • Keep sharing optional and avoid asking participants to explain personal emotions or experiences. • Review the organisation's safeguarding procedure.
Warm-up/opening 10 minutes	Welcome participants and introduce the session focus: using sport not only for physical activity, but also to support emotional awareness, regulation and learning. Agree on the following:

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Lesson plan field	Draft content
	• participation over performance • respect for different responses • the right to pass, pause or adapt • no requirement to explain personal feelings. Run a short, low-pressure passing or movement activity using the equipment selected for the session.
Main activity 100 minutes total	**Part 1 – Check-In on the Move (30 minutes)** Run Activity Card 1. Participants complete a short movement activity, choose between **Slower pace**, **Current pace** and **More active pace**, and observe how the facilitator adjusts the activity based on the group's responses. Participants then practise leading a short check-in and deciding how the activity could be adapted. Link the experience of using simple check-ins to understand energy and readiness without pressuring participants to explain how they feel. **Part 2 – Play, Reset, Replay (35 minutes)** Run Activity Card 2 using Roundnet, football or basketball. Participants play short rounds and try three reset strategies. After each reset, they return to the same activity and notice whether anything changes in their energy, tension, concentration or participation. Link the experience to offering different regulation options and recognising that the same strategy will not suit everyone. **Part 3 – Replay the Moment (35 minutes)** Run Activity Card 3 using the same or another selected sport activity. Participants identify one moment from the game and reflect through: **Experience → Notice → Learn → Transfer** technique**.** They choose one action to try in the next round, replay the activity and then practise leading a short reflection in small groups. Link the experience to helping participants make meaning from sport without requiring personal disclosure.
Reflection / debrief 10 minutes	• What did the check-ins help the facilitator understand? • Which reset strategy was most useful in the sport activity, and why? • How did reflection change the way you understood the activity? • What helped keep emotional sharing safe and optional? • What is one element you will integrate into your own sessions?
Adaptation options	• **Limited time:** Shorten the first activity by removing the participant-led practice and use two reset strategies in Activity Card 2. • **Beginners:** Use cooperative rallies, possession tasks or passing challenges instead of full games. • **Limited space:** Use small-group passing, ball-control or target activities. • **Limited mobility:** Use seated passing, rolling, target throwing or upper-body movement. • **Large groups:** Create parallel small games and complete check-ins and resets at the same time. • **Multilingual or low-literacy groups:** Use signs, symbols, demonstrations and short verbal prompts.

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Lesson plan field	Draft content
	• **Participants who prefer not to speak:** Allow gestures, cards, writing, drawing or silent reflection.
Safeguarding note	Keep personal sharing optional. Do not ask participants publicly why they selected a check-in response or interpret emotions and body signals as a diagnosis. Allow participants to pass, pause or use an alternative routine. Follow the organisation's safeguarding and support procedures if serious or continuing distress appears.
Evaluation prompt	Ask participants to complete three short prompts: • One check-in I could use. • One reset strategy I could introduce. • One reflection question I will use in my own sessions.

Activity Cards

Activity card 1	Content
Activity title	**Check-In on the Move**
Purpose	To help participants practise using a short check-in before and during a physical activity and adapt the activity according to the group's energy and readiness.
Module link	Module 4 – Emotional Regulation, Stress Management and Reflection Through Sport **Competency focus:** Integrating emotional check-ins and body awareness into sport activities
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	30–35 minutes
Materials	Balls or other safe passing equipment, cones and three signs: **Slower pace**, **Current pace**, **More active pace**
Instructions	**Step 1 – Prepare the activity (5 minutes)** Place the three signs in different parts of the space: "Slower pace", "Current pace" and "More active pace". Prepare a simple non-competitive activity, such as walking around the space while passing a ball. Explain to participants that they can choose a slower, current or more active pace before and during the activity. They can *move to* or *point at* the relevant sign and do not need to explain their choice. Clarify the options: • **Slower pace:** walking, slower passing or lighter movement. • **Current pace:** continuing at a moderate pace. • **More active pace:** faster movement or an additional challenge. **Step 2 – Complete the first check-in (3 minutes)** Ask participants which level of movement feels suitable for them. They can stand next to or point to one of the three signs. Do not ask them to explain their choice. Use the overall response to choose how the activity will begin:

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Activity card 1	Content
	• If most participants choose **Slower pace**, begin with gentle movement. • If most choose **Current pace**, begin at a moderate level. • If most choose **More active pace**, add faster movement or a small challenge. • If responses are mixed, allow participants to choose between a slower and a more active version. **Step 3 – Run the first round (5 minutes)** Run the movement activity at the selected pace. During the activity, ask participants to quietly notice their **energy**, **breathing**, any **tension** in their body and how easy or difficult it is to **focus**. They do not need to share their observations. **Step 4 – Check again and adapt (7 minutes)** Pause the activity and ask participants whether they would prefer a slower pace, the current pace or more active movement in the next round. Ask them to respond using the three signs again. Make one clear adjustment based on the group's responses. For example: • change jogging to walking • reduce or increase the playing area • simplify the passing task or add or remove a second ball • allow a short pause before continuing. Briefly explain the adjustment and run the activity again. **Step 5 – Practise leading a check-in (7 minutes)** Divide participants into small groups. Ask each group to: 1. choose a simple movement or passing activity 2. choose one check-in question, e.g. do they need movement, a slower pace or a short pause? 3. decide how they would adjust the activity for different responses. One participant leads the check-in. The group then tests one adjustment. **Step 6 – Complete the final check-out (3 minutes)** Bring the group together and ask whether their energy is now lower, similar or higher than at the beginning. Participants can respond using their fingers, a gesture or the three signs. Explain that there is no correct answer; the aim is simply to notice whether anything changed.
Debrief questions	• What did the check-ins add to the activity? • How did the adjustment affect participation or focus? • Which check-in question was easiest to understand? • How can a facilitator use a check-in without pressuring participants to share? • Where could you use a similar check-in in your own sessions?
Adaptations	• **Limited space:** Use circle passing, seated movement or movement on the spot. • **Limited mobility:** Use rolling, passing, stretching or upper-body movements. • **Younger groups:** Replace the signs with simple symbols or images. • **Multilingual groups:** Demonstrate each pace and use visual signs. • **Private responses:** Allow participants to show a card or gesture close to their body. • **Large groups:** Divide participants into smaller groups with separate signs.

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Activity card 1	Content
	• **Mixed responses:** Offer two versions of the same task instead of choosing one pace for everyone.

