

sky4.0



COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY



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CURRICULUM

	A	B	C	E
	Didactic Unit	Training Time (in minutes)	Unit Effects	References for teachers
1.	Introduction	45 (dependent on the size of the training group)	<p>Help the training participants get to know each other.</p> <p>Prepare the participants to understand the concept of cognitive flexibility by spotting differences in reasoning.</p> <p>The trainees will be acquainted with the structure of the training and its intended outcomes.</p>	<p>Activity 1.1: Warm-up session.</p> <p>Activity 1.2: Preparing to understand the concept.</p> <p>Activity 1.3: Training structure and intended outcome.</p>
2.	Definition of the concept	100	<p>The trainees will be acquainted with the theoretical bases of cognitive rigidity and cognitive flexibility from the perspectives of evolutionary biology and psychology.</p> <p>The trainees will understand the nature of habits and their tendency to reduce cognitive flexibility.</p> <p>The trainees will understand a) the difference between multitasking and cognitive flexibility, and b) the importance of concentrating in order to acquire cognitive flexibility skills.</p> <p>The trainees will be able to increase their concentration abilities by using notation tools.</p>	<p>Activity 2.1: Slow and fast thinking when taking decisions.</p> <p>Activity 2.2: Habits and cognitive rigidity.</p> <p>Activity 2.3: Multitasking is not cognitive flexibility.</p> <p>Activity 2.4: The Cornell method of notation.</p>
3.	Understanding of the concept – gap analysis	90	The trainees will understand how the initial anchor in thinking reduces our ability to solve problems	Activity 3.1: Case study.

			The trainees will see that the process of finding a solution can be inefficient if we are not able to look at the problem from a wider perspective.	“Dividing camels” Activity 3.1: “Bonus” case study.
4.	Improving mindful thinking skills	60	The trainees will understand the benefits of mindfulness techniques in enhancing cognitive flexibility skills such as awareness, concentration, and divergent thinking. Trainees will be confident that they can acquire mindful thinking techniques. The trainees will be able to observe, describe, and analyse phenomena in a mindful way. The trainees will practise observing, describing, and analysing.	Activity 4.1: Mindfulness – definition. Activity 4.2: “Being in the moment” exercise. Activity 4.3: “Peel the mandarin” exercise.
5.	Improving listening skills	115	The trainees will know basic facts about how we listen to others. The trainees will be acquainted with the sensing, processing, and responding skills of active-empathic listening. The trainees will improve their concentration during listening by improving their sensing abilities. The trainees will improve the processing and responding abilities of active-empathic listening. The participants will use their listening abilities in practice.	Activity 5.1: Basic facts about listening. Activity 5.2: Check your listening abilities. Activity 5.3: Improve your concentration during listening. Activity 5.4: Use your processing and responding abilities. Activity 5.5: Practice your listening abilities.
6	Improving interpersonal skills – opening vocabulary	200	The trainees will understand the impact of questions or sentences on their interlocutors’ feelings and will be acquainted with examples of questions or sentences that improve or worsen relations.	Activity 6.1: Motivating and demotivating

			<p>The trainees will understand the link between words, moods, and attitudes; they will be aware of the role of negative and positive words in creating negative or positive sentiments.</p> <p>The participants will improve their ability to find positive words and sentences.</p> <p>The trainees will understand the impact of questions or sentences on their interlocutors' feelings; they will see examples of questions or sentences that improve or worsen relations.</p> <p>The participants will practise the use of questions that facilitate cognitive flexibility by avoiding suggestive or judgemental questions.</p> <p>The participants will practise the use of opening questions that facilitate a cognitive flexibility approach in interpersonal relations.</p>	<p>sentences – role playing.</p> <p>Activity 6.2: Positive and negative words and sentences.</p> <p>Activity 6.3: Opening and closing questions.</p> <p>Activity 6.4: Practice your open questions.</p> <p>Activity 6.5: 12-question contest.</p>
7	Improving interpersonal skills – final case study	110	<p>In a practical situation, the participants will use a set of open questions that facilitate the cognitive flexibility approach.</p> <p>The objective is to summarise methods that help activate cognitive flexibility when solving problems.</p> <p>The participants will acquire skills in using open questions to create a good mood in discussion.</p> <p>The participants will acquire skills in using open questions to define the real goal in a given situation.</p> <p>The participants will be acquainted with forms of questions that introduce the motivation to change.</p> <p>The participants will be acquainted with forms of questions that enable the interlocutor to imagine the benefits of change.</p> <p>The participants will be able to use all these skills.</p>	<p>Activity 7.1 Opening dialogue in a difficult situation.</p> <p>Activity 7.2 Good mood.</p> <p>Activity 7.3 What is the goal?</p> <p>Activity 7.4 Let's make a change.</p>

				<p>Activity 7.5 Freezing the change and making a plan of action.</p> <p>Activity 7.6 Summary of the training.</p>
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1 INTRODUCTION

DIDACTIC UNIT 1. INTRODUCTION

Theoretical context:

Learning activity 1.1

We have the ability and natural tendency to look at something from an infinite number of angles. For example, a group of individuals can be considered from different perspectives: physical traits (male/female, age, hair colour etc.), emotional characteristics (calm, open etc), geographical (place of birth, place of residence etc.). Such human abilities are at the root of the concept of cognitive flexibility, thanks to which we can look at something from an infinite number of angles and solve a problem in an infinite number of ways.

Learning activity 1.2

Speaking different languages is an example of our diversity. Despite the myth of The Tower of Babel, such diversity can be a great advantage because humans have the ability to solve problems in multiple ways. There are always many ways to reach the same goal, but some are more efficient than others. Nevertheless, the question is whether a person is able to act in multiple ways and be willing to be flexible in their way of solving problems or taking decisions. If we have deficiencies in this area, the question is whether we can learn how to improve our cognitive flexibility

1.1 Warm-up session

LEARNING ACTIVITY 1.1	Warm-up session
Activity duration	45 minutes (duration depends on the number of participants)
Activity objective	Help the participants get to know each other
Guidance for correct activity progress	
Activity materials	<p>Notebook and pen for every participant</p> <p>Presentation sheet (attachment 1). Every participant should have as many sheets as the number of trainees in the classroom minus 1.</p> <p>Slide numbers: 2–4</p>
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask the participants to present themselves for not more than 2 minutes. Do not give any cues on what to say during the self-presentation. During the presentations, trainees should note 1 to 3 characteristic details about the person who is giving the presentation. Every person should be described on a separate piece of paper. 2. Let participants sort the notes about their peers into not less than 3 subgroups. The students are free to decide the number of groups and the sorting method.

	3. Ask participants to explain their sorting methods and present their reasons for choosing them.
Activity evaluation	<p>Discuss the outcome of the exercise with the group. You can use the following questions:</p> <p>Who used the best sorting type?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When can we say that one solution is better than another? • Why can there be different solutions to the same problem? (Drive the attention of the trainees to the link between the goal and the sorting methods). • What is the importance of having different solutions to the same problem?

1.2 Preparing to understand the concept

LEARNING ACTIVITY 1.2	Preparing to understand the concept
Activity duration	20 minutes
Activity objective	Prepare the participants to understand the concept of cognitive flexibility by spotting differences in reasoning and showing the importance of a multifaceted approach to solving problems
Guidance for activity development	
Activity materials	slide numbers 5–6
Methodology	Minilecture on the human ability to change perspective in the reasoning process
Activity evaluation	<p>Discuss the possibility that participants can profit from flexible cognitive skills in their working environment. You can use open questions to the trainees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you employ a multifaceted approach to problem solving in your working environment? • Could you give an example? • To what extent is it important to use this approach in your company? • What can you gain by using this approach?

