



MY INNER GUIDE

I CHOOSE FOR MYSELF

personal development journal

This publication was created as part of the project *'The Missing Link: Effective Stakeholder Cooperation for the Prevention of Human Trafficking among Vulnerable Youth'* implemented between June 2025-March 2026 by the Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender - A.L.E.G. and funded by the British Government through the British Embassy in Bucharest.





This journal is for you.



For those times when you need to better understand yourself, ask yourself questions, clear your mind, or discover new things about who you are and who you want to become.

This journal is for those who want to grow, learn to make decisions, discover the world and especially themselves.

There is no right or wrong answer here,

no scoring system, comparisons, or expectations. This is your personal space.

This journal is an invitation to a different conversation with yourself. At times, you will reflect on your feelings, your choices, the relationships in your life, how to set personal boundaries, as well as how people around you influenced you. You will explore daily situations and practice recognising signs of an unhealthy relationship or situations that may pose a danger.

You will also discover things about money: how it works, how to manage it and the impact financial decisions might have on your independence, safety and freedom. By understanding all this, you will be more prepared when faced with important decisions and will be able to avoid situations in which others might try to take advantage of you.

It may sound surprising, but personal development and money have more in common than you think. The way in which you see yourself, trust your decisions and understand your needs impact your choices, including the people you trust and the opportunities you accept.

Handwriting in this journal will give you a rare opportunity to slow down in a very fast world. There's no one to impress with your handwriting. No need to be perfect. Only honest.

This is your space, dedicated to your ideas, questions, dreams, doubts, and discoveries.

So, accept the challenge to give yourself the gift of time.

Write about yourself, for yourself.

Be curious.

Be honest.

Be patient with yourself as you grow and discover who you are.

And remember, you deserve to be treated with respect, have healthy relationships and feel safe.

This is the beginning of an important conversation with yourself and perhaps your first step towards making more conscious choices for your future.



About me



This page is about you, who you are, what you like, your dreams and what matters for you. No need for perfect answers. Write down what you feel.

How do I see myself at this moment?

How much do I feel I own my life?

Circle the score:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What could help me get closer to 10?

What changes, decisions or new things would make you feel more confident about yourself and your choices?

Three things that better describe me

Something I am proud of

Something I would like to be better at

On the things I like:

My hidden talent

Is there something you are good at but not many people know it? Or something you would like to develop more?

My perfect Saturday evening

What does an ideal weekend evening look for you? What would you do and who with?

My dream job

If you could do anything in this world, what profession would you choose and why?

Things I am not at all good at (and that's ok)

What do you find difficult to do? What would you like to learn/improve?

The most valuable thing I own

This may be an object, as well as something you can't see, such as a memory, a relationship, a skill.



On the people in my life:

My best friend

Who are they and what do you like most about them?

Important people in my life and why

Who are they and why do they matter to you?

The person or people I find inspiring

Who motivates you and what do you admire about them?

One thing I learnt from somebody close to me

What does a healthy relationship look like for me?

My preferences

The band or artist I would most like to see in concert

The actor/actress I would go on a date with

A movie I could watch over and over again

A series I recommend to everyone

A dish I could never say not to

The online world

The influencer I watch most

I like their content because

Something to remember about social media

Imagination and dreams

If I had a superpower, it would be

I would use my superpower to

A place in the world I would love to visit

Something I would like to learn in the next couple of years

Memories and things that matter

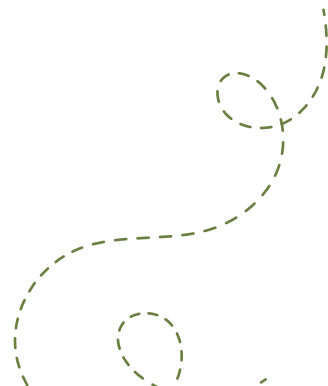
My favourite memory

A moment that always puts a smile on your face whenever you remember it.

A moment when I felt very brave

Something that always makes me smile

A piece of advice I would give myself 5 years from now



Small things that make me happy

Put down all the things that make you smile, no matter how small. There is no right or wrong, your feelings are all that matters.

A song that always makes me want to dance

A taste or dish I always enjoy

A place that soothes me

An activity that makes me lose track of time

A joke that makes me laugh out loud

Somebody who makes me feel safe

An inspiring book or film

A small thing that brings good memories

A colour or object that changes my mood

The moment of the day I most enjoy



20 things about myself



Jot down the first things that come to mind.

1. The word that best describes me is _____
2. My biggest dream is _____
3. A fear of mine is _____
4. The biggest joy I've recently experienced _____
5. My favourite hobby _____
6. The music that represents me _____
7. The film I've rewatched most _____
8. Somebody who inspired me _____
9. My favourite colour _____
10. The place I feel at home/safe _____
11. My favourite animal _____
12. A hidden talent of mine _____





13. A dish I could never say not to _____

14. A relaxing activity _____

15. The best compliment I ever got _____

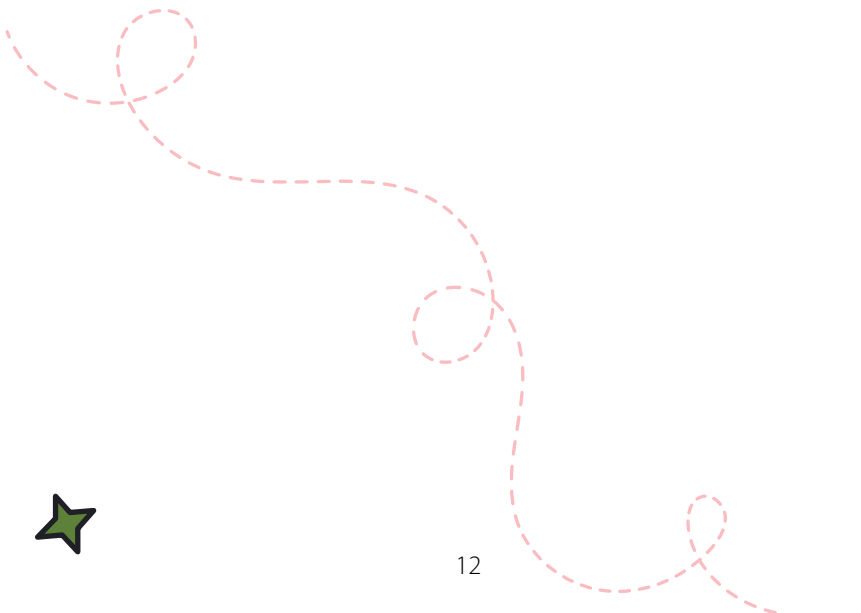
16. My favourite day of the week _____

17. My favourite month of the year _____

18. Something that always makes me smile _____

19. The superpower I wish I had _____

20. Something that makes me feel confident _____





My inner compass



Sometimes, we don't know what to decide. We have several options, several opinions from those around us and perhaps even different feelings at the same time. In times like these, our values can work as an inner compass that points us in the right direction even if we can't clearly see the road.