Activity card 2	Content
Activity title	**Play, Reset, Replay**
Purpose	To help participants experience three short regulation strategies during a Roundnet, football or basketball activity and identify how these strategies may support energy, tension and focus.
Module link	Module 4 – Emotional Regulation, Stress Management and Reflection Through Sport **Competency focus:** Facilitating movement-based regulation and calm-down routines
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+
Duration	30–35 minutes
Materials	Equipment for Roundnet, football or basketball; cones; bibs where needed
Instructions	**Step 1 – Choose and prepare the sport activity (5 minutes)** Select one of the following: **Sport** / **Activity** **Roundnet** – Play a short 2v2 game or a cooperative rally challenge. **Football** – Play a 3v3 or 4v4 small-sided game or a possession challenge. **Basketball** – Play a 3v3 half-court game or a team passing-and-scoring challenge. Create additional small teams where needed so that everyone remains involved. Keep each round short and avoid elimination. **Step 2 – Explain the activity (3 minutes)** Explain to participants that they will play several short rounds and try a different reset strategy between each round. After every reset, they will return to the same game and notice any changes in their energy, body tension, focus or participation. Clarify that: • there is no single strategy that works for everyone • participants do not need to share personal information • they may adapt or pass on any part of a reset routine **Step 3 – Play the first round (4 minutes)** Run the selected Roundnet, football or basketball activity. At the end of the round, ask participants to notice their energy, breathing, any tension in their body, and how easy or difficult it is to focus. They do not need to share their answers. **Step 4 – Use Reset 1: Gentle Movement (2 minutes)** Ask participants to move slowly around the playing area. Guide them to: • walk rather than stop suddenly • shake out their arms and legs • loosen their shoulders • stretch gently if comfortable

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Activity card 2	Content
	• gradually reduce their pace. Participants may continue holding or moving with the ball at a slower pace. Replay the sport activity for 3 minutes. Before continuing, ask participants whether they noticed any change in their energy, tension or focus. Participants may answer privately or with a simple hand signal. **Step 5 – Use Reset 2: Steady Rhythm (2 minutes)** Ask participants to complete a slow and steady repeated movement. Use an option suitable for the selected sport: • **Roundnet:** slow side steps while gently tossing the ball from hand to hand • **Football:** slow toe taps or controlled touches on the ball • **Basketball:** slow, controlled dribbling • **Alternative:** steady stepping, tapping or clapping without equipment. Gradually slow the rhythm and then stop. Replay the sport activity for 3 minutes. Ask participants to notice whether the rhythm affected their pace, coordination or focus. **Step 6 – Use Reset 3: Focus (2 minutes)** Invite participants to stand, sit or walk slowly. Guide them to: 1. notice their feet touching the floor 2. look at three things in the playing space 3. notice their breathing without changing it Replay the sport activity for 3 minutes.
Debrief questions	• What did you notice when you returned to the game after each reset? • Which reset affected your energy, tension or focus the most? • Why might different participants need different reset strategies? • When during a Roundnet, football or basketball session could a reset be useful? • How could you offer a reset without forcing everyone to use the same method?
Adaptations	• **Beginners:** Use cooperative rallies, passing challenges or possession tasks instead of a full game. • **Limited space:** Use ball-control, passing or target activities in small groups. • **Limited mobility:** Adapt the game to seated passing, rolling, target throwing or upper-body movement. • **Large groups:** Create several small games and run the resets with all groups at the same time. • **Participants who dislike stillness:** Allow slow walking during the Focus Reset. • **Participants who do not want to use equipment during the reset:** Offer walking, stretching, tapping or another simple movement. • **Limited time:** Use two reset strategies instead of three.

Activity card 3	Content
Activity title	**Replay the Moment**

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<table>
<tr><th>Activity card 3</th><th>Content</th></tr>
<tr><td>Purpose</td><td>To help participants practise using guided reflection after a Roundnet, football or basketball activity and connect what happened during the game with emotions, body signals, responses and practical learning.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Module link</td><td>Module 4 – Emotional Regulation, Stress Management and Reflection Through Sport
Competency focus: Using guided reflection to support emotional learning and meaning-making</td></tr>
<tr><td>Target group and age</td><td>Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators and volunteers aged 16+</td></tr>
<tr><td>Duration</td><td>35–40 minutes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Materials</td><td>Equipment for Roundnet, football or basketball; cones; four reflection signs or cards: EXPERIENCE, NOTICE, LEARN, TRANSFER; paper and pens if available</td></tr>
<tr><td>Instructions</td><td>Step 1 – Prepare the sport activity
5 minutes
Select one of the following:
<table>
<tr><th>Sport</th><th>Activity</th></tr>
<tr><td>Roundnet</td><td>Play a short 2v2 game or a cooperative rally challenge.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Football</td><td>Play a 3v3 or 4v4 small-sided game or a possession challenge.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Basketball</td><td>Play a 3v3 half-court game or a team passing-and-scoring challenge.</td></tr>
</table>
Place the four reflection signs where everyone can see them. Explain to participants that they will play a short round and then reflect on one moment from the activity. They will consider what happened, what they noticed, what they learned and where they could use this learning again. They do not need to share private experiences and may pass on any question.

Step 2 – Play the first round (5 minutes)
Run the selected activity. Ask participants to notice and remember one moment that affected their energy, emotions or focus, such as making a mistake, feeling pressure or receiving support from a teammate. Allow the activity to continue and discuss these moments after the round.

Step 3 – Choose one moment (3 minutes)
Stop the activity and give participants a quiet moment to think. Ask them to choose one moment from the game that affected how they felt, focused or responded. They do not need to share it with the full group.

Step 4 – Guide the four-part reflection (8 minutes)
Move through the four reflection signs one at a time using the “EXPERIENCE → NOTICE → LEARN → TRANSFER” technique from 4.4 Reflection and Meaning-Making Through Sport.

Step 5 – Choose one action for the replay (2 minutes)
Ask each participant to choose one action to try in the next round. Examples include:
• slow down after a mistake
• communicate more clearly
• use a short reset</td></tr>
</table>

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Activity card 3	Content
	• ask for or offer support. **Step 6 – Replay the activity (5 minutes)** Run the same Roundnet, football or basketball activity again. Ask participants to try their selected action and notice whether it affects their experience. Keep the rules and level of challenge similar to the first round so that participants can compare the two experiences. **Step 7 – Practise leading a short reflection (7 minutes)** Divide participants into small groups. Ask each group to prepare four short questions using the "**EXPERIENCE → NOTICE → LEARN → TRANSFER"** technique. One participant leads a three-minute reflection with the group.
Debrief questions	• What helped you move from describing the game to identifying learning? • Which reflection question was easiest or most difficult to answer? • Did choosing one action affect the second round? • How can reflection remain meaningful without requiring personal disclosure? • How could you use this four-part process in your own sport or youth activities?
Adaptations	• **Younger groups:** Use four simpler questions: *What happened? What did you feel or notice? What helped? What will you try next time?* • **Participants who do not want to speak:** Allow writing, drawing, selecting a card or silent reflection. • **Limited time:** Use one group reflection after the first round and omit the facilitation practice. • **Large groups:** Reflect in pairs or small teams before hearing two or three examples. • **Low literacy or multilingual groups:** Use symbols, demonstrations and short verbal prompts. • **Sensitive groups:** Keep questions linked to the activity and do not request examples from participants' personal lives. • **Online or classroom delivery:** Use a short video, scenario or imagined sport situation instead of a live game.

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Module 5. Noticing distress, responding supportively, and signposting

Module snapshot

Field	Draft guidance
Module purpose	This module supports youth workers, coaches, educators, and facilitators to respond safely and appropriately when they notice signs of distress in young people. It focuses on recognising warning signs, using supportive communication, understanding professional boundaries, and knowing when to seek additional support. The module provides a clear and practical framework for action, helping practitioners respond with confidence without taking on a clinical or therapeutic role.
Competency focus	• Recognising signs that may require attention • Responding in a calm, supportive, and non-judgmental way • Understanding the limits of the facilitator role • Knowing when to seek support or refer
Main target users	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, volunteers, and facilitators working with young people in sport and non-formal education settings
Core delivery settings	Youth centres, sport clubs, schools, non-formal education programmes, community settings, training courses, camps, and group-based youth activities
Suggested methods & tools	Sport-based learning, guided reflection, small-group discussion, role-play, scenario-based learning, decision-making exercises, safeguarding mapping tools, and facilitated debriefing

Learning objectives

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- **Describe** basic warning signs that may indicate a young person needs support
- **Explain** what facilitators can and cannot do in these situations
- **Notice** signs of distress in behaviour, participation, or interaction
- **Respond** in a calm and supportive way using simple language
- **Identify** when a situation should be shared with others or referred to
- **Demonstrate** a supportive, responsible, and non-judgmental approach when responding to young people

Theoretical introduction

Youth workers, coaches, and facilitators are often in regular contact with young people. This means they are in a position to notice when something changes in behaviour, participation, or interaction.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adults who regularly interact with young people can play an important role in recognising early concerns and supporting access to help when needed.

