Socialna akademija

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YOUTH WORK / METHODOLOGICAL COLLECTION

FIRST STEPS INTO CHANGEMAKING

Collection of Experiential Activities and Methods for Youth Work

IDENTITY • COMMUNICATION • EMPATHY • VOICE • ACTION

Target group: young people aged 15–18

The methods may be implemented as a connected learning journey or used independently.

ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

This collection brings together five experiential methods that guide young people from self-awareness and personal values towards empathic communication, courageous self-expression and concrete social action. The activities combine individual reflection, creative work, movement, dialogue, role-play and Gestalt-inspired methods. Each method includes a clear aim, learning outcomes, materials, step-by-step guidance and a closing reflection.

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

THE FIVE METHODS AT A GLANCE

NO.	METHOD	MAIN FOCUS	DURATION
1	This Is Me	Identity beyond roles and labels	90 min
2	Who Am I Becoming?	Purpose, strengths and future self	90 min
3	I See You	Empathy, listening and boundaries	90 min
4	My Voice Matters	Assertiveness and changemaker voice	90 min
5	Step into the Change	Shared vision, Gestalt sculpture and first step	60 min

LEARNING PATH

Recommended learning journey: begin with identity and personal growth, continue with empathy and communication, and conclude by transforming a shared concern into a realistic first step.

FACILITATOR GUIDELINES

01	**Voluntary participation**	Participants may pass, observe or choose a less personal example.
02	**Emotional safety**	Do not require young people to disclose painful or private experiences.
03	**Respect and confidentiality**	Agree that personal sharing is treated with care and is not repeated outside the group.
04	**No diagnosis or interpretation**	Invite curiosity without analysing or labelling another person.
05	**Role release**	After role-play or group sculpture, ask participants to step out of their roles and return to the present.
06	**Debrief the experience**	Always allow time to name what participants noticed, felt and learned.

VOLUNTARY • SAFE • RESPECTFUL • REFLECTIVE

01

IDENTITY AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Methods that support young people in exploring who they are beyond external roles, identifying their values and strengths, and imagining the person they choose to become.

TWO METHODS

01 THIS IS ME

02 WHO AM I BECOMING?

THIS IS ME

Discovering my identity before discovering my mission

Suggested duration: 90 minutes

AIM

To help participants reflect on their personal identity beyond labels, roles and achievements, while creating a safe space for sharing and getting to know one another.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- recognise that identity is more than external roles and labels;
- identify personal values, strengths and interests;
- become more aware of what is important to them;
- build trust within the group through meaningful sharing.

MATERIALS

- A3 paper;
- printed human silhouette;
- markers and coloured pencils;
- small reflection cards;
- Changemaker Journals or folders.

SESSION FLOW

01	INTRODUCTION – IDENTITY BEYOND LABELS	10 MINUTES
02	CREATIVE ACTIVITY – THIS IS ME	35 MINUTES
03	SHARING IN TRIADS	20 MINUTES
04	PERSONAL REFLECTION	10 MINUTES
05	CLOSING CIRCLE	15 MINUTES

METHOD IN PRACTICE

01 INTRODUCTION – IDENTITY BEYOND LABELS

10 MINUTES

Welcome the participants and introduce the topic.

> *"When someone asks us 'Who are you?', we usually answer with our name, age, school, hobbies or social media profile. These things describe us, but they do not fully define who we are. Today we will look a little deeper and begin discovering who we are beneath the labels."*

Explain that there are no right or wrong answers. This is not a test, but an opportunity for self-discovery.

02 CREATIVE ACTIVITY – THIS IS ME

35 MINUTES

Each participant receives a human silhouette with the title THIS IS ME and completes it step by step.

01

Head: What do I think about most?

Examples: dreams, school, sports, music, family, the future.

02

Heart: What really matters to me?

Examples: friendship, honesty, freedom, faith, creativity, justice, kindness.

03

Hands: What am I good at?