1.3 Training structure and intended outcome

LEARNING ACTIVITY 1.3	Training structure and intended outcome
Activity duration	10 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will be acquainted with the structure of the training and its intended outcomes
Guidance for correct development of the activity	

Activity materials	slides: 7
Methodology	Inform the participants about the training content, which will be divided into 3 parts: the first will focus on explaining the formation of habits and their role in cognitive rigidity; the second will show ways in which you can improve your interpersonal skills related to cognitive flexibility, such as mindfulness and listening skills; the third will concentrate on techniques that enable the use of flexible cognitive skills in the work environment, especially when solving problems.
Activity evaluation	Ask the group: What knowledge and skills do you hope to acquire as a result of this training? If necessary, add that the training should a) increase participants' understanding of emotions and reactions, b) explain the importance of cognitive flexibility in work environments, and c) show how to increase cognitive flexibility.

2 DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT

DIDACTIC UNIT 2 – DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT
<p>Theoretical context:</p> <p>Learning activity 2.1,</p> <p>Our brain has a tendency to use shortcuts when making decisions. We try to solve problems using our intuition and presentiments instead of rational thinking. Thanks to this, we are able quickly recognize whether somebody is smiling or not, but we need some time and effort to solve problems that are new for us or require cognitive effort. It is interesting that artificial intelligence reacts in the opposite way to our brains (slide 8). According to the findings of Daniel Kahneman et al., we mainly take decisions quickly, but this is the basis of an erroneous and so-called heuristic decision-making process (slide 9) (see more in Daniel Kahneman's, Thinking, Fast and Slow). Our brains' dual approach in decision-making processes has a great influence in different situations. The majority of our decisions are taken by so-called system 1, which is fast, unconscious, automatic, and intuitive. However, this decision-making system is also easy to fool. For example, when coming home from work we are able to drive a car in 'stand-by' mode, without thinking about our learned driving process; however, when something unexpected happens on the road, our brain suddenly switches from an unconscious to a conscious way of thinking: so-called 'system 2'. In this mode, we act rather slowly in a controlled way; we take informed decisions by analysing the broad context of the situation.</p> <p>Nevertheless, this system requires more energy, therefore our brains have the tendency to use system 1 as often as possible instead of system 2 (slide 10) We tend to do things habitually unless something unexpected happens. This type of decision making is also simply explained by Paul MacLean's triune brain theory (1960) (slides 11–12). The same happens in our daily routine work: we learn to do things habitually (slide 13), but this increases cognitive rigidity, a state in which we experience problems in acting and switching from one way of thinking about things to acting and thinking about them different way.</p>

Learning activity 2.2

The patterns of our perception prevent us finding solutions. We are stuck within the boundaries of our perception, as shown by the dots example (slide 15). Usually, when we see dots arranged as they are in the slide, our mind automatically links the dots in the form of a square. In psychology this is called the Principle of Closure. The Principle of Closure refers to the belief held in the Gestalt school of psychology that the human brain is inclined to perceive forms and figures in their entirely and complete appearance in spite of the absence of one or more parts.

Our brain likes habits. Thanks to habits we feel safe because we are following a neurobiological path that has already been well developed by our previous actions. The question is whether we can find enough inner strength to counteract shortcuts in thinking, which requires overcoming habits. All of this goes against one of the most powerful human emotions: the tendency to want to feel safe.

Learning activity 2.3

Our brains like new things, but constant changing – so-called multitasking – is counter-effective. The right approach is to pay attention to only one thing at once, and then to switch to something else. Such concentration makes it possible for us to find the cause of the problem and to avoid focusing on symptoms. Sometimes it enables us to question the status quo of the situation and to look at from a general perspective. When we do this, we are better prepared to pay attention to the details of the problem. It is also useful to take a break from trying to solve a problem and then return to it with fresh ideas. (Paul J. H. Schoemaker, Steve Krupp and Samantha Howland, “Strategic Leadership: The Essential Skills”, from the January–February 2013 Issue of Harvard Business Review.) Some useful remarks on concentration and distraction can also be found in the following article: <https://hbr.org/2019/12/10-quick-tips-for-avoiding-distractions-at-work?autocomplete=true>

Learning activity 2.4

A good example of a summarizing technique which consists of 4 elements is presented by the Cornell method of notation (see attachment 3):

1. Title of the subject
2. List of keywords
3. Notes attached to the keywords
4. Summary of the subject

2.1 Slow and fast thinking when taking decisions

LEARNING ACTIVITY 2.1	Slow and fast thinking when taking decisions
Activity duration	30 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will be acquainted with the theoretical basis of cognitive rigidity and cognitive flexibility from the perspectives of psychology and evolutionary biology
Guidance for the development of the activity	

Activity materials	Slides 8–13
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use the puzzle from slide 8 and its mathematical explanation. 2. Ask the questions on slide 9: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it true that the man in the photograph is smiling? • Is 50 the result of the equation? • Which one of these two questions would be easily solved by artificial intelligence? • Why did one task take longer than the other?
Activity evaluation	Explain the characteristics of system 1 and system 2, their psychological and biological bases, and the implications for the forming of habits

2.2 Habits and cognitive rigidity

LEARNING ACTIVITY 2.2	Habits and cognitive rigidity
Activity duration	30 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will understand the nature of habits and their tendency to increase cognitive rigidity.
Guidance for the correct development of the activity	
Activity materials	Slides 14–17 Film, Alfred Korzybski – how the nervous system “abstracts” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLX84Q-lkUI
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain how our perception and interpretation of things is formed by our thoughts, behaviours, habits, attitudes, and convictions (slide 14); show the film in which Alfred Korzybski presents “How the nervous system ‘abstracts’”; 2. Ask the trainees to connect the nine points on slide 15 by drawing not more than 4 straight lines and without lifting the pen; 3. Explain the habit loop (slide 16); 4. Divide the participants into subgroups of 3–4 members. Ask the groups to find 3 examples of their habits at work; 5. Write examples of these habits on the flipchart.
Activity evaluation	Discuss the positive and negative outcomes of the listed habits and their impact on employee efficiency (slide 17)

2.3 Multitasking is not cognitive flexibility

LEARNING ACTIVITY 2.3	Multitasking is not cognitive flexibility
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Activity duration	20 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will understand a) the difference between multitasking and cognitive flexibility, and b) the need for concentration as the primary element in acquiring flexible cognitive skills.
Guidance for the development of the activity	
Activity materials	Slides 18–20 Attachment 2: Multitasking sheet
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show an example of a pop-up e-mail notification as a habit trigger that leads to loss of concentration and a multitasking approach to work (slide 18). You can skip this part of the training if the students have already presented similar habit triggers during the previous exercise. 2. Do the multitasking exercise: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Give the students the Multitasking sheet. Explain that in a moment you will start a timer (you can use any internet timer application). Ask the students to write COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY in the white rows and numbers from 1 to 20 in the grey rows. Ask them to check and note how many seconds they needed to complete this task. b) Ask them to fold the sheet and put the written part face down; c) Ask the students to do the same exercise in the following order: write a letter (in the white square) then a number (in the grey row) and continue this way until they reach the last row. Ask them to check how long they needed to complete the task; d) Ask them to unfold the sheet and compare how long it took to complete both parts of the exercise. <p>Usually, it takes twice as long to write the answers in the 2nd scenario than in the 1st. This is due to the fact that in the second scenario the brain has to find a solution without resorting to habitual ways of thinking.</p> <p>Note, however, that some participants (especially those with a mathematical or IT background) can demonstrate extraordinary skills when finding a solution; they don't need longer to find a solution in scenario 2 because they treat the problem like an algorithm that mentally links both rows in the exercise.</p>
Activity evaluation	Emphasise the need to concentrate on one problem at a time.

2.4 Cornell method of notation

LEARNING ACTIVITY 2.4	Cornell method of notation
Activity duration	20 minutes

Activity objective	The trainees will be able to increase their concentration abilities by using notation tools
Guidance for the development of the activity	
Activity materials	Slides 6–20 and Slide 21 Attachment 3: Cornell method of notation
Methodology	Ask the participants to fill in the blank spaces in attachment 3. During this task, show slides 6–20 on the screen. Compare the students' definitions of cognitive flexibility.
Activity evaluation	Describe the Cornell notation method (slide 21) and compare it to the cognitive flexibility skills presented in the aforementioned article, "Strategic Leadership: The Essential Skills".