In practice, concerns rarely appear as clear or urgent situations. More often, they appear as:

- small changes in behaviour
- withdrawal or reduced participation
- strong reactions to pressure or feedback
- repeated patterns that feel “different”

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This often creates a common feeling for facilitators: *"Something seems off, but I'm not sure what it is."*

This uncertainty is normal.

What this means for you: You are not expected to be a mental health professional. Your role is to notice signs, respond safely, and involve support when needed.

5.1 What might be a warning sign?

A warning sign is not a diagnosis. It is something a facilitator notices that may suggest a young person needs attention, support, adaptation, or follow-up. In sport and youth settings, warning signs may appear through behaviour, emotions, participation, communication, or reactions to pressure.

Area to observe	Possible warning signs in sport settings
Participation	Stops joining activities, often sits out, avoids the ball, refuses to take part, leaves suddenly, or misses sessions more often than usual.
Energy and mood	Seems unusually tired, flat, tearful, irritated, restless, overwhelmed, or "not themselves".
Communication	Becomes very quiet, stops responding, jokes to avoid attention, reacts sharply, or says very negative things about themselves.
Social connection	Stands apart, avoids partners, is repeatedly excluded, seems isolated, has conflict with peers, or no longer connects with the group.
Reaction to pressure	Panics after mistakes, becomes aggressive, over-competitive, gives up quickly, freezes, or becomes very upset after feedback.
Care for self or safety	Appears unwell, disoriented, under the influence of substances, shows signs of injury, or behaves in ways that may put themselves or others at risk.
Concerning comments	Says things such as "nothing matters," "I can't do this anymore," "no one cares," or "I don't want to be here".

In practice: Do not think: "This young person is difficult." Think: "Something may be making participation difficult today."

One sign alone does not always mean there is a serious concern. Recognising distress involves focusing on three key aspects:

- **Change →** Is this different from the young person's usual behaviour?
- **Repetition →** Is it happening more than once?
- **Impact →** Is it affecting participation, relationships, engagement, or safety?

What this means for you: Focus on **patterns** and **changes**, not single behaviours.

The CHANGE tool can help facilitators decide whether a situation may need more attention, follow-up, or safeguarding action.

Letter	Letter Meaning	Guiding question
C	change	Is this different from how the young person usually behaves?
H	happens again	Has this happened more than once?
A	affects participation	Is it affecting engagement, interaction, or safety?

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N	notice context	Is there pressure, conflict, exclusion, or a trigger?
G	gets stronger	Is it becoming more intense or frequent?
E	emergency or safety	Is there any risk of harm or immediate concern?

In practice: You are not deciding what the problem is. You are deciding whether the situation needs attention, follow-up, or action.

5.2 Responding Supportively (Non-Clinical Approach)

When a concern appears, the facilitator's response can influence whether a young person feels safer or shuts down. A supportive response does not need to be clinical or complicated.

WHO's Psychological First Aid approach shows that non-specialists can provide helpful support through calm, respectful, and practical responses (WHO Psychological First Aid).

For sport and youth-work settings, this can be remembered as:

LOOK → LISTEN → SUPPORT → LINK

Step	What it means in practice
LOOK	Notice behaviour, participation, safety, group dynamics, and signs that something may be wrong.
LISTEN	Check in calmly, listen without judgment, and do not pressure the young person to explain everything.
SUPPORT	Reduce pressure, protect dignity, adapt the activity, and help the young person feel safer.
LINK	Involve the right person or service when the concern is repeated, serious, unsafe, or outside your role.

Examples in sport settings

Situation	Supportive first action
A young person walks away after making a mistake	Avoid calling them out publicly. Give space, then check in calmly when appropriate.
A young person is repeatedly left out	Adapt the activity so everyone has a role and monitor group dynamics.
A young person makes a worrying comment	Stay calm, do not promise secrecy, and follow safeguarding or support procedures.

5.3 Supportive communication

Supportive responses do not need to be complicated. The aim is to help the young person feel respected, safe, and supported without feeling judged or pressured. A calm, simple, and respectful approach can help reduce pressure and keep communication open.

Examples of supportive communication include:

- "I noticed you stepped out. Are you okay to continue, or would you prefer a short break?"
- "That looked difficult. Let's take a moment."
- "You do not have to explain everything now. I'm here if you want to talk."

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- "It seems something is making participation hard today."
- "I will respect your privacy, but if I am worried about your safety, I may need to involve someone who can help."

What this means for you: You do not need to solve the situation. A calm, respectful, and non-judgmental response is already a form of support.

5.4 Understanding Role Boundaries

Facilitators can play an important supportive role, but they are not mental health professionals. Facilitators are not expected to diagnose or provide therapy. Clear role boundaries protect both the young person and the facilitator.

Facilitators can:	Facilitators should not:
• notice changes • check in • listen • share concerns appropriately	• diagnose • investigate • manage serious situations alone • promise secrecy when safety may be at risk

What this means for you: You can be an important supportive adult, but you are part of a wider support system. Your role is to **respond safely** and **involve others when needed**.

5.5 Knowing When to Seek Support, Signpost, or Refer

Sometimes a situation can be supported within the session. Other times, additional support or safeguarding action may be needed. In practice, this often means knowing:

- who to speak to
- what procedure to follow
- when additional support is needed.

The facilitator should involve the appropriate support rather than managing the situation alone.

Situation	Next step
You are unsure what to do	Speak to the safeguarding contact person, supervisor, or responsible staff member.
The concern is repeated or getting worse	Share factual observations as per the organisation's procedure
The young person may need support beyond the activity	Help connect them with the appropriate support person or service
The young person shares something linked to harm, abuse, self-harm, or feeling unsafe	Stay calm, listen, and follow safeguarding procedures immediately
There is immediate danger	Follow emergency procedures and seek urgent support

When sharing a concern, facilitators should:

- use factual language: what was seen, heard, or said;
- avoid diagnosing or interpreting;
- share only with the appropriate person or service;

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- respect privacy, unless safety is at risk;
- follow the agreed procedure rather than acting alone.

5.6 Local signposting and safeguarding pathways

UNICEF guidance is especially clear that programmes should not run without referral/reporting pathways and an up-to-date service map.

Every organisation should adapt this module to its own local context and safeguarding procedures. Facilitators should know where support is available before a serious concern arises.

This may include:

- safeguarding contacts;
- internal reporting procedures;
- local youth or mental health services;
- helplines or emergency support options.

Support question	Answer
Who is the safeguarding contact person?	
Who should facilitators speak to if unsure?	
What internal reporting procedure should be followed?	
What local youth support services are available?	
What mental health or counselling services exist locally?	
What helplines or online support options can be shared?	
What is the emergency procedure if someone is not safe?	

Creating safe sport and youth environments is a shared responsibility. Facilitators do not need to have all the answers, but they should know how to notice concerns, respond supportively, and connect young people with appropriate support when needed.