Your inner compass is made up of those things that matter most to you.

Things that matter to me

Put down a couple of things without which you wouldn't be yourself:

Pick 3 values that you feel most represent you at this point in time

(e.g. friendship, freedom, respect, family, honesty, safety, creativity, independence, learning, courage, etc.).

If my values could talk...

Fill in the blanks:

The value _____ would stimulate me to _____

The value _____ would help me say "yes" when _____

The value _____ would help me say "no" when _____

The moment of choice

Think about a real or imaginary situation in which you have to make a decision.

The situation:

What choice would be in line with my values?

How would I feel after making this choice?

When our actions are not aligned to our values, we may feel confused or unhappy. Knowing yourself is discovering what truly matters to you. Even when we cannot control what happens around us, we can choose where we are headed. Your values do not dictate what you "have" to do, but guide you to choose what feels best for you.

I'VE FINALLY FOUND AN ANSWER
TO THE QUESTION:

**'WHO DO YOU
THINK YOU ARE?'**

I AM WHOEVER I SAY I AM.



My inner friend/How we speak to ourselves



What we tell ourselves is more impactful than we think. Sometimes we are more critical to ourselves than to other people. Other times, we are quicker to notice what we don't like about us and forget about those things that make us who we are. It's not about being perfect or having no doubts, but about being able to see ourselves with a kinder, more curious eye.

Things I like about myself

Think about your strong points, the small things you do well or the things that make you one of a kind. Take your time.

The time I felt proud of myself

Remember a situation when you achieved something or overcame a difficult time.

What happened?

What does that moment say about you?

My inner voice

A critical thing I sometimes tell myself:

What would I tell a friend who thought that about themselves?

How can I rephrase this thought about myself in kinder words?

! *You may not always notice, but you can improve your self-image bit by bit, using those moments when you choose to be on your own side and support yourself. !*

➤ My emotions, my inner rollercoaster ≤

Did you know that we can feel several things, even seemingly contradictory emotions, at the same time? Sometimes, it may seem we have to choose between them or that some of them are 'wrong'.

The good news is, there is **no such things as good or bad emotions**.

Feelings are simply different ways in which we, both boys and girls, experience and express our emotions.

Some emotions help us make sense of what's happening to us and adapt. And they can be overwhelming when get a hold of our reactions.

For example,

- **fear** warns us that something may hurt us;
- **anger** reveals our limits and what bothers us.

Emotions as such are not the problem, but how we express them.

Emotions can bring lots of ups and downs, like a rollercoaster. Get on the **wheel of emotions** on the next page and discover the multitude of different feelings you may experience!

Explore your emotions

Emotions may be a rollercoaster, full of unexpected ups and downs, so come explore the wheel of emotions. Use it to uncover the plethora of different emotions you may experience and how often they may come up.

Take a look at the wheel of emotions. Which ones do you feel most often? Circle or colour them.

Select 3 emotions you've recently experienced and put down an example.

Emotion 1: _____

What made me feel that? _____

Emotion 2: _____

What made me feel that? _____

Emotion 3: _____

What made me feel that? _____

Think about an emotion that sometimes feels overwhelming.

Which emotion is that? _____

How could I better manage it?

Fill in the blanks with a positive:

'Whatever I might be feeling, I can...'










! *Emotions are a part of you. You don't have to erase them, but simply understand them and learn how to use them to your advantage. !*

My emotion map

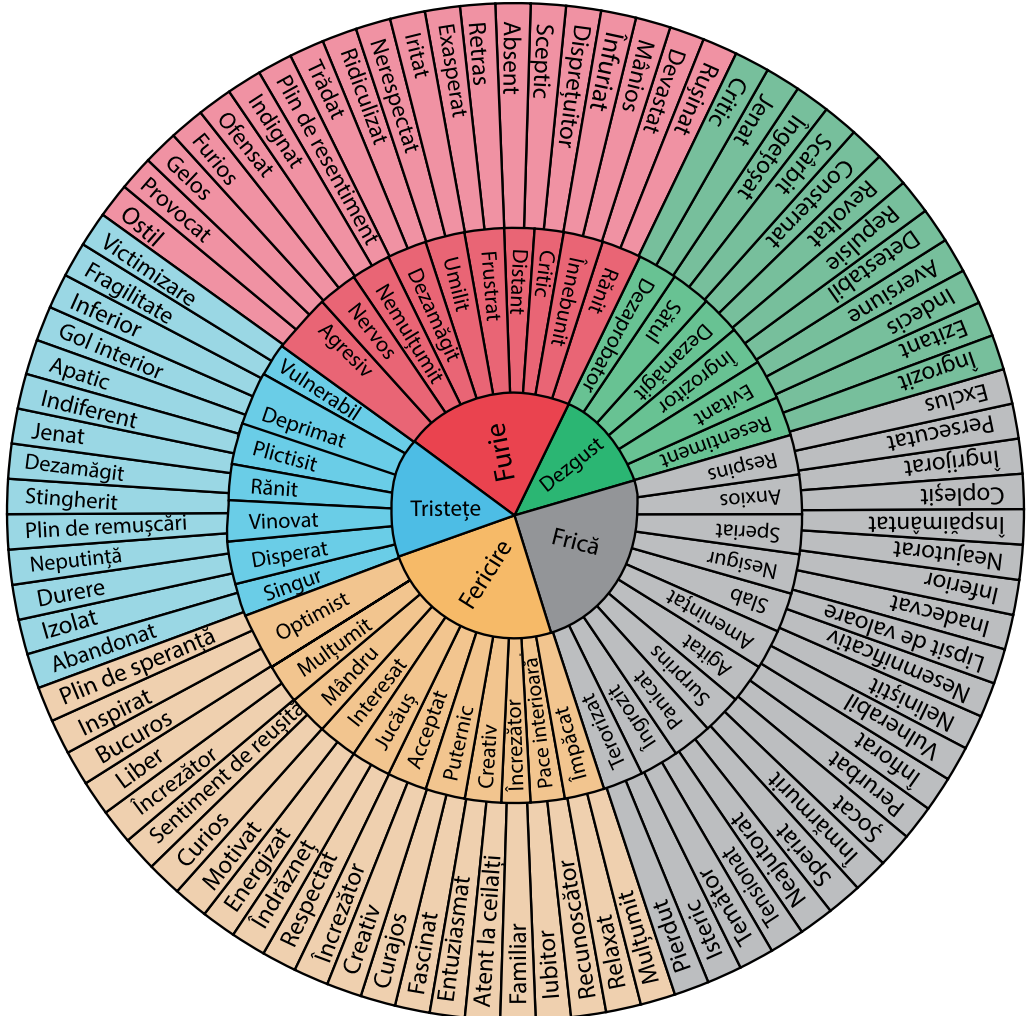
Create your own emotion legend! Put down the emotions you experience most often or the ones you know best and assign a colour to each.