3 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT – GAP ANALYSIS

DIDACTIC UNIT 3 – UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT – GAP ANALYSIS	
<p>Theoretical context: We know that while evaluating and making decisions we have a tendency to stick to the initial information. In consequence, we try to find solutions to problems using previously acquired information; however, we forget that there might be other solutions and that we might be able to do things in a different way. This tendency, which is called the anchoring effect, was explained by social psychologist Muzafer Sherif et al. in an article entitled "Assimilation and contrast effects of anchoring stimuli on judgments" and later developed by Kahneman and Tversky, who established that people don't shift far enough away from the mentally established anchor (see f.ex. Tversky, A.; Kahneman, D. (1974). "Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases". Science. 185). This attitude is at the root of the rigidity that prevents the mind shifting attention in order to find creative solutions. The second case included in this didactic unit also refers to the basic definitions of company strategy based on the ideas of J.B. Quinn in his book "Strategies for change: Logical Incrementalism", ed. 1980</p>	

3.1 Case study: "Dividing camels"

LEARNING ACTIVITY 3.1	Case study "Dividing camels"
Activity duration	15 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will understand how the initial anchor reduces our freedom of thought when attempting to solve problems.

Activity materials	Slide 22, film https://www.ted.com/talks/william_ury_the_walk_from_no_to_yes (Use the initial 2 minutes of the film)
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide the students into groups of 3–4 members. Ask them to solve the following puzzle: An old man left 17 camels to his 3 sons in his will. He decided that half of the camels should go to the oldest son, a third to the second son, and a ninth to the youngest. How would you solve their problem? (slide 23); 2. Show the film: https://www.ted.com/talks/william_ury_the_walk_from_no_to_yes (first 2 minutes); 3. Inform that the solution presented in the film takes a mathematical perspective; ask participants to find other solutions using different perspectives; 4. If required, show other perspectives, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economical (sell the camels and divide the money); • Social (take care of the camels altogether and divide the benefits according to the father's will).
Activity evaluation	Discuss the results. Check what was the main reason that the majority of the groups considered only one solution (if that was the case).

3.2 Case study: “Bonus”

LEARNING ACTIVITY 3.2	“Bonus” case study
Activity duration	75 minutes. The exact duration depends to some extent on the number of groups.
Activity objective	The trainees will see that the process of finding a solution can be inefficient if we are not able to look at a problem from a wider perspective.
Guidance for development of the activity	
Activity materials	<p>Blackboard or Flipchart.</p> <p>Give copies of the case study text to all trainees (Attachment 4: initial information and characteristics of employees), slides 25–31</p>
Methodology	The trainees should understand that the initial information acquired by the brain heavily influences future judgments. This scenario is about awarding bonuses to employees, which is a kind of initial anchor that is imposed on the trainees. In order to solve this problem, company managers should establish in advance the company's present situation and why only a fraction of the bonuses awarded in previous quarters can now be given. In order to achieve this, there is a need to shift attention from the present situation (<i>we have to allocate the bonus</i>) to the real goal (<i>we have to find a way to assure the future of our company</i>). By making such a shift in thinking, we start to understand that the bonus allocation is just a tool to implement company strategy. During this case

study, groups usually concentrate on people problems: they have to negotiate remuneration for employees, but they have a tendency to want to give the largest bonuses possible. This is also a result of anchoring bias, which limits freedom of thought and makes it hard to find a solution. The anchoring effect causes confusion in differentiating between the purpose and the goal. In the “Bonus” case, participants usually stick rigidly to the goal, i.e. to allocating bonuses, whereas they forget that the real problem is to find the purpose (the real sense) of bonus allocation.

The first part of the case (points 1–9 below) should show the pitfalls of rigid thinking in problem solution. While discussing the following points concerning company strategy, they should see how to escape cognitive anchor traps.

- Vision, mission, and purpose: what will the world be like and what will the purpose of the firm be in its business and social surroundings?
- Policy and values: what are the rules or guidelines that limit what the company can do? What is good and what is bad from the point of view of the company’s values?
- Goal: what should be achieved and by when?
- Plan of action: step-by-step sequence of actions necessary to achieve the major objectives;
- Strategy: Pattern that integrates an organization's major goals, policies, and action sequences into a cohesive whole.

The trainees will see the value of having a strategy when solving business problems. They should discuss the reasons behind their initial solution to the problem. During the exercise, they should recognize the nature of related cognitive aspects such as analytical or creative thinking.

During the case, leave the trainees to freely express their solutions; use open questions and ask them to find a mutual solution to the problem. Take the following steps to implement the case:

1. Present the case problem to the group (slide number 25):
XYZ is a medium-sized company specializing in production of spare parts for the aeronautical industry. According to company policy, some employees used to be remunerated in a system of monthly wages and a quarterly paid bonus at the discretion of the CEO. It is time now to establish the bonus for 3 key specialists from the Analytical, Sales and R&D Departments. Previously, the amount used to be €4,000–8,000 per person, dependent on the financial results of the firm. However, the last quarter was very unfavourable, therefore it was decided that the bonus should be €2,000 for all employees. The CEO has asked you (3 Department managers) to help him decide on the bonuses. First, read about each employee; then, you will have 15 minutes to present your solution to the CEO. What is your proposed solution?
2. Form groups of at least 3 trainees and 1 observer in each group. If the number of class members cannot be divided by 4, appoint an additional observer in some groups.
3. Show the characteristics of the case study employees (slide number 26):

Christine: Business analyst. She does a very good job, despite the fact that she has to look after a mentally disabled child, therefore her bonus is of utmost importance to her. She is very helpful for other employees. She has been with the firm for 14 years; this is partly the reason why she is reluctant to look for another job despite her quite modest remuneration

John: A nice-looking and well-educated man who is highly valued by his co-workers for his sense of humour. Lately, he has had better sales results than usual, but his after-sales service has deteriorated. Therefore, he is regarded as brilliant but not very conscientious. He needs the bonus to finance the modernization of his house. There is gossip that after 4 years of working for the firm he plans to switch to the competition.

Charles: Employed 1 year ago but he has already proved his impressive skills in finding innovative new products. A man with extraordinary ideas but difficult to work with. Sometimes, without notice, he doesn't come to work. Other employees in the company do not really like him, but the bosses appreciate his results and treat him as good value for money because he earns little in comparison to his sensational ideas. He is starting to be recognized within the industry, so it is possible he will soon be looking for another company to work for.

4. In each group, allocate who will play the role of the manager of each employee or the role of observer.
5. Give 15 minutes for the groups to solve the problem.
6. Ask the groups to present their results. Write down on the blackboard how much of the bonus was allocated by each group to each employee using the table below:

Group number	Bonus for Christine	Bonus for John	Bonus for Charles
1			
2			
3			
.....			

7. Evaluate the results; use the following questions
 - Which of the groups found the best solution?
 - Why are the solutions different?
8. Establish the reasons for each group's decision. Ask a group to present the opinions of the 'manager' and the 'observers'. Note the reasons on the blackboard. Continue in the same way with the other groups
9. With the arguments of each group visible on the blackboard, ask the groups to explain the manager's choice. If the trainees adhered rigidly to the manager's goals (allocation of the bonus), underline on the blackboard the arguments that relate to the firm's situation.