What this means for you: You should know who to contact, what to record, and what to do if a young person may not be safe.

Key messages for practitioners

- Notice patterns and changes, not single behaviours.
- A calm, respectful, and supportive response can make a significant difference.
- Facilitators support, observe, and involve others when needed — they do not diagnose or manage serious concerns alone.

Lesson plan

Lesson plan field	Draft content
Lesson/session title	Noticing Distress, Responding Supportively, and Signposting

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Module link	Module 5 – Noticing Distress, Responding Supportively, and Signposting
Target group	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers from 16 y.o. and above.
Duration	110–120 minutes (The session can be shortened by reducing rotations in Activity 2 or the number of prompts in Activity 3.)
Setting	Indoor or outdoor sport space
Group size	12–24 participants (Can be adapted for 6–10 or larger groups by creating more sub-groups or parallel activities.)
Aim of the session	To help participants recognise signs of distress in youth sport settings, respond in a calm and supportive way, and make safe decisions about when to observe, support, or involve additional support through safeguarding and signposting pathways.
Learning objectives	By the end of the session, participants will be able to: • Recognise warning signs that may indicate a young person needs attention or support • Observe behaviour without labelling or jumping to conclusions • Respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgmental way using simple language • Distinguish between what is within their role and what requires additional support • Decide when to observe, support, or share a concern • Identify who to involve and what steps to take in their own context
Materials needed & Handouts	Balls or simple sport equipment, Cones with zone signs, Flipchart or whiteboard, Markers, Behaviour cue cards, Scenario cards, Support pathway mapping template
Preparation notes	• Review all activity instructions in advance • Print all cue cards and scenario cards • Prepare 3 zones (Activity 3): STEP BACK / STEP IN / STEP FORWARD • Prepare space (safe, inclusive, no hazards) • Review safeguarding procedures relevant to your organisation • Prepare key concepts: “warning signs”, “supportive communication”, “role boundaries”, “signposting pathways” Reminder for facilitator: This is a **practical and non-clinical session**. Focus on safe responses, not diagnosis or therapy.
Warm-up/opening	**Step 1 – Welcome & framing (5 min)** • Introduce session purpose • Set group agreement and expectations **Step 2 – Light energiser (5 min)** Simple low-pressure activity, such as circle passing, name-and-pass and short cooperative tasks.
Main activity 90-95 minutes	**Part 1 – Spot the Change: Sideline Signals (30–35 min)** Run the observation activity to help participants recognise warning signs that may require attention in sport settings. Participants observe a simple sport activity, notice changes in behaviour and participation, compare different rounds, and reflect on what may indicate that a young person needs support or follow-up. **Part 2 – The 30-Second Sideline Check-In (30–35 minutes)** Run the response activity to help participants practise supportive communication during sport sessions. Participants work in small groups to practise short check-ins

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	using simple, non-judgmental language while protecting the young person's dignity and avoiding pressure or overreaction. **Part 3 – Step In, Step Back, or Step Forward (30–35 minutes)** Run the decision-making activity to help participants understand role boundaries, safeguarding responsibilities, and signposting pathways. Participants move between different decision zones, discuss how situations may change depending on context or safety, and identify who should be involved when concerns go beyond the facilitator role.
Reflection / debrief 10 minutes	• What is one key idea you are taking from today's session? • How did the three activities connect? • What did you learn about **noticing**, **responding** and **acting safely**? • When would you move from observing or supporting to sharing a concern? • What is one thing you will do differently in your sessions?
Adaptation options	• **For time constraints:** reduce rotations or number of prompts • **For limited space:** adapt activities to a low-movement or discussion format • **For smaller groups:** run activities in one group instead of subgroups • **For larger groups:** create stations or parallel groups • **For sensitive groups:** keep sharing optional • **For mixed-experience groups:** use simpler or more complex prompts depending on participants' confidence and experience levels. • **For low-mobility groups:** use seated or discussion-based versions • **For multilingual groups:** use demonstrations and simple instructions • **For lower-confidence participants:** reduce pressure and competition
Safeguarding note	This session may raise awareness of distress, exclusion, or vulnerability. Facilitator should: • allow participants to step out • avoid personal exposure • monitor behaviour closely If distress appears: • pause or adapt activity • check in calmly if appropriate • follow the organisation's safeguarding or support procedures. Serious concerns should not be managed alone.
Evaluation prompt	At the end of the session, ask participants to complete a short reflection • One thing I understood better • One behaviour I will look at differently • One thing I need more confidence or guidance on

Activity cards

Activity card 1	Content
Activity title	Spot the Change: Sideline Signals
Purpose	To help participants recognise basic warning signs that may indicate a young person needs attention, support, or follow-up during a sport session. The activity focuses on observing changes in behaviour, participation, communication, and interaction without jumping to conclusions or diagnosing.

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Module link	Module 5: Noticing Distress, Responding Supportively, and Signposting Competency focus: Recognising signs that may require attention
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers from 16 y.o. and above.
Duration	30–35 minutes
Materials	Open space, Ball or simple sport equipment, Cones, Observation sheet or flipchart, Behaviour cue cards, Pens or markers
Instructions	**Step 1: Set-up (5 min)** Set up a simple, inclusive sport activity (e.g. circle passing, relay, 4v4 possession, cooperative challenge). Explain that the focus is not on performance. The focus is on noticing changes that may suggest a young person needs support. ❗ *Clarify the key rule: Participants should describe what they see, not diagnose its meaning.* **Step 2: Round 1 – Normal play (5–7 min)** Divide participants into two groups: • Group A (4–5 players) → takes part in the activity • Group B (rest of the group, observers) → watches the activity Explain that: • players focus on the activity • observers focus on noticing **participation, mood and energy**, **communication**, **social connection**, **reaction to pressure**, **safety and wellbeing**. Run the activity for 3–4 minutes. After the round, pause the activity and ask observers: • What did you notice? • Who seemed involved? • How did the group interact? Keep this discussion short. **Step 3: Round 2 – Introduce change (5–7 min)** Privately give 2–3 players a behaviour cue card. Ask them to show the behaviour naturally, without exaggeration. (Activity Card 1: Cue Cards) Run the activity again for 3–4 minutes. Observers should notice what changes compared with Round 1. ❗ If time allows, switch roles so both groups experience playing and observing. **Step 4: Observation before interpretation (5–7 min)** Ask observers to describe only what they saw. Use prompts such as: • What changed from Round 1? • What behaviour did you notice? • Did it affect participation or interaction? Record observations on a flipchart. Use neutral language and focus on what happened, not on labelling the person (e.g. instead of “she was aggressive,” say “she reacted strongly after losing the ball”). **Step 5: Concern check using CHANGE (5 min)** Ask participants to reflect on the behaviours observed using the **CHANGE** technique. The “G” and “E” situations will be addressed in the other Activity Cards of this Module.

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	Briefly collect responses. Highlight that a behaviour does not need to be explained to be taken seriously and the focus is on noticing patterns and deciding whether attention or follow-up may be needed. **Step 6: Reflection and closure (5 min)** Summarise the activity by reinforcing: • Facilitators are not expected to diagnose • Their role is to notice changes and take them seriously • Observing early can help prevent situations from becoming more serious
Debrief questions	**1. Observation (What happened?)** • What changes did you notice between the two rounds? • Which signs were easy to notice? • Which were easier to miss? **2. Interpretation (What does it mean?)** • Why is it important to describe behaviour before interpreting it? • What different explanations could there be for the same behaviour? **3. Practice (What does this mean in sport settings?)** • What signs might require attention in real sessions? • Which signs might suggest a need for support or follow-up? • Which situations might involve safety concerns? **4. Transfer (What will I take into my role?)** • What will you pay more attention to in your sessions? • How can you observe without labelling or judging?
Adaptations	• **For younger groups:** use fewer cue cards and simpler language (quiet, upset, not joining). • **For low-mobility groups:** use seated passing, target throwing, or a discussion-based version with scenario cards. • **For large groups:** run several small games at the same time and assign observers to each group. • **For limited equipment:** use paper balls, cones, water bottles, or no equipment. • **For sensitive groups:** remind participants that the behaviours are fictional and should not be linked to real people in the room.