Examples: listening, drawing, encouraging others, solving problems, making people laugh, organising.

04

Feet: Where do I feel most alive?

Examples: in nature, with friends, playing music, helping others, travelling, volunteering, playing sport.

Around the silhouette, participants write the different roles they currently have, such as friend, student, sibling, athlete, musician or volunteer.

METHOD IN PRACTICE

STEP 02 / CREATIVE ACTIVITY – THIS IS ME – CONTINUED

When everyone finishes, invite them to quietly observe their drawing and ask:

> *"If all these roles disappeared tomorrow, what would still remain?"*

Participants are not required to answer aloud. Allow one minute of silence.

03 SHARING IN TRIADS

20 MINUTES

Participants form groups of three. Each person has about five minutes to share, completing only one sentence:

> *"Today I discovered that..."*

The other two participants listen without giving advice or starting a discussion. After everyone has shared, invite the triad to thank one another.

04 PERSONAL REFLECTION

10 MINUTES

Each participant receives a small card and completes:

> *"Today I realised that I am..."*

They keep the card in their Changemaker Journal or folder. Nobody collects it.

05 CLOSING CIRCLE

15 MINUTES

Invite participants to stand in a circle. Those who wish may share their sentence:

> *"Today I realised that I am..."*

> *"Every changemaker begins with one important discovery: before changing the world, we first need to get to know ourselves."*

WHO AM I BECOMING?

Discovering my purpose and the difference I can make

Suggested duration: 90 minutes

AIM

To help participants connect their identity, values and strengths with their potential to positively influence other people and the world around them.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- recognise that everyone has unique gifts;
- discover what deeply motivates them;
- reflect on the kind of person they want to become;
- identify one meaningful step towards becoming a changemaker.

MATERIALS

- large paper footprints;
- A3 compass worksheets;
- markers and coloured pencils;
- one chair;
- paper and envelopes;
- rope or masking tape.

SESSION FLOW

01	THE FOOTPRINTS WE LEAVE BEHIND	15 MINUTES
02	MY INNER COMPASS	25 MINUTES
03	WALKING INTERVIEWS	15 MINUTES
04	THE CHAIR OF MY FUTURE SELF	25 MINUTES
05	ONE STEP FORWARD	10 MINUTES

METHOD IN PRACTICE

01 THE FOOTPRINTS WE LEAVE BEHIND

15 MINUTES

Place large paper footprints around the room. Write one question inside each footprint:

- Who has changed your life?
- Who believed in you?
- Who inspired you?
- Who helped you when you needed it?
- What small act of kindness do you still remember?
- When did someone make you feel seen?

Participants walk silently, stop at the footprint that speaks to them and write a few words. Debrief with:

- What did all these people have in common?
- Did they change the whole world, or did they change someone's world?

> *"Every changemaker starts exactly there."*

02 MY INNER COMPASS

25 MINUTES

Each participant receives an A3 compass with four directions:

NORTH: What do I truly care about? What touches my heart? What makes me think: "This is not right"?

EAST: What gives me energy? When do I lose track of time? What do I enjoy doing?

SOUTH: What strengths do I already have? What do others appreciate about me? What comes naturally?

WEST: What kind of person do I want to become? Not: What job? But: Who?

Participants decorate their compass using colours and symbols.

METHOD IN PRACTICE

03 WALKING INTERVIEWS

15 MINUTES

Participants work in pairs and walk while one interviews the other. After about seven minutes, they switch.

- What surprised you while making your compass?
- Which direction was easiest?
- Which was hardest?
- When do you feel most yourself?
- What would you like people to remember about you?

The interviewer does not give advice. They only listen and ask questions.

04 THE CHAIR OF MY FUTURE SELF

25 MINUTES

Place one empty chair at the front and say:

> *"Imagine this chair belongs to the person you will become in ten years."*

Invite participants to close their eyes and imagine:

- How does this person smile?
- How do they treat other people?
- What values guide their life?
- What are they grateful for?
- What advice would they give you today?