EMOTION

CLOUR

_____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
_____	
_____	

! There are no good or bad emotions. Your map simply shows what you felt and how to connect to yourself. !



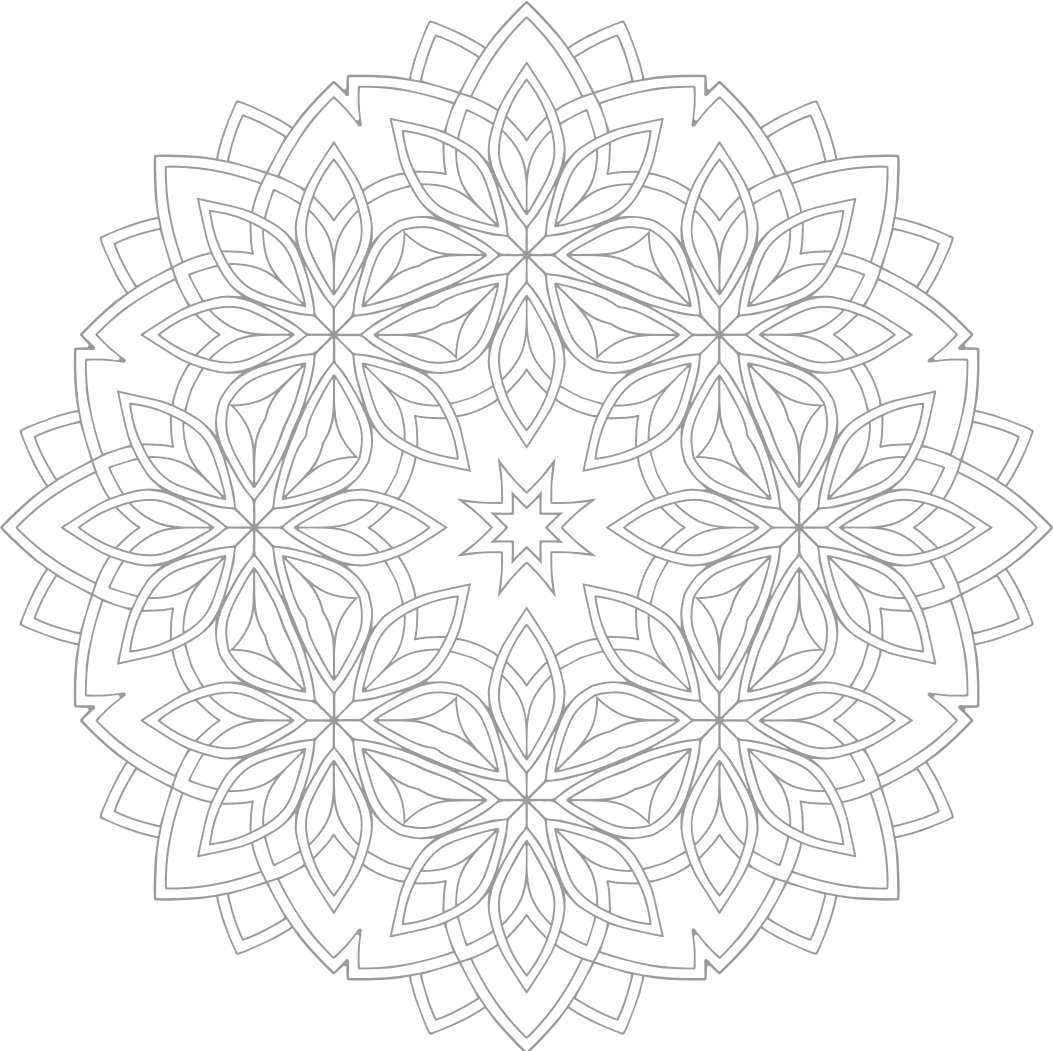