Activity card 2	Content
Activity title	The 30-Second Sideline Check-In
Purpose	To help participants practise responding calmly and supportively when a young person shows signs of distress, withdrawal, frustration, or discomfort during a sport session. The activity focuses on simple, non-clinical language, respectful body language, and avoiding responses that may shame, pressure, or escalate the situation.
Module link	Module 5: Noticing Distress, Responding Supportively, and Signposting Competency focus: Responding in a calm, supportive, and non-judgmental way
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers from 16 y.o. and above.
Duration	30–40 minutes
Materials	Open space, Scenario cards, Response cards, Flipchart or whiteboard, Pens or markers

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Instructions	**Step 1: Set-up (5 min)** Explain that this activity focuses on the **first supportive response** when a facilitator notices that a young person may be struggling. **Key message:** There is no perfect response, just a safe one. A short response is enough. Help the young person feel noticed, not exposed. **Step 2: Introduce the check-in structure (5 min)** Share the phrase *"I noticed you stepped out. Would you like a short break, or do you want to rejoin? You don't have to explain now."* with the participants. Ask the group what they noticed in that response. Present the structure **Notice – Offer – Respect.** • Notice → Say what you observed without labelling (e.g. "I noticed you stepped out of the activity.") • Offer → Give a simple choice or support option ("Would you like a short break, or do you want to rejoin in a smaller role?") • Respect → Do not force explanation or participation ("You don't have to explain now. I'm here if you need me.") **Step 3: Practice in groups (10–12 min)** Divide participants into groups of three: • Facilitator → responds • Young person → acts the situation • Observer → watches and gives feedback Give each group one scenario card and allow one minute for reading. (Activity Card 2: Scenario Cards). Ask the facilitator to prepare a short response using the Notice–Offer–Respect framework (30-second check-in). **Run short rounds:** Act the situation (total 60 seconds): The young person starts first with his/her act, and then the facilitator shares his/her 30-second check-in ❗ Stop the interaction after the check-in (do not continue into problem-solving or discussion). The observer gives feedback on the facilitator's tone (e.g., calm, steady), language (e.g., simple, non-judgmental), pressure (e.g., no forcing or questioning), dignity (e.g., no public exposure or embarrassment), and **choice** (the young person is given options). The feedback should be no more than 2 minutes. After each round, rotate roles so each participant practises being the facilitator (10–12 min). Use 2–3 different scenarios if time allows. **Step 4: Group reflection (5–7 min)** Bring the group back together and proceed with the reflection, using the debriefing questions below. Write helpful phrases on a flipchart. **Step 5: Closure (3–5 min)** Key message: A supportive first response does not need to solve the problem. It should reduce pressure, protect dignity, and keep the door open for support. Reminder to the facilitator to stay within your role.
Debrief questions	**Observation: What happened?** • What kinds of situations did you practise?

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	• What types of responses did you hear? **Experience: How was it lived?** • How did it feel to respond in only 30 seconds? • What made the response feel supportive? • What made some responses more effective than others? • What made it feel difficult? **Interpretation: What does it mean?** • Why can tone and body language matter as much as words? • Why is it important to offer choice rather than force participation? • Why should facilitators avoid asking too many questions in the moment? • Why is it important not to try to solve the situation immediately? **Transfer: What will I take into my role?** • What phrase could you use in your own sessions? • What responses would you avoid using? • How can you protect a young person's dignity when checking in?
Adaptations	• **For younger groups:** use simpler scenarios and sentence starters. • **For low-mobility groups:** conduct the role-play seated or as a discussion-based practice. • **For larger groups:** run several trios at the same time. • **For a limited time:** use only two scenarios and one role rotation. • **For sensitive groups:** allow participants to practise with fictional names and remind them not to use real personal stories. • **For experienced participants:** add complexity by asking them to respond while also keeping the wider group safe and active.

Activity card 3	Content
Activity title	Step In, Step Back, or Step Forward: Knowing Your Role
Purpose	To help participants practise deciding what action to take when a concern arises in a sport session. The activity supports participants to recognise what is within their role, when to respond in the moment, and when to involve additional support, safeguarding procedures, or signposting pathways.
Module link	Module 5: Noticing Distress, Responding Supportively, and Signposting Competency focus: Understanding role boundaries, signposting, and safeguarding
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers from 16 y.o. and above.
Duration	30–40 minutes
Materials	Open space, 3 zone signs placed in different areas [STEP BACK (Observe), STEP IN (Support), STEP FORWARD (Share / Refer)], Flipchart or whiteboard, Pens or markers, Support pathway mapping template (Optional: cones/tape for marking zones)
Instructions	**Step 1: Set-up (3–5 min)** Set up three zones (STEP BACK, STEP IN, STEP FORWARD). Explain that participants will hear short, sport-based scenarios, decide what they would do next, and move to the corresponding zone. Each zone has a meaning: • **STEP BACK** → Observe the situation, notice patterns.

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- **STEP IN** → Respond in the moment with calm, non-clinical support or adapt the activity.
- **STEP FORWARD** → Share and involve the appropriate person or pathway.

Clarify:

- there may not be one perfect answer
- the aim is to make a safe and responsible decision
- STEP BACK does not mean ignore
- STEP FORWARD does not mean panic
- facilitators are not expected to manage serious concerns alone.

Key message: You are not deciding what the problem is; you are deciding what action is safe.

Step 2: Quick decision round (10–12 min)
Read short prompts (NOT full scenarios):

- "A young person is quieter than usual"
- "A young person reacts strongly after mistakes"
- "You hear: 'I don't care anymore'"
- "A young person avoids activities for several sessions."
- "A young person says: 'Please don't tell anyone…'"
- "A young person becomes very angry and throws equipment."

After each prompt:

1. Participants move to a zone immediately
2. Ask 2–3 participants to share why they chose this zone.

Keep the pace quick.

Step 3: Challenge the decision (8–10 min)
Choose 3–4 prompts from the first round and add a new detail, e.g., what if this happens again, becomes more intense, or involves safety.
Example: "A young person is quieter than usual today...and this has happened for the last four sessions in a row."

Ask participants to move to a zone based on this new detail. Ask 2–3 participants to share why they chose to switch to a new zone.

Step 4: Safeguarding & signposting focus (5–7 min)
After Step 3, explain that some situations moved from STEP BACK (observe) or STEP IN (respond) to STEP FORWARD (share/refer) because the concern becomes **repeated**, more **intense**, **unsafe**, or **beyond the facilitator's role**.

If you move to STEP FORWARD, the next question is: what do you actually do?

Explain to participants that STEP FORWARD means using the support system rather than handling the situation alone, and involving the **right person, in the right way**.

Now focus on what STEP FORWARD actually means in practice. Ask participants to **complete or adapt the table using their own organisational or local context**. (Activity Card 3: Support pathway mapping).