10. Show the need to make a cognitive shift from the bonus allocation problem to the problem of the company's future. Using slides 27 and 28, explain the need to establish the company strategy before negotiating remuneration; using slide 4, explain the company's vision, mission goal, and plan.
11. Ask the trainees to find possible explanations for the company's situation. If the groups have difficulty doing this, show them the scenarios presented in the points below .
12. If required, you can use the following possible scenarios:
 - a) The company experiences the same seasonal fluctuations in profits every year: there are always 3 quarters of good profits and 1 quarter of bad profits;
 - b) New competitors have appeared on the market with highly skilled sales forces;
 - c) New competitors have appeared on the market with innovative products.
13. Ask what the bonus allocation would be in situations a), b), and c). It is highly possible that the solutions will favour Joan in scenario a), John in scenario b) and Charles in scenario c).
14. Discuss whether it is possible to solve the case by separating the problem (the future of the firm) from the people (a manager's bias in favour of his subordinates).
15. Show a possible solution by using the following Excel sheet (slide 30):

Values and behaviour important for the firm	Level of Importance to the firm	Christine	John	Charles	Check the share	Amount of bonus for chosen behaviour	Christine	John	Charles
trustworthy	20%	80%	20%	0%	100%	400	320	80	0
innovative	60%	0%	30%	70%	100%	1200	0	360	252
goal oriented	20%	30%	70%	0%	100%	400	120	280	0
TOTAL	100%					2 000	440	720	840

Activity evaluation

Ask the participants to make notes using Attachment 4 as a tool (Cornell method of notation – Gap Analysis). Include the following elements:

1. the anchoring effect in thinking;
2. the need for flexibility in reasoning;
3. the need to approach problems from a broad perspective first, which is then followed by focusing on details;
4. blank space for students to use as they like.

Ask the participants to read their conclusions aloud.

4 INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS – MINDFULNESS

DIDACTIC UNIT 4: INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS – MINDFULNESS

Theoretical context:

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, mindfulness is “the practice of maintaining a non-judgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one’s thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis”. In practice, mindfulness means focusing conscious attention on one thing at a time in a non-judgmental way. The results of practicing mindfulness in business practice are improved working memory capacity, decreased negative thinking behaviour, and reduced emotional reactivity. For example, see “How mindfulness can help engineers solve problems”, B.Rieken, S.Shapiro, S.Gilmartin, S.D.Sheppard, HBR Jan.4, 2019.

We can increase our mindful thinking abilities thanks to a brain process called neuroplasticity, which was succinctly described by psychologist Donald Hebb: “Cells that fire together wire together”. This means that “When an axon of cell A is near enough to excite cell B and repeatedly and persistently takes part in firing it, some growth process of metabolic changes takes place in one or both cells such that A’s efficiency, as one of the cells firing B, is increased” (Donald Hebb The Organization of Behavior, 1949).

The neuroplasticity of the brain is similar to the development of physical skills: both are the result of the human ability to learn. We can learn, for example, to improve our concentration abilities deliberately, as was described by J.Kabbat-Zinn in “Some reflections on the origins of MBSR”. Contemporary Buddhism,12, 281–306).

4.1 Mindfulness – Definition

LEARNING ACTIVITY 4.1	Mindfulness – Definition
Activity duration	30 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will understand the benefits of mindfulness techniques in enhancing cognitive flexibility skills such as awareness, concentration, and the ability to use divergent thinking, and they will be confident that they can acquire mindful thinking techniques.
Activity materials	Slides 33–37 Attachment 6, Intrapersonal skills

Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present the ideas from the article “How mindfulness can help engineers solve problems” by B.Rieken, S.Shapiro, S.Gilmartin, S.D.Sheppard, HBR Jan.4, 2019. (slide 33). 2. Show slide 34 and ask the participants to find a false statement out of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness means paying attention • Practising mindfulness creates awareness • Non-judgmental thinking is an attitude of crucial importance in mindfulness • Mindfulness is one of many forms of meditation • Practicing mindfulness enhances curiosity, acceptance, and openness 3. Explain that all of the sentences are true, but the initial question helped the trainees concentrate better on each of the statements. 4. Use the example of the photograph from slide 35. Ask the participants how it is possible to get into a state of concentration like these two boys in the photograph. Explain that each of them is playing a different song at the same time by turning the handles of two barrel organs. This situation made them concentrate by accident, but we actually have the ability to improve our concentration skills and use them independently of a favourable or unfavourable context. 5. Discuss the comparison between neuroplasticity and body change as a result of physical exercise (slide 36); ask these questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you run 20 kilometres in 2 hours? • What would you have to do to make it possible? • Would you observe any changes in your body? 6. Explain the phenomena of neuroplasticity.
Activity evaluation	Give the participants attachment 6; ask them to fill in the notes in the Mindfulness part

4.2 Mindfulness exercises: Being in the moment

LEARNING ACTIVITY 4.2	Mindfulness exercises: Being in the moment
Activity duration	15 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will be able to observe, describe and analyse phenomena in a mindful way
Activity materials	Slide 38

Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform the participants that in a moment they will be asked to spot two things that will come in their minds during the exercise. 2. Ask the trainees to put one hand on a cool surface (e.g. a metal chair leg if possible) and another hand on a warm surface (e.g. the neck). 3. Let the trainees describe their experience in writing. Ask them to describe only facts, not their opinions. Ask them to describe not only what came to their minds but also how was it happening.
Activity evaluation	<p>Ask the trainees to analyse the situation: let them explain what happened and how they felt.</p> <p>Inform that the abilities of observing, describing, and analysing will be used during the next exercise</p>

4.3 Mindfulness exercises – Peel the mandarin

LEARNING ACTIVITY 4.3	Mindfulness exercises – Peel the mandarin
Activity duration	15 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will practise the abilities of observing, describing, and analysing
Activity materials	<p>Slide 39</p> <p>At least one mandarin for each trainee and the teacher</p>
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform the trainees that in a moment they will be asked to analyse the information that will be transmitted to their senses. 2. On the slide, show data categories such as shape, colour, texture, weight, smell, taste. 3. Give the mandarins to the trainees; ask them to describe the fruit. 4. Ask the trainees to peel the mandarin and share their feelings with the group.
Activity evaluation	Inform trainees that repeating the exercise sharpens the senses, reduces stress level, and aids concentration.

5 INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS – LISTENING

DIDACTIC UNIT 5 - INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS – LISTENING
<p>Theoretical context:</p> <p>Learning Activity 5.1</p>

We listen to others in order to learn something new, to look at something we already know from a different angle, or to understand somebody's feelings and expectations. Listening is indispensable to communication, but the fact is that we generally do not use our listening abilities fully. The brain has a natural tendency to save energy, therefore why we mainly use marginal listening instead of attentive or active-empathic listening. We are able to hear 450 words per minute, whereas the average speed of speaking is around 100–150 words per minute. At the same time, our brain is able to transform not more than 25% of perceived words into viable information. These statistics can be improved by using the techniques of active-empathic listening.

In active-empathic listening, we tend to feel others' feelings and concentrate on grasping the meaning and importance of the communication process. We suspend our judgment of the situation in order to understand the interlocutor without bias. We put ourselves into the shoes of the other person in order to understand their feelings, decode their interpretation of messages, and fully connect with them during the dialogue.

Learning activity 5.2

In active-empathic listening, we can discern 3 basic skills: sensing, processing, and responding. Examples of such skills can be found in a study by Drollinger, Corner and Warrington in 2006. Based on this study, in his article "Active-Empathic Listening as a General Social Skill" (2011), G. Bodie checked managers' skills in each of these three areas and found that, on average on a 7-point scale, they scored from 3.05 to 4.91 points, from 5.05 to 5.25 points, and from 3.26 to 3.31 points, respectively.

Learning activity 5.3

We can use mindful thinking techniques to improve our concentration during listening. This is done by controlling the thoughts that come to our mind during the process of listening and changing the thoughts that reduce our listening concentration.