The main emotions I felt this month are



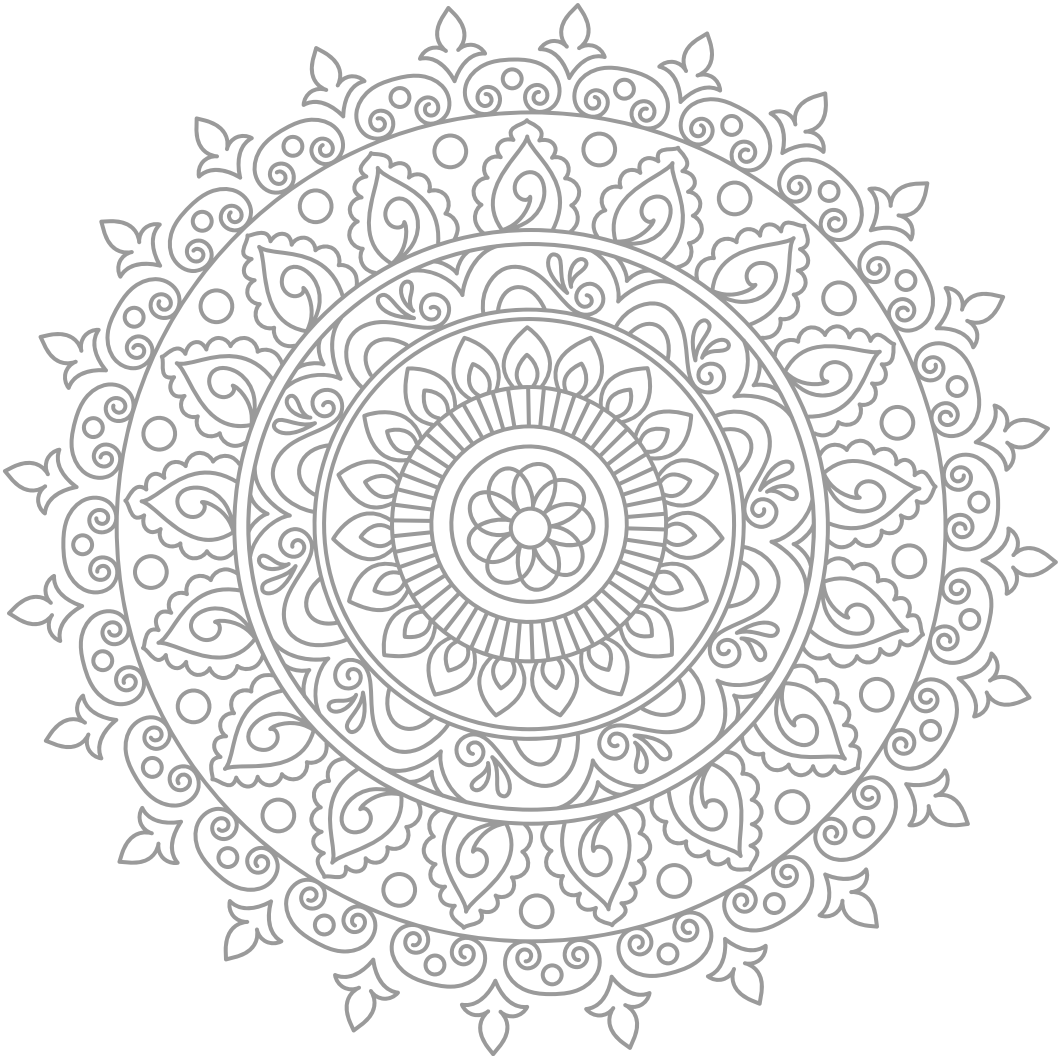
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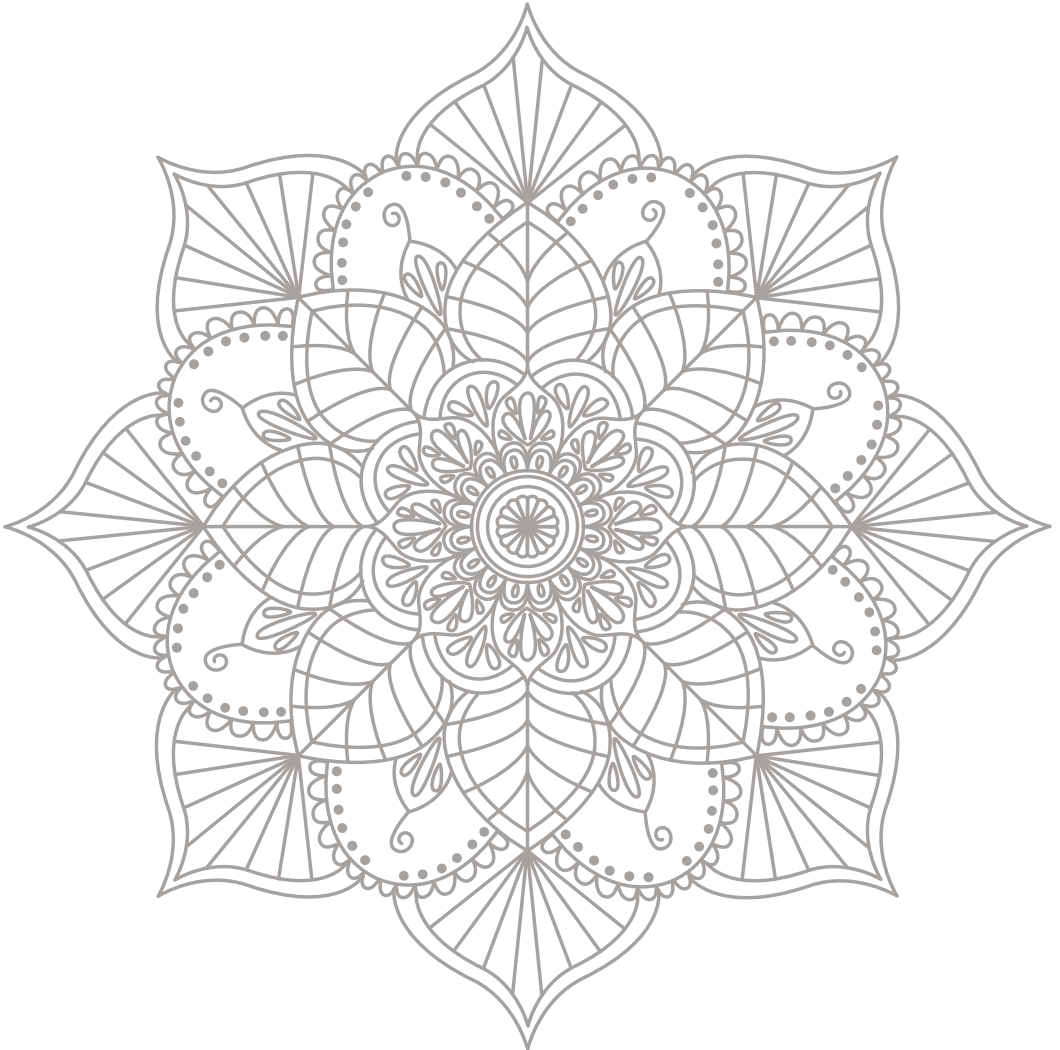
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