Participants should write **at least one real name, role, or service where possible**.
Follow-up discussion

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	Ask 2–3 participants to share: • Who would they go to if they were concerned/unsure? • What should they avoid promising in these situations? Write answers on the flipchart. If participants do not know the answers, emphasise to them that this is an **action point for local follow-up**. **Step 5: Boundary statement practice (5 min)** Ask participants to complete: *"I can…, but I should not… If I am concerned, I should…"* Write answers on the flipchart. **Step 6: Closure (2–3 min)** Reflection using the debriefing questions below. **Final message:** • Observe when you need more information. • Support when a young person needs calm, respectful help in the moment. • Share when the concern is repeated, serious, unsafe, or beyond your role.
Debrief questions	**Observation: What happened?** • What types of situations did you respond to? • Which prompts led people to choose different zones? **Experience: How was it lived?** • Which decisions felt clear? • Which felt uncertain or uncomfortable? • How did it feel to make decisions quickly? **Interpretation: What does it mean?** • What helped you decide when to step back, step in, or step forward? • When would you move from observing or supporting to sharing the concern? • Why is it important not to handle serious situations alone? **Transfer: What will I take into my role?** • What will guide your decisions in real sessions? • What is one step you would take if you were concerned? • Who would you involve in your context?
Adaptations	• **For younger groups:** use simpler zone names (Watch / Help / Ask for help) • **For low mobility:** participants point to zone cards or place prompt cards under the three headings on a table. • **For larger groups:** run in smaller clusters, divide participants into those clusters and ask each team to vote before moving. • **For a limited time:** use fewer prompts and keep only the decision round plus the share pathway check. • **For limited space:** use hand signals: one finger for STEP BACK, two for STEP IN, three for STEP FORWARD. • **For sensitive groups:** remind participants not to share personal stories unless they choose to. Keep all examples fictional. • **Experienced participants:** add "What would you record?" and "What is the next step in your organisation's procedure?"

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Activity Card 1: Cue Cards

Cue card	What the player shows
Withdrawal	Stands back, avoids the ball, stops asking to be included
Low effort	Joins the activity but gives very little energy
Strong reaction	Gets visibly frustrated after a mistake or losing the ball
Over-competitiveness	Tries to control every decision and becomes tense when others make mistakes
Silence	Stops communicating and avoids eye contact
Concerning comment	Says something like “I’m useless at this” or “there’s no point”
Possible safety concern	Appears unwell, distracted, or not able to safely take part

Activity Card 2: Scenario Cards

Scenario	Situation
Walks away	A young person walks away after missing an easy pass
Negative self-talk	A young person says “I’m useless at this”
Frustration	A young person reacts strongly after losing the ball
Withdrawal	A young person stands away from the group
Silence	A young person stops communicating
Low effort	A young person participates with very little energy
Overwhelmed	A young person looks close to tears after feedback

Activity Card 3: Support pathway mapping

If the concern is…	Who should be involved?
Unclear but repeated	
Related to group safety or behaviour	
Possible harm, abuse, self-harm, or serious distress	
Immediate safety risk	
Beyond the facilitator’s role or confidence	
A young person may need ongoing support	

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Module 6. Planning and facilitating MindFit sessions in real settings

Module snapshot

Field	Draft guidance
Module purpose	This module helps youth workers, coaches, educators, and facilitators plan and deliver realistic MindFit sessions in everyday youth work and sport settings. It focuses on practical session design, adapting activities to different groups and conditions, balancing movement with reflection, and evaluating what works in practice.
Competency focus	• Planning realistic and structured sport-for-wellbeing sessions in non-formal education and youth work settings • Adapting activities and facilitation approaches for mixed groups, changing conditions, and different participation needs • Integrating inclusion, reflection, and well-being goals into practical session delivery
Main target users	Youth workers, coaches, sports facilitators, trainers, educators, and volunteers
Core delivery settings	Grassroots sport activities, youth work and non-formal education settings, schools, after-school programmes, community projects, and recreational sport environments, including indoor, outdoor, and low-resource settings.
Suggested methods & tools	Cooperative sport and movement activities, small-group planning tasks, scenario-based adaptation exercises, reflection and debrief discussions, and practical facilitation review tools such as session planning templates and Stop–Start–Continue reflection sheets.

Learning objectives

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- **Describe** the basic principles of planning and facilitating MindFit sessions in non-formal education and sport settings
- **Plan** realistic MindFit sessions for different group sizes, settings, and timeframes
- **Adapt** activities and facilitation approaches to different participation needs and delivery conditions
- **Evaluate** session delivery to identify strengths, challenges, and possible improvements

Theoretical introduction

6.1 Planning realistic MindFit sessions

In many youth and sport settings, practitioners do not control all conditions: space is often shared, time is limited or reduced at short notice, and group participants can change from week to week. Session plans that assume stable conditions can become difficult to use in this reality and may leave practitioners feeling unsuccessful when they are unable to follow a plan exactly. This module, therefore, promotes flexible planning that can be adapted as circumstances change, while still protecting the session's core aims.

MindFit treats a session plan as a flexible structure rather than a fixed script. In practice, a MindFit session includes four essential elements:

Session phase	Purpose
Opening/check-in	Welcome participants, introduce the focus, and create connection

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Warm-up	Build energy, interaction, and readiness to participate
Main activity	Explore the theme through movement, teamwork, challenge, or cooperation
Reflection / debrief	Help participants connect the activity with emotions, behaviour, communication, or learning
Closing	End positively and support a calm transition out of the session

What this means for you: Good sessions are usually simple, structured, adaptable, and participant-focused.

6.2 Balancing activity, reflection, and facilitation

The MindFit framework emphasises that effective practice combines physical activity with reflection and supportive facilitation. This means that sport provides the context for building connection, confidence, emotional regulation, and resilience, beyond exercise.

In practical terms:

- The **activity** provides the experience (e.g. cooperation, challenge, managing mistakes).
- **Reflection** helps participants notice what happened, how they felt, and what they can take away.
- **Facilitation** ensures that the activity remains safe, inclusive, and linked to mental well-being.

Question to ask if working under pressure: *"If I only have 45 minutes today, what is the one main activity and one reflection question that will still connect this session to mental well-being?"*

6.3 Adapting for time, place, age, and ability

The MindFit framework is designed for use across schools, clubs, NGOs, youth centres, grassroots sport environments, and community settings. As a result, each module supports adaptation to different conditions.

Area to adapt	Explanation
Time	Sessions may be 30, 45, 60, or 90 minutes. A useful approach is to design a shorter core session that can be expanded or reduced by adjusting activity rounds, instructions, or reflection time.
Space	Activities should be suitable for use in large sports halls, small indoor rooms, outdoor courts, or multi-use community spaces. Indoor/outdoor and "low-space" options.
Group size	Group numbers may change from session to session. Activities should work with both smaller and larger groups by using stations, pairs, sub-groups, or parallel tasks.
Equipment	Sessions should remain usable even with limited equipment by using simple, adaptable, or improvised materials where needed.
Energy levels and pace	Group energy and focus may change during delivery. Facilitators may need to shorten activities, simplify instructions, add breaks, or adjust pacing depending on the group response.

What this means for you: Plan "core plus options": a clear core structure with simple adjustments ready for different time, space, and group scenarios.

6.4 Facilitating participation and inclusion

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The MindFit toolkit treats inclusion as a core design principle. This means that every MindFit session should consider **who** can participate, **how** they can participate, and **what** may prevent some young people from fully participating. Young people are more likely to stay engaged when activities feel safe, inclusive, and manageable.