After a few minutes of silence, participants write a short letter beginning with "Dear Future Me…" or "Dear Present Me…". They keep the letter; nobody reads it.

METHOD IN PRACTICE

05 ONE STEP FORWARD

10 MINUTES

Lay a rope across the floor. Place TODAY on one side and MY FUTURE on the other. One by one, participants step across and complete:

> *"Today I choose to become someone who…"*

Examples: listens, has courage, helps, creates, does not give up. There is no applause; allow a moment of silence after each person.

> *"A changemaker is not someone who changes everything overnight. A changemaker is someone who chooses, day after day, the person they want to become."*

02

COMMUNICATION, EMPATHY AND VOICE

Methods for developing active listening, curiosity, empathy, respectful boundaries, assertiveness and the courage to use one's voice for positive change.

TWO METHODS

03 I SEE YOU

04 MY VOICE MATTERS

I SEE YOU

Listening Beyond Words

Suggested duration: 90 minutes

AIM

To help participants recognise how quickly they judge visible behaviour, experience the power of real listening and learn to respond with both empathy and clear boundaries.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- recognise that visible behaviour does not reveal the whole story;
- become more aware of their assumptions;
- practise active and empathic listening;
- respond with curiosity instead of immediate judgement;
- understand that empathy and boundaries can exist together.

MATERIALS

- Hidden Story Cards;
- A3 paper and markers;
- Empathy and Boundaries Situation Cards;
- timer.

SESSION FLOW

01	WHAT YOU DO NOT SEE – THE HIDDEN STORY	25 MINUTES
02	THE LISTENING LAB – THREE WAYS OF LISTENING	40 MINUTES
03	EMPATHY AND BOUNDARIES	20 MINUTES
04	CLOSING CIRCLE	5 MINUTES

METHOD IN PRACTICE

01 WHAT YOU DO NOT SEE – THE HIDDEN STORY

25 MINUTES

Divide participants into small groups. Give each group one Hidden Story Card. They prepare a short scene showing only the visible behaviour and do not reveal the hidden reason.

After each scene, ask the observers:

- What did you see or hear?
- What did you immediately think about the person?
- How might you normally react?
- What else could be happening?

The group reveals the hidden story. Ask what changed when the full context became known and invite one participant to respond with curiosity.

> *"I noticed you keep checking your phone. Is everything okay?"*
>
> *"You seem frustrated with the task. Is something unclear?"*
>
> *"Would you like to join us, or do you need a little time?"*
>
> *"What we see is real, but it is not always the whole story. Judgement says: 'I know.' Curiosity says: 'I wonder.'"*

METHOD IN PRACTICE

02 THE LISTENING LAB – THREE WAYS OF LISTENING

40 MINUTES

Participants work in pairs and choose a light, safe topic, such as something they enjoy, a place they would like to visit, something they are proud of or a skill they would like to learn.

Round 1 – Distracted Listening

One participant speaks for one minute while the listener looks around, plays with a pen or appears uninterested. They switch roles, then briefly discuss how it felt and whether they wanted to continue speaking.

Round 2 – The Fixer

One participant speaks while the listener immediately gives advice or talks about their own experience: “You should…”, “Why don’t you just…?”, “That happened to me too.” They switch roles and reflect on whether the advice helped them feel understood.

Round 3 – Listening to Understand

The listener gives full attention, does not interrupt, asks one or two open questions and reflects back what they heard.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Can you tell me more?
- Why is that important to you?
- What did you enjoy most?
- What would you like to happen?

USEFUL REFLECTIONS

- What I hear you saying is…
- It sounds as if…
- Did I understand you correctly?

Each participant speaks for three minutes before they switch roles. In the group reflection, explore which listening style felt best, what made participants want to stop speaking and why listening matters for a changemaker.