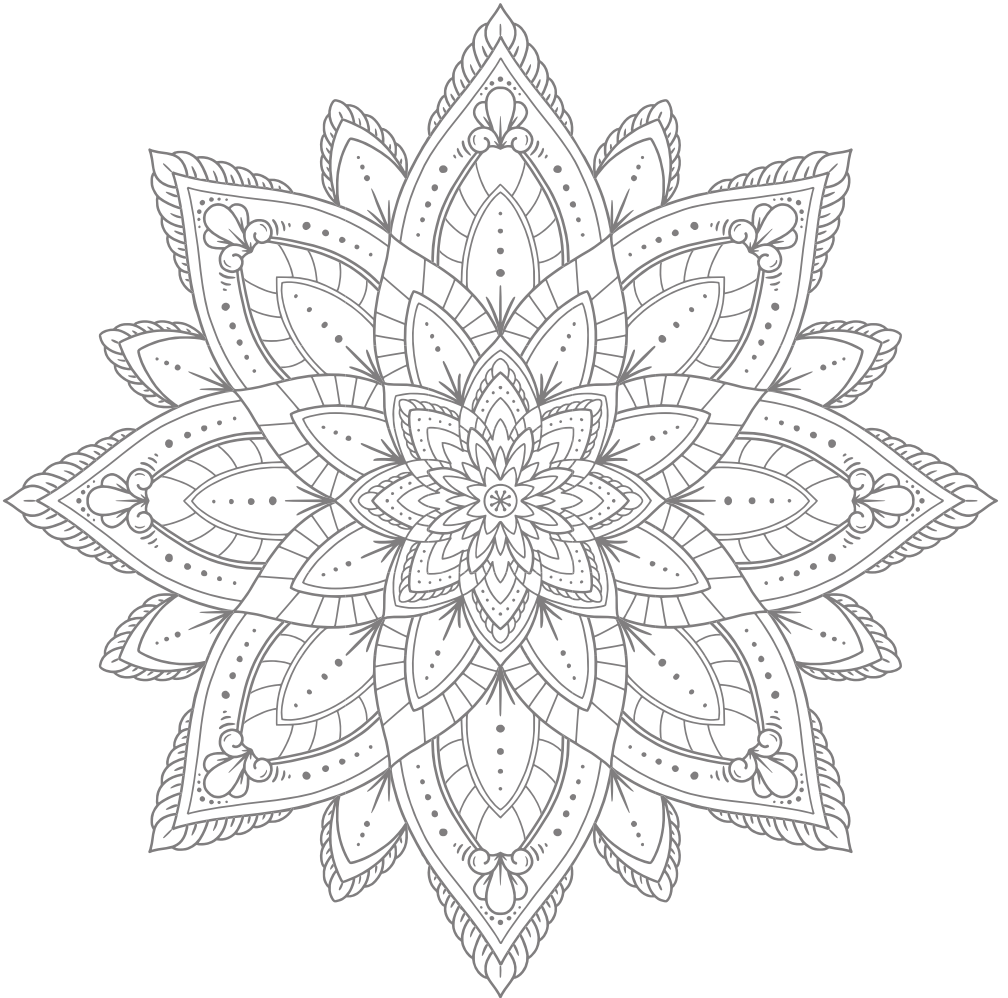
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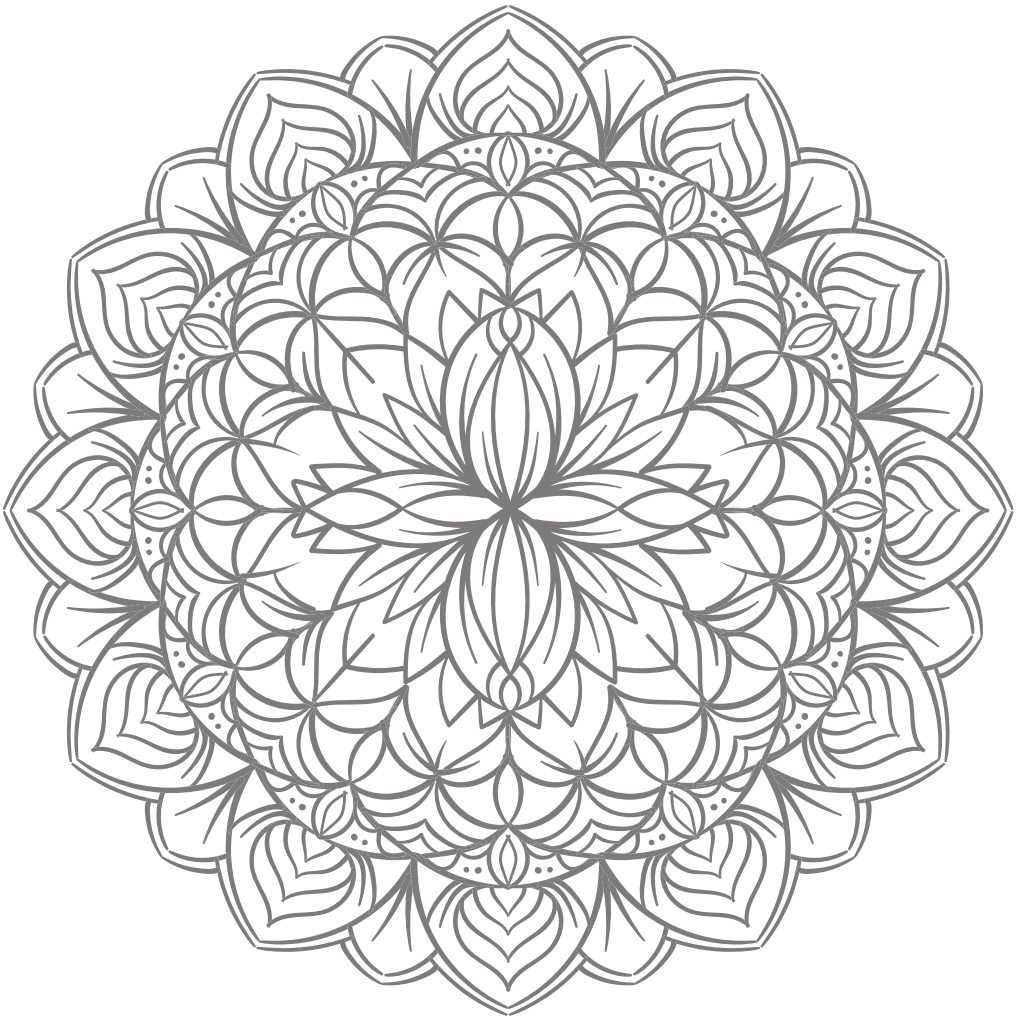
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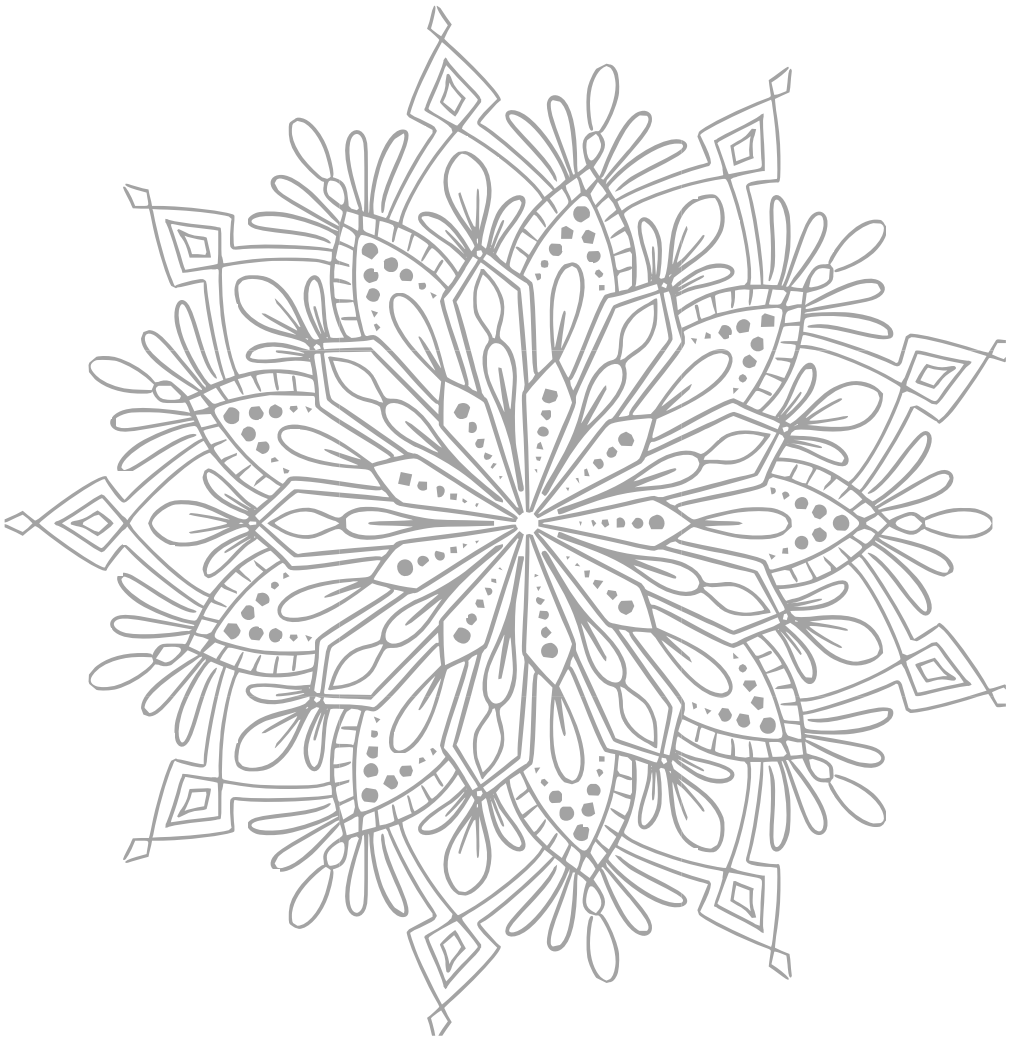