5.1 Basic facts about listening

LEARNING ACTIVITY 5.1	Basic facts about listening
Activity duration	20 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will know basic facts about the way we listen to others
Activity materials	Slides 41–44 Attachment 5 – Notes about intrapersonal skills
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the need for proper listening when communicating with team members. Emphasise that thanks to listening we can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn something new • look at something we already know from a different angle • understand somebody's feelings and expectations 2. Present some basic facts about listening:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we are able to hear 450 words per minute • the average speed of speaking is about 100–150 words per minute • our brain is able to transform not more than 25% of perceived words into viable information <p>3. Explain 3 ways of thinking: marginal, attentive, and active empathic. Use the image from slide 43 to describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marginal listening – you are sitting in a restaurant and you hear a live band playing, but you pay attention to other things • attentive listening – you pay attention to the music played, to its rhythm, melody etc. • active-empathic listening – you not only pay attention to the music, but you come closer to the band and start dancing or singing <p>4. Explain active-empathic listening as a state in which you concentrate in order to grasp the meaning and importance of the communication process. You suspend your judgment of a situation in order to understand the interlocutor without bias. You put yourself into the shoes of the other person to understand her/his feelings, decode her/his interpretation of messages, and to get into full contact during the dialogue.</p>
Activity evaluation	Ask trainees to use attachment 6 and make notes in the listening skills section

5.2 Check your listening abilities

LEARNING ACTIVITY 5.2	Check your listening abilities
Activity duration	15 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will be acquainted with the sensing, processing, and responding abilities of active-empathic listening skills
Activity materials	Slide 45, 46 Attachment 7: Sensing, Processing, and Responding skills in AEL listening
Methodology	<p>1. Ask the trainees to assess themselves on a seven-point scale according to the questionnaire on slide 45:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am sensitive to what others are not saying; 2. I am aware of what others imply but do not say; 3. I understand how others feel; 4. I listen for more than just the spoken words; 5. I assure others that I will remember what they say; 6. I summarize points of agreement and disagreement when appropriate; 7. I keep track of the points that others make; 8. I assure others that I am listening by making verbal acknowledgements; 9. I assure others that I am receptive to their ideas;

	<p>10. I ask questions that show my understanding of others' positions; 11. I show others that I am listening with my body language (e.g., head nods).</p> <p>2. Give attachment 7 to the participants; pay attention to the 3 AEL skills included in colour in the tables on slide 46.</p> <p>3. Ask them to calculate the results according to the tables in the attachment.</p> <p>4. Ask them to compare their results to those from the Bodie study.</p>
Activity evaluation	Inform that the results we give ourselves are usually higher than in reality. We have a tendency to overevaluate ourselves, therefore trainees should ask somebody who knows them very well to assess their abilities and compare the results in order to reveal the gap between their own perception and others' perception of their abilities.

5.3 Improve your concentration during listening

LEARNING ACTIVITY 5.3	Improve your concentration during listening		
Activity duration	20 minutes		
Activity objective	The trainees will improve their concentration during listening by improving their sensing abilities		
Activity materials	Slide 47		
Methodology	<div>1. Divide the trainees into groups of 3 to 4 members</div> <div>2. Present a list of thoughts that might come into your mind when listening</div> <div>3. Give an example of changing the first of these thoughts: when it comes to your mind that “a speech is boring”, you can remind yourself that something will be profitable for you in the speech, thus turning your attention to the benefits of listening instead of judging the speech itself</div> <div>4. Ask the groups to find the answers to the remaining examples in group work.</div> <div>5. Ask the groups to show their results. During the discussion, you can use the following examples:</div>		
	Thought	Internal answer to the thought	Explanation of the answer
	He has a strange way of speaking	What does he want to tell me?	Concentrate on the content instead of the way of speaking
	I will interrupt his speech because I know the solution	I will wait until he finishes his speech	Suspend your judgment

	I have to interrupt to not forget my idea	I will make notes in order to remember my idea	Summarize but don't interrupt
	I have to concentrate	I am concentrating now	We should not use words that force us to do something
	I am losing concentration	What is the idea of his speech?	Concentrate on the idea of the speech
	It is too difficult	I will ask a question	Use questions to enhance the dialogue
Activity evaluation	Summarize the explanations to the exercise		

5.4 Use your processing and responding abilities

LEARNING ACTIVITY 5.4	Use your processing and responding abilities									
Activity duration	25 minutes									
Activity objective	The trainees will improve their processing and responding abilities of active-empathic listening									
Activity materials	Slide 48 Attachment 6									
Methodology	<div><div><div>1. Explain the active-empathic listening techniques of mirroring feelings, paraphrasing, summarizing, checking, and probing.</div><div>2. Divide the trainees into groups of 3–4 members.</div><div>3. In groups, ask them to prepare a sentence that would follow this statement: “This challenging project will be time consuming and will oblige us to show excellent communication skills”. Use the techniques given in the table below.</div><div>4. Ask the groups to present their solutions. If necessary, you can use the following examples:</div></div><table><tr><th>Technique</th><th>Example</th></tr><tr><td>Mirror feelings</td><td>So, you feel that the project will be time consuming and challenging for you?</td></tr><tr><td>Paraphrase</td><td>You want to tell me that the project will take a lot of time and requires excellent communication abilities.</td></tr><tr><td>Summarize</td><td>As I understand, the project has two main traits: it is time consuming and it requires excellent communication skills</td></tr></table></div>		Technique	Example	Mirror feelings	So, you feel that the project will be time consuming and challenging for you?	Paraphrase	You want to tell me that the project will take a lot of time and requires excellent communication abilities.	Summarize	As I understand, the project has two main traits: it is time consuming and it requires excellent communication skills
Technique	Example									
Mirror feelings	So, you feel that the project will be time consuming and challenging for you?									
Paraphrase	You want to tell me that the project will take a lot of time and requires excellent communication abilities.									
Summarize	As I understand, the project has two main traits: it is time consuming and it requires excellent communication skills									

	Check	Do I understand properly that the project is time consuming and requires excellent communication skills?
	Probe	What do you mean when you say that it is time consuming? What kind of communication skills does it require?
Note that the examples on the slide will appear in reverse order (down top). You can show this manoeuvre as an example of a cognitive shift.		
Activity evaluation	Ask the trainees to write examples of processing and responding techniques in the attachment.	

5.5 Practice your listening abilities

LEARNING ACTIVITY 5.5	Practice your listening abilities
Activity duration	35 minutes
Activity objective	The participants will use their listening abilities in practice
Activity materials	Attachments 7, 8 (AEL observer sheet) and 8a (AEL skills) Slide 49
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide the participants into groups of 3 members. 2. Assign the roles of speaker, listener, and observer in each group. If the number of participants is not divisible by 3, assign 2 observers in a group or in 2 groups. 3. Ask the speakers to describe their most perfect day – one that made them feel very happy. During the presentation, the listeners should use as many AEL techniques as possible. Each use of a technique should be noted in Attachment 7 by the observers. 4. The observers should write the exact sentences spoken by the listeners. 5. Observe the body language of the listeners and speakers; make notes. 6. Give attachment 8a to the trainees. 7. Present your findings about body language techniques; ask the participants to make notes in the last row of the table. 8. Ask the observers to show the best examples of listening techniques noted during the scenes. 9. Ask the trainees to note some examples of these techniques.
Activity evaluation	Give time to the participants to fill in the conclusion table in attachment six. Let them present the conclusions.

6 IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS – VOCABULARY THAT IS USEFUL IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

DIDACTIC UNIT 6: Improving Interpersonal skills – a vocabulary that is useful in communication skills

Theoretical context:

The use of words, sentences and questions creates sentiments in our interlocutors. Getting our interlocutor in a good mood inspires cooperation, opens the way for ingenuous thinking, and is generally favourable for cognitive flexibility. We can do this by using positive words and avoiding negative words in our speech.

What's more, we can obtain this favourable effect by using sentences that are focused not on our ego but on our interlocutor; we should construct messages that express certainty, that are goal oriented and avoid wishful thinking.