In practice, facilitating participation and inclusion in MindFit sessions involves:

- **Offering roles and tasks that do not depend only on physical ability**, such as observer, organiser, or motivator.
- **Using clear and simple instructions, demonstrations, and visual cues**, especially in multilingual or mixed-ability groups.
- **Reducing unnecessary competition and pressure** when this may exclude or discourage some participants (for example, by focusing on team challenges rather than individual performance).
- **Paying attention to who is on the margins of the activity** and making small adjustments to bring them in (for example, changing team sizes, rotating roles, or adapting rules).
- **Adapting activities, pacing, or groupings** when participation, confidence, or engagement changes during the session.

6.5 Simple evaluation and follow-up

Evaluation tools should be simple enough to use in busy youth work and sport environments. MindFit promotes:

- **Brief feedback from young people**, using one or two of the following methods:
  - quick group discussions;
  - one-word check-outs;
  - mood cards;
  - thumbs up/down;
  - reflection circles.
- **A one-page facilitator reflection sheet** completed by the facilitator immediately after the session.
- **Short notes on group dynamics, participation, and any concerns** that may need follow-up or safeguarding, linked to Module 5.

What this means for you: Support continuous improvement while keeping documentation light, focused, and practical.

Key messages for practitioners

- A MindFit session is effective when it includes a clear opening, one meaningful activity, a short reflection, and a simple closure, even if the details change.
- Small, regular adjustments based on observation and feedback.
- Inclusion is built through many small decisions: offering different roles, reducing unnecessary pressure, and paying attention to who is on the margins of participation.
- Create safe, supportive, and engaging conditions for participation and reflection.
- Brief, simple review after each session helps see what worked, what to change next time, and how participation and group dynamics are evolving.

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Lesson plan

Lesson plan field	Draft content
Lesson/session title	Planning and Adapting MindFit Sessions in Real Settings
Module link	Module 6 – Planning and facilitating MindFit sessions in real settings
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers (16+)
Duration	75–90 minutes
Setting	Indoor or outdoor sport and non-formal education settings
Group size	8–24 participants
Aim of the session	To help participants plan, adapt, and review realistic MindFit sessions that remain inclusive, flexible, and practical under different delivery conditions.
Learning objectives	• Describe the basic principles of planning and facilitating MindFit sessions in non-formal education and sport settings. • Plan realistic MindFit sessions for different group sizes, settings, and timeframes. • Adapt activities and facilitation approaches to different participation needs and delivery conditions. • Evaluate session delivery to identify strengths, challenges, and possible improvements.
Materials needed & Handouts	MindFit Session Planning Template, Stop–Start–Continue reflection sheet, Flipchart paper, Pens/markers, Scenario/constraint cards, Simple sports equipment
Preparation notes	• Prepare one example MindFit session plan and constraint cards (Activity Card 2). • Print the MindFit Session Planning Template (Activity Card 1). • Print or prepare the Stop–Start–Continue reflection sheet (Activity Card 3). • Ensure sufficient workspace for small-group planning and discussion. • Select simple sport or non-formal education activities suitable for the group context. • Prepare flipchart paper or digital collaboration tools for group planning and reflection activities.
Warm-up/opening	**Warm-up / opening (10–15 minutes)** Start with a short pair or small-group discussion: “What usually makes facilitation difficult in real youth or sport settings?” Invite participants to share their own real-life examples and experiences.
Main activity	**Part 1 – MindFit Session Builder (25–30 minutes)** Run Activity Card 1: *MindFit Session Builder* Participants work in small groups to choose a session focus, build a realistic session structure, respond to delivery constraints and identify practical adaptations. **Part 2 – Adapting a Session Under Real Constraints (25–30 minutes)** Run Activity Card 2: *Adapting a Session Under Real Constraints* Participants receive new delivery challenges and adapt an existing session plan in response. **Part 3 – Quick Session Review: Stop, Start, Continue (10–15 minutes)** Run Activity Card 3: *Quick Session Review: Stop, Start, Continue*

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	Ask participants to complete a short individual reflection using the three prompts: STOP, START and CONTINUE. Then ask participants to reflect briefly on participation and inclusion, who joined in easily, who stayed on the margins and what small facilitation adjustments may help next time. If working in pairs or co-facilitator teams, invite participants to exchange reflections and agree on one shared improvement for future sessions.
Reflection / debrief 10 minutes	• What helped you decide what to keep, change, or adapt during the activities? • What did the activities help you understand about planning and facilitating MindFit sessions in real conditions? • What has become clearer to you about adapting activities, pacing, or facilitation approaches? • What is one thing you will pay more attention to in your own sessions? • What is one practical adjustment or strategy you would use in future MindFit sessions?
Adaptation options	• **For less experienced groups:** provide example activities, reflection questions, or planning templates. • **For experienced facilitators:** introduce multiple delivery constraints or more complex participation challenges. • **For a limited time:** focus on one planning activity, one adaptation round, and a shorter Stop–Start–Continue reflection. • **For low-mobility groups:** conduct activities such as seated planning and discussion exercises. • **For multilingual groups:** use visual planning tools, keywords, demonstrations, and simplified instructions. • **For larger groups:** assign different session themes and compare facilitation approaches across groups. • **For co-facilitator teams:** encourage shared planning, joint reflection, and collaborative review.
Safeguarding note	Facilitators should maintain safe, inclusive, and low-pressure participation throughout the session. Activities should not create unnecessary embarrassment, exclusion, or excessive competition. During planning, adaptation, and review activities: • avoid labelling participants or discussing personal situations publicly; • encourage respectful communication and constructive feedback; • reinforce that participants can engage at different levels; • ensure reflection remains focused on facilitation practice rather than personal disclosure. If wellbeing or safeguarding concerns arise during discussions or activities, facilitators should follow the procedures and role boundaries outlined in other modules.
Evaluation prompt	At the end of the session, ask participants to complete a short reflection: • One thing I understood better about planning or facilitating MindFit sessions • One adaptation or facilitation strategy I would use differently in future sessions • One area where I would like more confidence, practice, or guidance

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Activity cards

Activity card 1	Content
Activity title	MindFit Session Builder
Purpose	To help facilitators design a realistic MindFit session, using a simple planning structure.
Module link	Module 6 – Planning and facilitating MindFit sessions in real settings.
Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers (16+).
Duration	15–20 minutes (facilitator preparation time).
Materials	MindFit Session Planning Template (one page), pen or digital device, access to MindFit activity cards and modules
Instructions	**Step 1 – Define the focus (3-5 minutes)** Ask yourself: *"What is the main thing I want this group to work on today?"* Write a short aim in one sentence, for example, "To help participants notice what helps them stay calm under pressure." **Step 2 – Choose one core activity (5 minutes)** Select one activity card from Modules 1–5 that fits your aim, group, and space. Decide on the approximate duration of the activity. **Step 3 – Plan opening and closure (3–5 minutes)** Plan a simple **opening** (5–10 minutes) that welcomes the group, states the aim in simple language and sets 2–3 basic ground rules. Plan a simple **closure** (5 minutes) that summarises one or two key messages and includes a short check-out (e.g. "one word about how you feel now"). **Step 4 – Prepare activity materials and 3–4 reflection questions (5–10 minutes)** Check and prepare the activity's respective materials. Shortlist 3–4 questions from the debrief guide and plan to ask at least 2–3 of these, depending on time and energy. **Step 5 – Note key adaptations (3–5 minutes)** On your planning template, write brief notes for: **Time adaptation**, i.e. if time is shorter, reduce to one round / shorten the reflection / skip the warm-up. **Space adaptation**, i.e. if space is limited, use smaller teams / change to walking/use a circle-based version. **Group adaptation,** i.e. if numbers change, adjust team size / create extra stations / work in one group instead of two. This gives you a clear core plan plus ready alternatives if conditions change.