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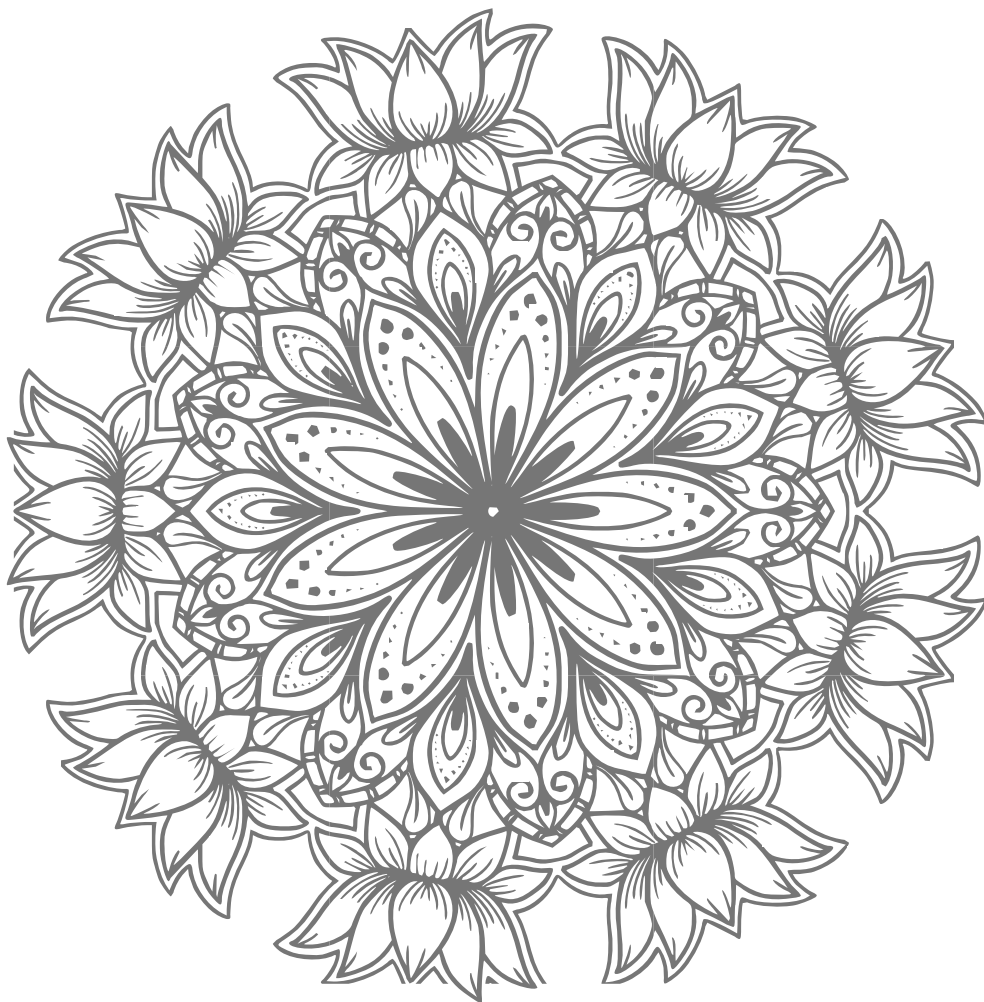
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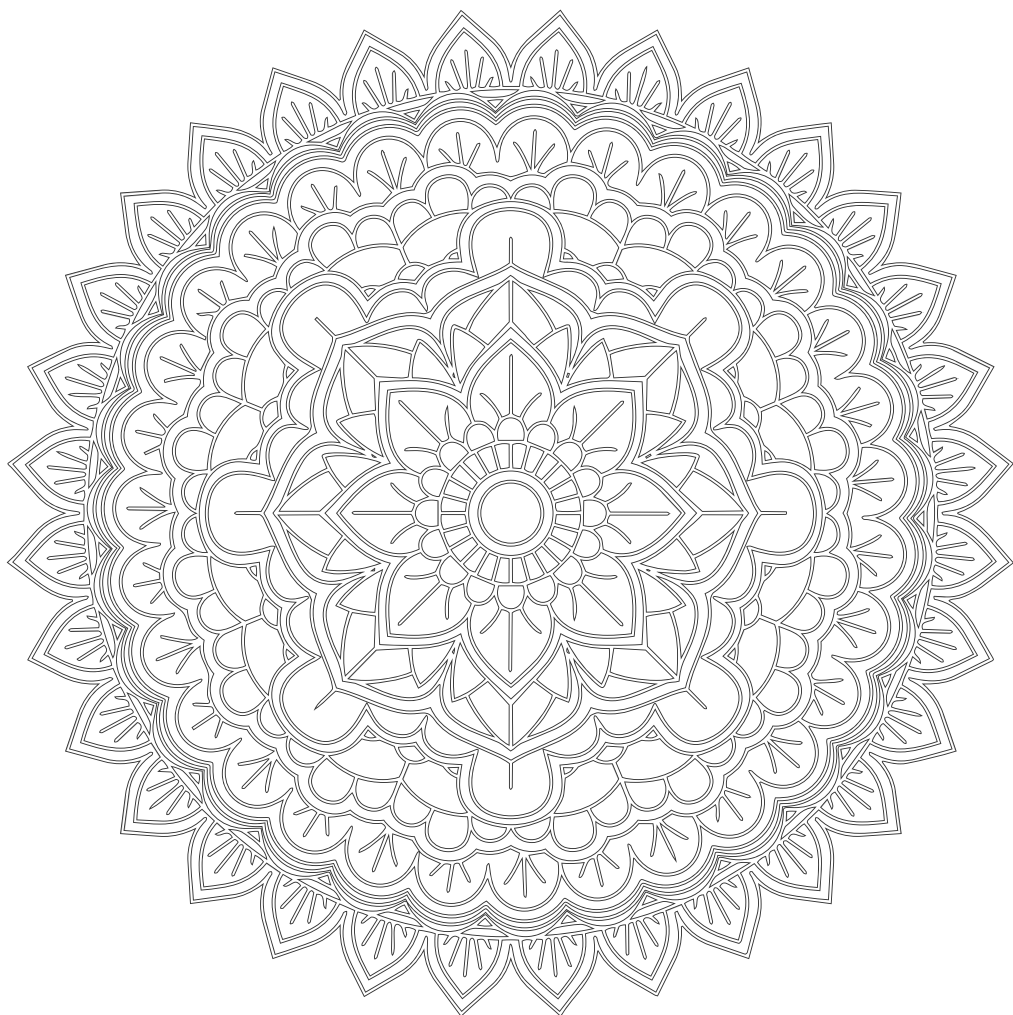
The main emotions I felt this month are