METHOD IN PRACTICE

STEP 02 / THE LISTENING LAB – THREE WAYS OF LISTENING - CONTINUED

> *"Listening to reply: I wait for my turn. Listening to fix: I try to solve your problem. Listening to understand: I enter your world for a moment."*
>
> *"When someone truly listens to me, I feel that I matter."*

03 EMPATHY AND BOUNDARIES

20 MINUTES

> *"Understanding why someone behaves in a certain way does not mean that every behaviour is acceptable. We can show empathy and still set a clear boundary."*

In pairs or groups of three, participants receive a situation card and prepare a response with two parts:

1. Empathy or curiosity: "I can see that you are upset." / "Is something making this difficult for you?"

2. A clear boundary or request: "The joke was hurtful, and I would like you to stop." / "It is okay to disagree, but we need to let everyone finish speaking."

Groups present their responses. Ask where the audience heard empathy, where they heard the boundary and whether the response was clear without attacking the person.

> *"Empathy without boundaries can become silence. Boundaries without empathy can become attack. A changemaker needs both understanding and courage."*

METHOD IN PRACTICE

04 CLOSING CIRCLE

5 MINUTES

Participants complete:

> *"In my next conversation, I want to..."*

Possible answers: ask before assuming, listen without interrupting, stop giving advice too quickly, ask one more question, remain curious or set a respectful boundary.

> *"Every person carries a story that we cannot immediately see. A changemaker listens before judging and combines empathy with the courage to set respectful boundaries."*

MY VOICE MATTERS

Speaking with Courage and Creating Change

Suggested duration: 90 minutes

AIM

To help participants practise speaking clearly and respectfully, setting boundaries and using their voice for positive change.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- recognise that speaking honestly requires courage;
- distinguish between passive, aggressive and assertive communication;
- practise expressing disagreement and setting boundaries;
- connect their voice with something they care about.

MATERIALS

- rope or masking tape;
- EASY TO SAY and DIFFICULT TO SAY signs;
- Three Ways to Respond Situation Cards;
- paper and markers;
- Changemaker Journals.

SESSION FLOW

01	THE COURAGE LINE	20 MINUTES
02	THREE WAYS TO RESPOND	40 MINUTES
03	MY CHANGEMAKER MESSAGE	25 MINUTES
04	CLOSING CIRCLE	5 MINUTES

METHOD IN PRACTICE

01 THE COURAGE LINE

20 MINUTES

Create a line between EASY TO SAY and DIFFICULT TO SAY. Read one sentence at a time, and invite participants to stand where the sentence feels true for them.

- “I disagree.”
- “I need help.”
- “I made a mistake.”
- “Please stop.”
- “I am sorry.”
- “That joke was not okay.”
- “I have a different idea.”
- “I do not want to do this.”
- “I feel left out.”
- “Something needs to change.”

Participants briefly discuss in pairs which sentence was easiest or most difficult and what makes speaking easier. In the group reflection, explore whether being loud is the same as being brave and when silence protects us or allows harm to continue.

> *“Courage does not mean having no fear. Courage means that something matters enough for us to take a step.”*

METHOD IN PRACTICE

02 THREE WAYS TO RESPOND

40 MINUTES

Passive communication: I hide what I think or need. “Your needs matter more than mine.”

Aggressive communication: I attack, blame or insult. “My needs matter more than yours.”

Assertive communication: I speak clearly while respecting myself and the other person. “My needs matter, and your needs matter too.”

Introduce a simple structure:

> *“When this happens…, I feel or think…, because… I would like…”*

In small groups, participants receive one situation and prepare three short versions: passive, exaggerated aggressive and assertive. The first two may be humorous; the third should be realistic and respectful. After each performance, ask what made the final response assertive and whether assertiveness required loudness.

> *“I do not have to choose between silence and attack.”*

03 MY CHANGEMAKER MESSAGE

25 MINUTES

Participants choose an issue that matters to them, such as inclusion, mental health, bullying, school pressure, social media, discrimination, the environment, animal welfare, fairness or youth participation.