In a dialogue, we can discern open-ended and closed-ended questions that either encourage your interlocutors to expand the discussion or close it with simple yes or no answers, respectively. However, the belief that the use of open questions is sufficient to achieve fruitful communication is wrong. The real problem concerns the feelings of your interlocutor that were provoked by the use of particular questions or sentences. Did you use questions or sentences that enhance your interpersonal communication, or did you say something that has frozen your relations? Thus, instead of open- or closed-ended questions or sentences, we should instead think about questions or sentences that invite the possibility to continue a dialogue with another person or close this dialogue. We will call them opening and closing questions and sentences.

To sum up, in our discourse we can discern positive or negative words, sentences that restrict somebody's autonomy in forming an opinion by denying their point of view, pressure to accept another point of view, or sentences or questions that encourage autonomous thinking. Thus, knowing what improves or worsens relations and the ability to use questions or sentences that enhance relations is of crucial importance for creating an environment that is favourable for cognitive flexibility.

6.1 Motivating and demotivating sentences – role playing

LEARNING ACTIVITY 6.1	Motivating and demotivating sentences – role playing
Activity duration	40 minutes (about 5 minutes for one role-playing scene; not more than 10 minutes for one group member to play a specified role).
Activity objective	The trainees will understand the impact of questions or sentences on their interlocutors' feelings; they will be acquainted with examples of questions or sentences that close or open relations.
Guidance for development of the activity	

Activity materials	<p>Blackboard or Flipchart.</p> <p>One red and one green card, and an observation sheet with a pen for every group. The observation sheet should be in A4 format, divided in two parts with a smiling face on one side and sad face on the other.</p> <p>Attachment 9</p> <p>Slide numbers 50, 51</p> <p>Attachment 10: Interpersonal skills – words, sentences, and questions</p>
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do the role-playing exercise based on the following situation: A manager wants to motivate their subordinate to find different ways of implementing a project that is being undertaken by the firm. The manager is sure that the firm's present situation needs to change. However, the employee is convinced that the only way of completing the project is to do it the same way as a year ago. 2. Divide the participants into groups of 3 persons. In each group the participants will play the role of manager or employee. The third person is the observer. 3. Give the red and green cards to the person playing the role of the employee. The "employee" should hold up the red card when they feel uneasy during the dialogue with the manager; they should hold up the green card when they feel pleasant. The observer should note the exact questions or sentences that provoked the employee's positive (green card) or negative (red card) feelings 4. The manager should start the discussion with the statement: "I have seen your proposition to implement the project, but why not do it differently than last year?" 5. During the role play, you should be aware of whether the "observers" have noted at least 3–5 examples. If not, you can ask participants to change roles. 6. After finishing the role playing, ask the observers to give their "red" and "green" examples. Note them in the 2 opposite columns on the blackboard using red and green pens 7. Ask the groups to draw conclusions: what is the difference between the "red" and "green" sentences or questions?
Activity evaluation	<p>Summarise the groups' findings; use the marker to underline the most illustrative examples.</p> <p>Show slide 52 and categorise the elements that restrained the dialogue: pressure, denial, and restraint of your interlocutor's autonomy. Discuss with the group the results of these behaviours, such as the desire to defend opinions, feeling offended, or the hindering of creativity.</p> <p>Give attachment 10 to the participants: Interpersonal skills – words, sentences and questions</p>

6.2 Positive and negative words and sentences

LEARNING ACTIVITY 6.2	Positive and negative words and sentences																																
Activity duration	20 minutes																																
Activity objective	<p>The trainees will understand the link between words, moods, and attitudes; they will be aware of the role of negative and positive words in creating negative or positive sentiments.</p> <p>Participants will improve their abilities in finding positive words and sentences.</p>																																
Guidance for development of the activity																																	
Activity materials	Blackboard Slides 53–56																																
Methodology	<div><div><div><div>1. Take a green pen and find positive words written on the blackboard during the previous exercise.</div><div>2. Draw the trainees’ attention to the fact that the use of positive words is linked to the “green” feelings in the previous exercise.</div><div>3. Present the link between words, moods, and attitudes with the use of slide 53.</div><div>4. Discuss with the group the benefits of an open-minded attitude in their working environment.</div><div>5. Note the benefits on the blackboard.</div><div>6. Present slide 54. Ask the group to find positive words for the examples on the slide. Let the group find them one by one. Show the correct answer at the end of each search according to the table below:</div></div><table><tr><th>Positive Connotation</th><th>Neutral Connotation</th><th>Negative Connotation</th></tr><tr><td>interested</td><td>questioning</td><td>nosy</td></tr><tr><td>employ</td><td>use</td><td>exploit</td></tr><tr><td>thrifty</td><td>saving</td><td>stingy</td></tr><tr><td>steadfast</td><td>tenacious</td><td>stubborn</td></tr><tr><td>sated</td><td>filled</td><td>crammed</td></tr><tr><td>courageous</td><td>confident</td><td>conceited</td></tr><tr><td>unique</td><td>different</td><td>peculiar</td></tr><tr><td>meticulous</td><td>selective</td><td>picky</td></tr><tr><td>vintage</td><td>old</td><td>decrepit</td></tr></table></div><div><div>7. Explain good and bad examples of creating open-minded attitudes by the use of sentences.</div></div></div>			Positive Connotation	Neutral Connotation	Negative Connotation	interested	questioning	nosy	employ	use	exploit	thrifty	saving	stingy	steadfast	tenacious	stubborn	sated	filled	crammed	courageous	confident	conceited	unique	different	peculiar	meticulous	selective	picky	vintage	old	decrepit
Positive Connotation	Neutral Connotation	Negative Connotation																															
interested	questioning	nosy																															
employ	use	exploit																															
thrifty	saving	stingy																															
steadfast	tenacious	stubborn																															
sated	filled	crammed																															
courageous	confident	conceited																															
unique	different	peculiar																															
meticulous	selective	picky																															
vintage	old	decrepit																															

	<p>8. Present slide 55 to illustrate bad examples of transmitting a message:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We try • We hope • It seems that • We make efforts • We tend to • We are looking for • Sometimes • We think that <p>9. Divide the trainees into groups of 3–4 persons.</p> <p>10. Ask the groups to change the examples on slide 55.</p> <p>11. Ask the groups to present their findings and write them on the blackboard.</p> <p>12. Compare the groups' results with the following from slide 56:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We implement • We are able to • We can • We achieve • We give • You receive • You gain • As a result
Activity evaluation	<p>Summarise the results of the exercises performed during this activity,</p> <p>Ask the participants for their opinions regarding the impact of words and sentences on the open-minded approach.</p> <p>Inform participants that – besides the creation of an open-minded attitude – the usage of sentences in the last exercise also builds the credibility of the information giver (last section of slide 56)</p>

6.3 Questions and statements opening and closing relations

LEARNING ACTIVITY 6.3	Questions and statements that open or close relations
Activity duration	50 minutes
Activity objective	The trainees will understand the impact of questions or sentences on interlocutors' feelings; they will see examples of questions or sentences that improve or worsen relations.
Guidance for development of the activity	
Activity materials	Slides 57–60
Methodology	<p>1. Present the importance of open questions in creating a good atmosphere and behaviours favourable to cognitive flexibility; use the following statements from slide 57:</p>

- They sustain discussion in an attempt to achieve a goal
- They are non-invasive, but they touch the causes of the problem
- They make us think by challenging the status quo
- They encourage investigation and discourage instant solutions
- They neither judge nor suggest

2. Compare the starts of the questions and sentences presented in the following table. Explain the rationale for using starters that open relations:

Closing starters	Opening starters	Rationale
Let's...	I wonder	Don't pressure; instead, show your interest in another point of view.
Nevertheless	It is so interesting to know ...	Try to probe in order to fully understand the interlocutor before you present your solution.
Why don't we...	How did it happen that	Avoid pressuring, even if it is veiled by a false question starting with "why don't we".
But ...	And	Don't put yourself in opposition with the interlocutor by using "but"; instead, use "and" or simply avoid "but".

3. Present the following sentences:

- Were there other ways of doing it?
- Why did you stop trying?
- Why didn't you try other solutions?
- Could you do it in a way that you won't regret later?
- Could you do it this way?
- Why don't we try to do it like this...?