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The main emotions I felt this month are





Where I feel emotions



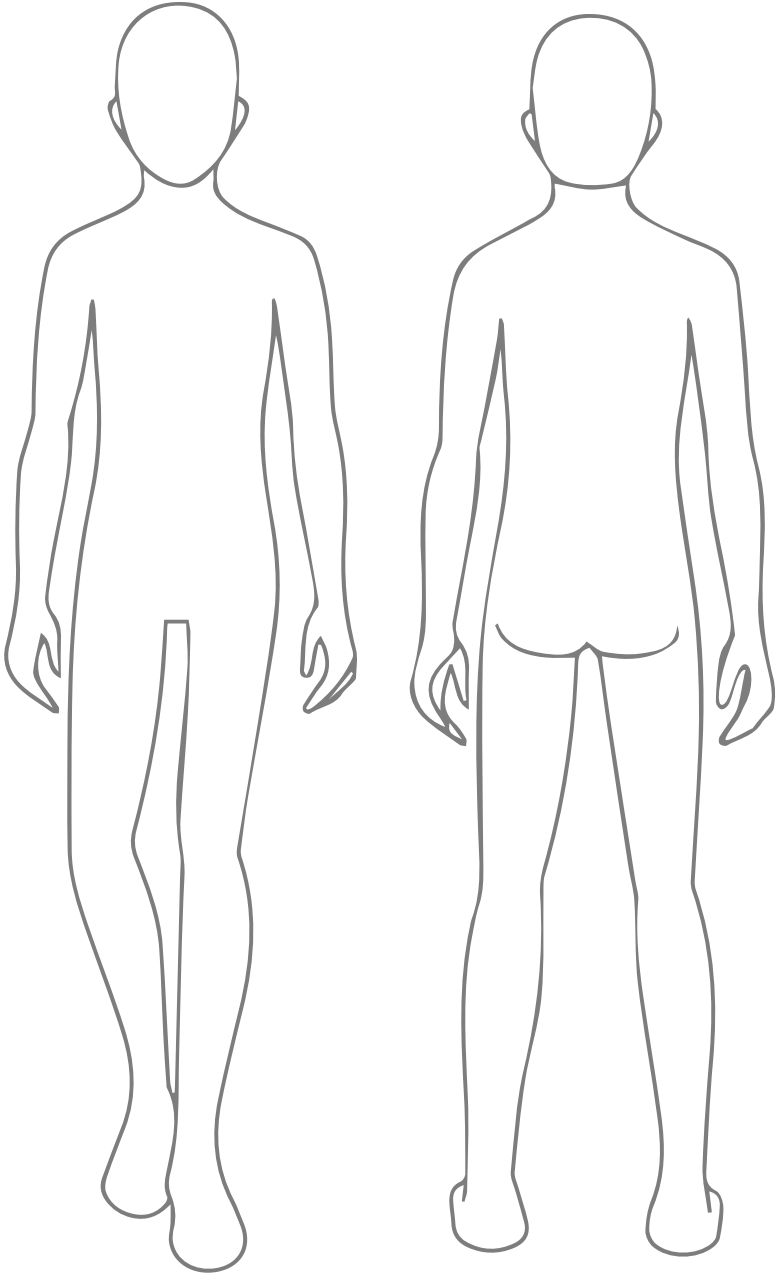
Our emotions don't only come up in our mind, but we can feel them in our body, too! When we feel we have butterflies in our stomach, we are excited, when we feel tension in our shoulders, we are angry and when we are joyful, our chest feels warm. Each emotion 'lives' in a certain place in our body and we each experience this differently.

Find where your emotions live

On the body below, colour the different areas with the colours representing your own emotions. Use the colours above to represent your emotions and where they come up in your body.

! By taking note of where and how emotions manifest in your body, you learn to better recognize and manage them. !







Emotion tracker



Use this page to explore your emotions and learn more about yourself. Choose one emotion you've recently experienced and fill in the blanks below.

Fill in the column 'What I would like to do in the future' with reactions you think may help you feel better or better manage that emotion.

! *By taking note of your emotions and reactions, you learn to recognise and better manage them. Each emotion says something about you and the things that matter to you.* !

EMOTION	WHEN I FELT IT (THE SITUATION YOU WERE IN)	WHAT I DID THEN	WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO DO IN THE FUTURE

EMOTION	WHEN I FELT IT (THE SITUATION YOU WERE IN)	WHAT I DID THEN	WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO DO IN THE FUTURE



**FEELINGS HAVE
NO GENDER.**

➤ Me in 15 years! ⚡

Sometimes, it's hard to picture the future, especially as we are still discovering who we are at present. However, dreaming and thinking of what we will be like in the future helps clarify what we want, what truly matters for us and how we want to develop.

Picture your life 15 years from now. It doesn't have to be perfect or ideal, but merely an **imaginary snapshot of a potential future you**. You may draw, colour or put together a small poster/collage representing you 15 years from now.

Start by:

- Drawing, colouring or making a small poster representing you.
- Use colours, symbols or emojis to reflect what you feel and want.
- Use the rest of this page to write down or draw whatever might inspire you.

Prompts

- *What will I look like 15 years from now?*
- *Will I have a partner?*
- *Will I have children or other important people by my side?*
- *Where will I live? What does my place look like?*
- *What do I do? Where do I work?*
- *Is it a fulfilling job?*
- *What would I tell a young person who wants to follow their dreams?*
- *What is one of the best things in my life?*

Creative space

and write things down. Turn this page into a **visual map of your dreams**, whatever you wish to create for your future self and the things you need to get there.