They prepare a short message:

METHOD IN PRACTICE

STEP 03 / MY CHANGEMAKER MESSAGE - CONTINUED

> *I care about…*
>
> *This matters because…*
>
> *I believe we can…*
>
> *My invitation is…*

They share their messages in groups of three. Listeners respond only with:

> *"The part I will remember is…"*
>
> *"Your invitation was clear when you said…"*

Sharing with the whole group is voluntary.

> *"My voice becomes powerful when it is connected to something I care about and to an action people can actually take."*

04 CLOSING CIRCLE

5 MINUTES

Each participant completes:

> *"With my voice, I want to…"*

Possible answers: encourage, include, protect, question, connect, speak honestly, challenge unfairness or create change.

> *"A changemaker is not always the loudest person in the room. A changemaker listens before judging, speaks without humiliating and turns values into action."*

03

FROM VISION TO ACTION

A creative, Gestalt-inspired method that helps young people connect their changemaker messages, imagine a desired future and identify a realistic first step towards change.

ONE METHOD

05 STEP INTO THE CHANGE

STEP INTO THE CHANGE

From My Message to My First Step

Suggested duration: 60 minutes

AIM

To help participants transform their changemaker messages into a shared vision and recognise one concrete step they can take towards change.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- connect with others who care about similar issues;
- explore the difference between the current situation and the change they want;
- experience change through drawing and Gestalt group sculpture;
- recognise their personal role in creating change;
- identify one realistic first step.

MATERIALS

- participants' Changemaker Messages;
- three A3 sheets for each group;
- markers;
- sticky notes;
- masking tape or rope.

SESSION FLOW

01	FORM THE CHANGE GROUPS	5 MINUTES
02	THREE PICTURES OF CHANGE	20 MINUTES
03	LIVING CHANGE – GROUP SCULPTURE	25 MINUTES
04	OUR REAL FIRST STEP	5 MINUTES
05	CLOSING CIRCLE	5 MINUTES

METHOD IN PRACTICE

KEY MESSAGE

> *Change begins when we can see what is happening, imagine what could be different and recognise what we can do now.*

When used independently: Invite participants to write one issue they care about and one change they would like to see before forming the groups.

01 FORM THE CHANGE GROUPS

5 MINUTES

Participants take their Changemaker Messages and briefly share:

> *"I care about..."*
>
> *"My invitation was..."*

They form small groups with others whose messages are connected by a similar issue or value. Each group completes:

> *"We all care about..."*

02 THREE PICTURES OF CHANGE

20 MINUTES

Each group receives three A3 sheets and creates three connected pictures.

Picture 1 – The Problem

What issue or situation would you like to change? Show who is affected, what is missing, what the atmosphere feels like and who is not seen, heard or included.

METHOD IN PRACTICE

STEP 02 / THREE PICTURES OF CHANGE - CONTINUED

Picture 2 – The Change We Want

What would the situation look like after a positive change? Show what would be different, how people would behave, how relationships would change and which values would become visible.

Picture 3 – The First Steps into Change

What can we begin doing now? Each participant adds at least one personal contribution beginning with:

> *"I can..."*

Examples: start a conversation, listen, invite someone, create a post, speak with a teacher, share an idea, organise a small activity, ask others to join, collect information or stand up when something is unfair. The third picture may include footprints, arrows or a path connecting the problem with the desired future.

03 LIVING CHANGE – GROUP SCULPTURE

25 MINUTES

Each group uses its pictures to create a short living presentation.

Sculpture 1 – The Problem

The group creates a frozen image of the first picture. Observers briefly name what they notice, who is seen or unseen, where the tension is and what feeling the sculpture creates.

Sculpture 2 – The Change We Want

The group slowly changes the sculpture into the desired situation. Observers name what changed, who moved, who became included or heard and which values are now visible.