4. Discuss how to modify the sentences so that dialogue and a positive atmosphere in interpersonal contacts is encouraged. If necessary, use slide 59 and help the group by showing the following open questions one by one:

- What other options did you have?
- What else could you have done?
- What other solutions were possible?
- What could you have done to be satisfied?
- What would have to have happened to do it this way?
- What would have happened if you had done that?

	5. Summarise the opening relations vocabulary issue by introducing 3 techniques to promote cognitive flexibility in interpersonal contacts. Show the examples from slide 60:		
	QUESTION/SENTENCE	TECHNIQUES	OPENING QUESTION
	Could you do the analysis before you draw your conclusions?	Search for new solutions	What other ideas did you have to solve this problem?
	You can't do it this way	Shift the point of view	To what extent can it be done in another way?
	Did you deceive us?	Positive reframing	How could you change your behaviour to make us trust you?
	6. Based on the examples above, explain the rationale of the techniques: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Searching for new solutions has a positive impact since it is based on the basic human need for exploration. Shifting the point of view helps to break free of the initial anchor. In our example, instead of deliberating whether something was or was not possible (black-and-white frames of thinking), we shift attention to the degree of possibility. Positive reframing means using positive words instead of negative ones. In our example, we change a negative word “deceive” into “trust”, which is much more positive. In this example we also use the first two techniques. 		
Activity evaluation	Ask the groups to give examples of three ways to open interpersonal relations.		

6.4 Practice your opening questions

LEARNING ACTIVITY 6.4	Practice your opening questions
Activity duration	50 minutes
Activity objective	The participants will practise the use of questions that facilitate cognitive flexibility by avoiding an approach based on suggestions and judging
Guidance for development of the activity	
Activity materials	Slides 61–63 Flipchart sheets (two sheets for each group) Adhesive putty to stick the sheets to the wall temporarily

Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide the trainees into not more than 4 groups of 3–5 members. 2. Present the following “suggestion” questions and sentences (slide 61) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before you make a decision, could you send a survey? • Can we send an email? • I guess you could ask your boss for help, right? • What if you started exercising regularly? • In my opinion, talking to the team would be helpful. • Do you agree with me that you lied? 3. Ask the groups to change the examples into opening questions that promote cognitive flexibility; ask them to write them on the flipchart 4. Ask the groups to stick the sheets to the wall 5. Discuss every example with the group; correct the results if needed and show the following examples from slide 61 one by one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you get more information? • How to reach others with this information? • Who could help you in this situation? • What could you do to improve your health? • Who could you talk to about this situation? • How do you assess your behaviour in this situation? 6. Leave the sheets on the wall and show the groups the following “judging” sentences and questions (slide 62): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can't be so aggressive with your employees • I'm afraid you can't keep your word • Doing this will probably destroy their trust in you • Well, well, such a text to the boss? • Don't you think that you have taken on too many tasks? • You were a little bit naïve 7. Ask the groups to change the examples into open questions that promote cognitive flexibility; ask them to write them on the flipchart 8. Ask the groups to stick the sheets to the wall 9. Discuss every example with the group; correct the results if needed and show the following examples from slide 62 one by one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you talk to employees to make you better received? • What can you do to keep your word? • How can you maintain their trust? • What could you say in order to achieve a satisfactory result? • How could you focus on what's important to you? • How could you guard against such naivety?
Activity evaluation	<p>Collect the sheets. After the training, you may collate the questions prepared by the groups and distribute them to the participants by mail</p>

6.5 12-question contest

LEARNING ACTIVITY 6.5	12-question contest
Activity duration	40 minutes
Activity objective	The participants will practice the use of opening questions that facilitate cognitive flexibility
Guidance for the correct development of the activity	
Activity materials	Slide 64 4 chocolates
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present the following rules: The little boy in the photograph on the slide has just come home from fishing. Ask him what he was doing. Use at least 12 open questions. You win if the boy can't answer "no" or "yes" to any of your questions. 2. Divide the trainees into 4 groups. 3. In each group, allocate the roles of the boy and the person who is talking to him. 4. Give the groups 10 minutes to prepare their questions 5. Start the discussion; count the number of questions for each group 6. Present the results; give chocolates to all groups that succeeded
Activity evaluation	<p>Present the question beginnings from slide 63</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What... • How... • In what way... • Who... • With whom... • When... • To what extent... • How much... <p>Ask the participants to find additional beginnings for open questions.</p>

7 IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS – FINAL CASE STUDY

DIDACTIC UNIT 7: Improving Interpersonal skills – final case study

Theoretical context: The opening questions presented in the previous didactic unit are more effective for modifying somebody's behaviour if used in a specific way. Thus, taking into consideration the context, we

can profit from coaching techniques that aim to introduce change on a personal level: for example, the GROW method proposed by John Whitmore, or the method presented by M.V. Pantalon in his book “Instant Influence: How to Get Anyone to Do Anything”. Besides, the case presented in this section draws a lot from the findings of positive psychology, especially from the works of Martin Seligman, which explain how to move forward while meeting stiff resistance.

7.1 Continuing a dialogue in difficult situations

LEARNING ACTIVITY 7.1	Continuing a dialogue in difficult situations
Activity duration	10 minutes
Activity objective	In a practical situation, the participants will use a set of questions that facilitate cognitive flexibility. The objective of the case is to summarise in practice the methods that encourage cognitive flexibility in solving problems.
Guidance for development of the activity	
Activity materials	Slides 64–66
Methodology	Present the case (slide 65). Explain that we are returning to a previous case to solve it in a new way. Present the steps that will be used in solving the case (slide 66): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a good mood for discussion by celebrating a recent success 2. Find the real goal or goals to be achieved in the next project 3. Motivate to change 4. Let your interlocutor imagine the benefits of the change 5. Make a plan to implement the goal
Activity evaluation	None

7.2 Good mood

LEARNING ACTIVITY 7.2	Good mood
Activity duration	20 minutes
Activity objective	The participants will acquire skills in using questions that create a good mood for discussion

Guidance for development of the activity	
Activity materials	<p>Slides 67</p> <p>Flipchart sheets</p> <p>Adhesive putty</p> <p>Post-it notes</p>
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide the participants into 3–4 groups 2. Ask the groups to write the questions for the first step in dialogue on the post-it cards. Tell them that the questions should create a good mood for discussion by celebrating the success in the previous project of the interlocutor and the team. 3. Stick the Flipchart sheet entitled GOOD MOOD on the wall. 4. Ask the groups to stick their post-it cards to the sheet. 5. Discuss with the groups to what extent their questions meet the objectives of the first step in discussion. If required, the groups can use the questions from slide 67: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the reason for the success of the last project? • Which aspects of the previous projects were extremely successful? • What was the reason for this success? • How important is this success for you? • How important is this success for your team?
Activity evaluation	Decide with the groups which questions from the slide you will write on the post-it cards and stick them to the flipchart sheet

7.3 What is the goal?

LEARNING ACTIVITY 7.3	What is the goal?
Activity duration	20 minutes
Activity objective	The participants will acquire skills in using questions to define the real goal in this scenario
Guidance for development of the activity	
Activity materials	<p>Slides 68, 69</p> <p>Flipchart sheet</p> <p>Adhesive putty</p> <p>Post-it notes</p>
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the case. Draw the participants' attention to the difference between achieving the goal (i.e. the result) and gaining habits that will be beneficial to achieving goals in the future (i.e. to manage the process) (slide 68)

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the groups to write questions for the second part of the dialogue (defining the goal) on the post-it cards. The questions should enable the interlocutor to find the real goal or goals to be achieved in the next project, from the perspective of both the result and the process. Stick the Flipchart sheet entitled GOAL on the wall. Ask the groups to stick their post-it cards to the sheet. Discuss with the groups to what extent their questions meet the objectives of the second step of the discussion. Use the questions from slide 69 if required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was the impact of the last project on your team? To what extent did the last project develop your team's skills? Concerning the project that will be undertaken, what would we consider a success? What elements are vital in future projects?
Activity evaluation	Decide with the groups which questions from the slide they will write on the post-it cards; stick them to the flipchart sheet