Activity card 2	Content
Activity title	**Adapting a Session Under Real Constraints**
Purpose	To help facilitators practise adapting MindFit sessions safely and confidently when conditions change (time, space, group size).
Module link	Module 6 – Planning and facilitating MindFit sessions in real settings.

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Target group and age	Youth workers, coaches, sports professionals, trainers, educators, and volunteers (16+). For use in training, supervision, team meetings, or professional development.
Duration	30–40 minutes
Materials	One MindFit session plan per group (e.g. 45–60 minutes), scenario cards with constraints (printed or written on paper), flipchart or large paper, markers
Instructions	**Step 1 – Set-up (5 minutes)** Divide participants into small groups of 3–5. Give each group: • One existing MindFit session plan (or example session) of about 45–60 minutes. • A blank sheet or planning template to note adaptations. Explain that the aim is to practise realistic adaptation, not to create the "perfect" session. **Step 2 – Round 1: New constraint appears (10–15 minutes)** Give each group one constraint card. Examples: • "Your 60-minute slot has been reduced to 30 minutes." • "You must move from an outdoor pitch to a smaller indoor room." • "Double the number of young people has arrived." • "Half the group are new and less confident with sport." • "The group becomes low-energy." • "Some participants dominate the activity." Ask groups to adapt their plan so that it **still includes** (a) a short opening, (b) one main activity and (c) one reflection moment. Tell participants to note which elements they keep, which they shorten, change, or remove, and any new instructions needed to keep the session inclusive and safe. **Step 3 – Round 2: Share adapted plans (10–15 minutes)** Each group presents: • The original session focus and structure (very briefly). • The constraint they received. • The key changes they made and why. As they present, note useful strategies on a flipchart. **Step 4 – Reflection and closure (5 minutes)** Guide a short group discussion based on the debriefing questions below. Close by reinforcing that adapting a plan in response to real conditions is part of responsible and professional practice, not a sign of failure.
Debrief questions	• What helped you decide what to keep and what to change? • How did you make sure everyone could still participate? • What is one adaptation idea you can use in your next real session?
Adaptations	• **For less experienced groups:** provide example activities or reflection questions. • **For experienced facilitators:** introduce multiple challenges at the same time. • **For a limited time:** focus only on the main activity and reflection phases. • **For low-mobility groups:** conduct the activity as a seated planning workshop. • **For larger groups:** assign different themes and compare planning approaches.

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Activity card 3	Content
Activity title	Quick Session Review: Stop, Start, Continue
Purpose	To provide facilitators with a simple structure for reviewing each MindFit session and planning small, concrete improvements.
Module link	Module 6 – Planning and facilitating MindFit sessions in real settings.
Target group and age	Facilitators using MindFit Toolkit
Duration	10–15 minutes.
Materials	Stop–Start–Continue reflection sheet (one page), flipchart, pen or digital device
Instructions	**Step 1 – Individual reflection (5–7 minutes)** Right after the session, encourage participants to find a quiet spot. Ask them to complete three prompts, keeping sentences short and specific: • **STOP** – "One thing I will stop doing or reduce next time." • **START** – "One thing I will start doing next time." • **CONTINUE** – "One thing that worked well and I will keep." **Step 2 – Optional co-facilitator exchange (5–8 minutes)** If two or more facilitators ran the session, ask that: • Each person shares their Stop–Start–Continue points. • Together, agree on **one priority change** for the next MindFit session. Tell the participants to note this shared action on the reflection sheet. **Step 3 – Note participation and inclusion (2–3 minutes)** Ask participants to answer the two questions below, focusing on participation and inclusion: • "Who joined in easily?" • "Who held back or stayed on the margins?" Explain to the participants that these brief notes (e.g. "Two participants stayed on the side during competitive parts; adjust rules next time.") will help them plan small adjustments for future sessions. **Step 4 – Storage and follow-up (2–3 minutes)** Encourage participants to file the reflection sheet by group and date (in a folder or digitally). The sheets will be used in three ways: • To inform their next session plan. • To notice patterns over time (e.g. timing, inclusion, energy). • To support supervision, peer reflection, or project reporting.
Debrief questions	• How did you feel during this session (energy, confidence, calm, stress), and where did that show up in your facilitation? • Which moments in the session are you most satisfied with, and why? • Which moments felt difficult or uncomfortable for you, and what made them difficult? • How did your choices (rules, instructions, tone, positioning in the space) influence who joined in and who held back? • What is one small adjustment in your own behaviour or style that you would like to try next time?
Adaptations	• **For individual facilitators:** complete the reflection independently and identify one priority adjustment for the next session.

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	• **For co-facilitators or teams:** compare reflections and agree on shared improvements or follow-up actions. • **For beginner facilitators:** provide example answers or sentence starters to support reflection. • **For experienced facilitators:** add prompts related to pacing, inclusion, group dynamics, or facilitation style. • **For a limited time:** focus only on one question under each category (Stop, Start, Continue). • **For digital delivery:** use shared documents, online forms, or collaborative boards instead of paper sheets. • **For multilingual groups:** allow short notes, keywords, or visual symbols instead of full written sentences. • **For supervision or mentoring settings:** use the reflection sheet as a starting point for peer feedback or facilitator support discussions.

Activity Card 1: MindFit Session Builder

Planning field	**Your session plan**
Session title	
Facilitator(s)	
Date and location	
Target group, age and number of participants	
Main aim	
Selected module and activity card	
Materials needed	
Adaptation, Inclusion and safety	
Self-reflection & follow up actions	

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Further Resources and Useful Links

Youth work, facilitation, and non-formal education

- Council of Europe Youth Department. (n.d.). *Youth Department resources*. https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth
- EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership. (n.d.). *Mental health and well-being*. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/mental-health-and-well-being
- SALTO-YOUTH. (n.d.). *Tools and resources for European youth work and training*. https://www.salto-youth.net/
  The platform includes training resources, publications, evaluation guidance, and a Toolbox for Training and Youth Work.

Sport, inclusion, and well-being

- European Commission. (2026). *Physical activity and health*. https://sport.ec.europa.eu/policies/sport-and-society/physical-activity-and-health
- European Commission. (2022). *Social inclusion through sport*. https://sport.ec.europa.eu/policies/sport-and-society/social-inclusion
- International Safeguards for Children in Sport. (n.d.). *The eight International Safeguards for Children in Sport*. https://safeinsport.org/8-safeguards/

Adolescent mental health and safeguarding

- UNICEF. (n.d.). *Adolescent Mental Health Hub*. https://www.unicef.org/adolescentmentalhealthhub/
- World Health Organization & UNICEF. (n.d.). *Helping Adolescents Thrive programme*. https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/promotion-prevention/who-unicef-helping-adolescents-thrive-programme

Optional Multimedia Resources

- Youth to Youth International. (n.d.). *Y2Y Teens Discuss Stress, Anxiety and Mental Health* [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgZhHxUwllU
- UNICEF. (n.d.). *How to support young people's mental health* [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk_UuIx_-O8
- EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership. (2021). *Covid-19 and young people's mental health* [Podcast]. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/mental-health-and-well-being

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