The First Movement

The group returns to the first sculpture. One participant makes the first movement towards change and says:

METHOD IN PRACTICE

STEP 03 / LIVING CHANGE – GROUP SCULPTURE - CONTINUED

> *"I can begin by..."*

Another participant moves and adds their step. The movement continues until the group reaches the second sculpture. At the end, invite everyone to shake out their body and consciously step out of the role.

04 OUR REAL FIRST STEP

5 MINUTES

Each group chooses one step that is specific, realistic, possible and small enough to begin soon. They complete:

> *"Our first realistic step is..."*

05 CLOSING CIRCLE

5 MINUTES

Each person completes:

> *"Today I realised that change can begin with..."*

Possible answers: one conversation, one person, one idea, one question, one invitation, one courageous step or working together.

> *"A changemaker does not only see the problem or dream about a better future. A changemaker asks: What can I bring, and what can I begin today?"*

APPENDIX A

HIDDEN STORY CARDS

Cut out the cards and give one to each small group.

STORY 1

VISIBLE BEHAVIOUR

A young person keeps checking their phone while someone is speaking.

HIDDEN REASON

They are waiting for important news about a family member.

STORY 2

VISIBLE BEHAVIOUR

A participant does not greet anyone and sits away from the group.

HIDDEN REASON

They are new, do not understand the language well and are afraid of making a mistake.

STORY 3

VISIBLE BEHAVIOUR

Someone laughs when another participant gives a wrong answer.

HIDDEN REASON

They laugh when they feel nervous and do not know how to react.

STORY 4

VISIBLE BEHAVIOUR

A young person says, “This project is stupid. I’m not doing it.”

HIDDEN REASON

They do not understand the task and are afraid that others will notice.

STORY 5

VISIBLE BEHAVIOUR

Someone becomes angry when their idea is not selected.

HIDDEN REASON

They often feel ignored and spent a lot of time preparing the idea.

APPENDIX B

EMPATHY AND BOUNDARIES

Use these cards for the Empathy and Boundaries activity.

SITUATION 1

Someone posts another person's photo without permission.

SITUATION 2

A participant repeatedly interrupts others.

SITUATION 3

Someone makes a hurtful joke and says, "Relax, it was only a joke."

SITUATION 4

One person refuses to contribute to group work.

SITUATION 5

Friends pressure someone to do something they do not want to do.

SITUATION 6

Someone keeps checking their phone while another person is sharing.

SITUATION 7

Someone becomes angry and speaks disrespectfully.

APPENDIX C

THREE WAYS TO RESPOND

Use these cards for the passive, aggressive and assertive role-play.

SITUATION 1 – SHARED PHOTO

Someone posts an embarrassing photo of another person without permission.

SITUATION 2 – GROUP WORK

One person is doing almost all the work while the others do not contribute.

SITUATION 3 – HARMFUL JOKE

Someone makes a joke about another person's appearance, accent or background.

SITUATION 4 – IGNORED IDEA

A quieter participant suggests an idea, but the group continues as if nothing was said.

SITUATION 5 – PEER PRESSURE

Friends pressure someone to do something they do not want to do.

SITUATION 6 – GROUP CHAT

Several people begin making negative comments about someone who is not present.

APPENDIX D

THIS IS ME

WORKSHEET / PRINTABLE PROMPTS / 01

Use these prompts to create simple worksheets or flipcharts.

HEAD – What do I think about most?

HEART – What really matters to me?

HANDS – What am I good at?

FEET – Where do I feel most alive?

AROUND ME – Which roles do I currently have?

APPENDIX D

MY INNER COMPASS

WORKSHEET / PRINTABLE PROMPTS / 02

NORTH – What do I truly care about?

EAST – What gives me energy?

SOUTH – What strengths do I already have?

WEST – What kind of person do I want to become?

APPENDIX D

THREE PICTURES OF CHANGE

WORKSHEET / PRINTABLE PROMPTS / 03

PICTURE 1 – The Problem

PICTURE 2 – The Change We Want

PICTURE 3 – The First Steps into Change

OUR FIRST REALISTIC STEP – What can we begin soon?