7.4 Let's make a change

LEARNING ACTIVITY 7.4	Let's make a change
Activity duration	15 minutes
Activity objective	The participants will be acquainted with forms of questions that introduce motivation to change
Guidance for correct development of the activity	
Activity materials	Slides 70,71 Flipchart sheet entitled CHANGE with written questions from slide 70 Adhesive putty Post-it notes
Methodology	Stick the CHANGE Flipchart sheet to the wall next to the other flipchart sheets Discuss the use of the following questions that introduce motivation to change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why might you change your way of implementing the project this time? What could be good for your team in thinking about changes in the new project? What benefits could you gain from the new approach to the project? How beneficial would it be for you to find new solutions?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could make you decide to look at the new project from a different perspective? • What could you do differently? <p>Ask the groups to prepare their own examples</p> <p>Ask the groups to stick them to the flipchart sheet</p> <p>Draw participants' attention to the work that has already been done. Ask for their opinions on how to develop the dialogue in order to maintain the motivation to change</p> <p>Show slide 71</p> <p>Present the sentence:</p> <p>"If you think that changing your approach would produce benefits, then say on a scale of 1 to 10 to what extent you would like make it happen". Ask the participants what kind of answer to this question is possible.</p> <p>Considering the scenario in which your interlocutor chooses a number between 2 to 10, explain why the "why didn't you pick a lower number?" question is more motivating than questions that are usually used in similar situations, such as "why didn't you pick a higher number?".</p> <p>When the interlocutor's answer is 1 use the following question: "what would it take for your 1 to become 2?"</p>
Activity evaluation	None

7.5 Freezing the change and making a plan of action

LEARNING ACTIVITY 7.5	Freezing the change and making a plan of action
Activity duration	30 minutes
Activity objective	The participants will be acquainted with forms of questions that will enable the interlocutor to imagine the benefits of change
Guidance for correct development of the activity	
Activity materials	<p>Slides 72–74</p> <p>Flipchart sheet entitled CHANGE with written questions from slide 70</p> <p>Adhesive putty</p> <p>Post-it notes</p>

Methodology	<p>Ask the participants to identify the questions in slide 72 that should be used in the FREEZE THE CHANGE and the MAKE THE PLAN OF ACTION steps.</p> <p>While discussing this with the participants, stick the post-it cards to the corresponding flipchart sheets in the following order:</p> <p>Flipchart sheet FREEZING THE CHANGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine you did change, what would be good about that? • Why would the change be important? • What important things would happen? • What do you think would be valuable? • Anything else? <p>MAKING THE PLAN flipchart sheet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What action will you take now? • What will be the first step? • What will be the next step? • How will you know you have been successful? • When will you finish?
Activity evaluation	<p>Divide the participants in groups of 2 members.</p> <p>Ask the groups to practise using all the questions on the walls in a role-playing dialogue (Manager–subordinate) while showing slide 75.</p> <p>Discuss with the group to what extent the model presented in this didactic unit can be used in their job context, and to what extent this approach improves cognitive flexibility.</p>

7.6 Summarise the training

LEARNING ACTIVITY 7.6	Summarise the training
Activity duration	15 minutes
Activity objective	The participants will summarise the content of the whole training
Guidance for correct development of the activity	
Activity materials	Slide 76

Methodology	<p>Show slide 76</p> <p>Ask the participants to write the 3 most useful important things for their work that they have learned during the training.</p>
Activity evaluation	<p>Ask the participants one by one to present their views on the most important elements of the training.</p> <p>After the training, take photographs of the flipchart sheets and send them to the participants.</p>

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - Presentation sheet

Name	Information

Attachment 2 - Multitasking sheet

C								
1								

F									
10									

Time used to fill the rows: seconds
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Fold here

C								
1								

F									
10									

Time: seconds
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Attachment 3 Making notes

(A) COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY – DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT

(B) MULTIFACETED APPROACH TO PROBLEM SOLVING	(C)
SLOW AND FAST THINKING IN DECISION- MAKING	
HABITS AND COGNITIVE RIGIDITY	
COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY (My definition)	

(D) CONCLUSIONS

Attachment 4 – Bonus case

XYZ is a medium-sized company specializing in the production of spare parts for the aeronautical industry. According to the firm's policy, some of its employees used to be remunerated in a system of monthly wages and a quarterly paid bonus at the discretion of the CEO. It is time now to establish the bonus for 3 key specialists from the Analytical, Sales, and R&D Departments. Usually, the bonus is €4,000–8,000 per person, dependent on the financial results of the firm. However, the last quarter was very unfavourable, and the bonus was €2,000 EUR for all staff.

The CEO has asked you (3 department managers) to help him distribute the bonuses. Read the characteristics of every employee; you then have 15 minutes to present your solution to the CEO. What is your proposed solution?

Brief characteristics of your staff:

CHRISTINE	JOHN	CHARLES
<p>Business analyst. She does a very good job, despite the fact that she has to look after a mentally disabled child, therefore her bonus is of utmost importance to her. She is very helpful for other employees. She has been with the firm for 14 years; this is partly why she is reluctant to look for another job despite her quite modest remuneration</p>	<p>A nice-looking and well-educated man who is highly valued by his co-workers for his sense of humour. Lately, he has had better sales results than usual, but his post-sales services have deteriorated. Therefore, he is regarded as brilliant but not very conscientious. He needs the bonus to finance the modernization of his house. There is gossip that after 4 years of working for the firm he plans to switch to the competition.</p>	<p>Employed 1 year ago but he has already proved his impressive skills in finding innovative new products. A man with extraordinary ideas but difficult to work with. Sometimes, without notice, he doesn't come to work. Other employees in the company do not really like him, but bosses appreciate his results and treat him as good value for money because he earns little in comparison to his sensational ideas. He is starting to be recognized within the industry, so it is possible he will soon be looking for another company to work for.</p>

Attachment 5 – Gap analysis – notes**COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY – GAP ANALYSIS**

Anchoring effect in thinking	
Need for flexibility in reasoning	
Solving problems by moving from general to specific perspectives	

CONCLUSIONS

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Attachment 6 – Intrapersonal skills – notes

Mindfulness	
Listening	
Processing and responding – examples	

CONCLUSIONS

Attachment 7 – Sensing, Processing and Responding skills in AEL

SENSING SKILLS	Result
<p>I am sensitive to what others are not saying.</p> <p>I am aware of what others imply but do not say.</p> <p>I understand how others feel.</p> <p>I listen for more than just the spoken words.</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>: 4 =</p>

PROCESSING SKILLS	Result
<p>I assure others that I will remember what they say.</p> <p>I summarize points of agreement and disagreement when appropriate.</p> <p>I keep track of points others make.</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>: 3 =</p>

RESPONDING SKILLS	Result
<p>I assure others that I am listening by making verbal acknowledgements.</p> <p>I assure others that I am receptive to their ideas.</p> <p>I ask questions that show my understanding of others' positions.</p> <p>I use body language to show that I am listening (e.g., head nods).</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>: 4 =</p>

1 (never), 4 (sometimes), 7 (always)

Source: *Drollinger, Comer, Warrington 2006*



Attachment 8 – Listening – observer sheet

Mirroring	
Paraphrasing	
Summarizing	
Checking	
Probing	
Body Language	

Attachment 8a – Examples of listening techniques

Mirroring	
Paraphrasing	
Summarizing	
Checking	
Probing	
Body Language	

Attachment 9 – Observation sheet, motivating and demotivating sentences

Attachment 10 – Interpersonal skills – notes

Open-minded attitude	
Using words	
Using sentences	
Using questions	

Conclusion	
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