➤ What's it like being a boy or a girl? ⚡

Everyone experiences being a boy or a girl in their own way. We are sometimes influenced by the body we were born in, other times by the expectations of society, our friends and family. This activity allows you to explore what you feel and what being a boy or a girl means to you.

Cross out the word that does not fit you and finish the sentences below. Put down whatever comes to mind. There is no right or wrong.

I'm happy to be a boy/girl because...

I would like to be a boy/girl because I could...

➤ Spot the difference ➤

Every day, we hear the words **'girl', 'boy', 'feminine', 'masculine'**, but they don't all mean the same to all people.

- Some things have to do with our body and the biological characteristics we are born with - these have to do with our **sex**.
- Other things have to do with **expectations, roles or ways in which people choose to express themselves/behave** - these have to do with our **gender**.

This activity will help you better understand the difference between **what your body tells you vs. what society tells you**.

Read the statements below and note them with:

S = if you think the statement is about biological sex (biological, body-related);

G = if you think the statement is about gender (social roles, expectations, personal expression).

- People are born with certain body characteristics
- Boys shouldn't cry
- Someone's reproductive organs
- Expecting girls to look after others
- The way people choose to dress
- Biological differences noticeable at birth
- Pressuring boys into always being strong
- Physical traits, such as voice or body development during puberty
- Colours considered to be typical for boys and girls
- The idea that certain jobs are for men and others for women
- Chromosomes
- How society expects girls and boys to behave
- Choosing a hairstyle or personal style
- The biological changes during puberty
- Comments such as 'this is not for girls' or 'this is not for boys'
- How somebody expresses their identity
- The human body's biological structure
- Expecting boys to take the first step in relationships

Correct answers to the statements

Sometimes, we mistake body-related traits to social rules. Noticing the difference helps us better understand the diversity of people and how society influences the way we perceive ourselves and each other.

S People are born with certain body characteristics

G Boys shouldn't cry

S Someone's reproductive organs

G Expecting girls to look after others

G The way people choose to dress

S Biological differences noticeable at birth

G Pressuring boys into always being strong

S Physical traits, such as voice or body development during puberty

G Colours considered to be typical for boys and girls

G The idea that certain jobs are for men and other for women

S Chromosomes

G How society expects girls and boys to behave

G Choosing a hairstyle or personal style.

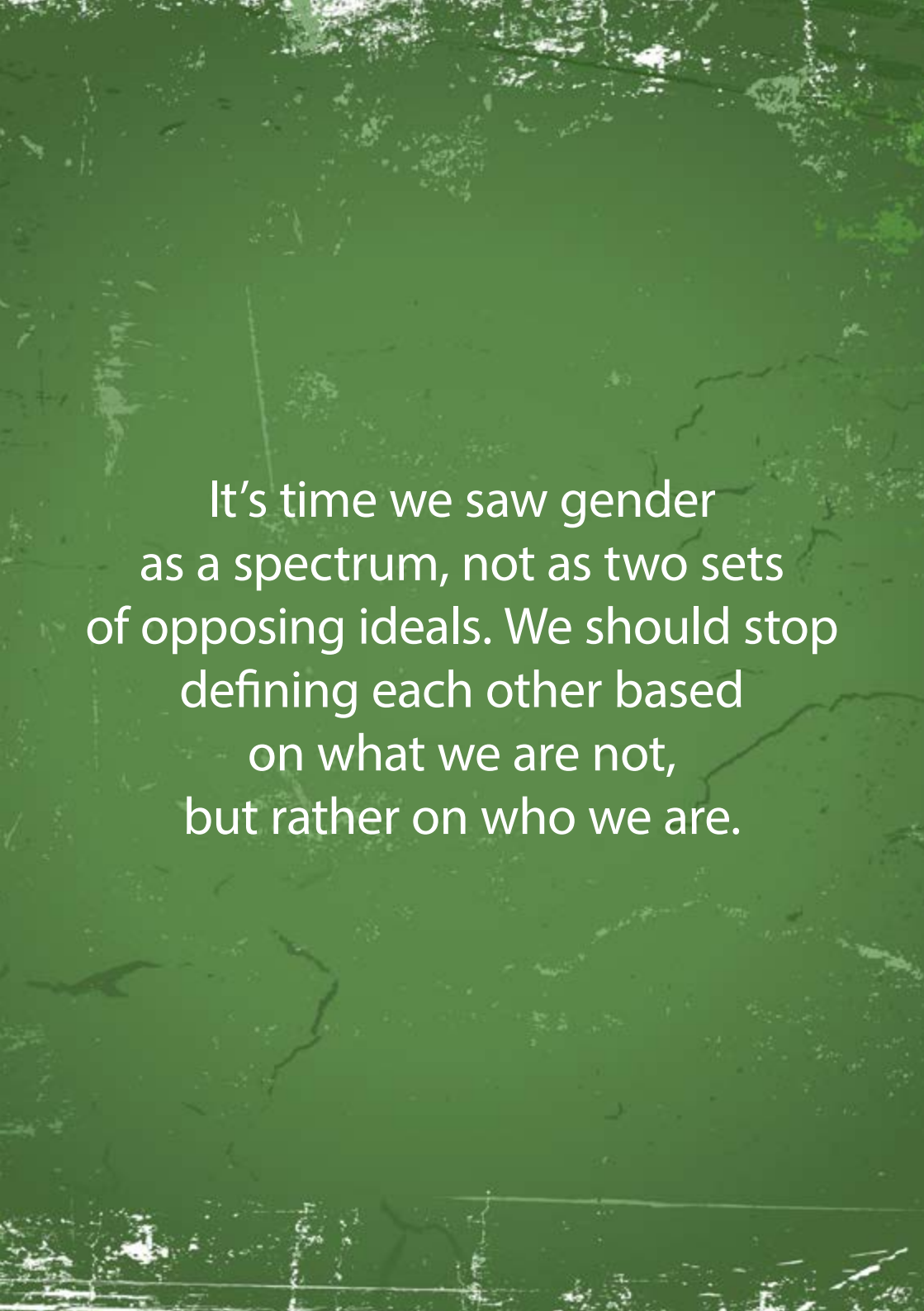
S The biological changes during puberty

G Comments such as 'this is not for girls' or 'this is not for boys'

G How somebody expresses their identity

S The human body's biological structure

G Expecting boys to take the first step in relationships



It's time we saw gender
as a spectrum, not as two sets
of opposing ideals. We should stop
defining each other based
on what we are not,
but rather on who we are.

➤ Social pressure and who you are ≤

We may not realise how many things are influenced by **other people's expectations**, which are also called **social expectations**. Sometimes, these expectations make us feel like we have to be a certain way, even if it doesn't fit us.

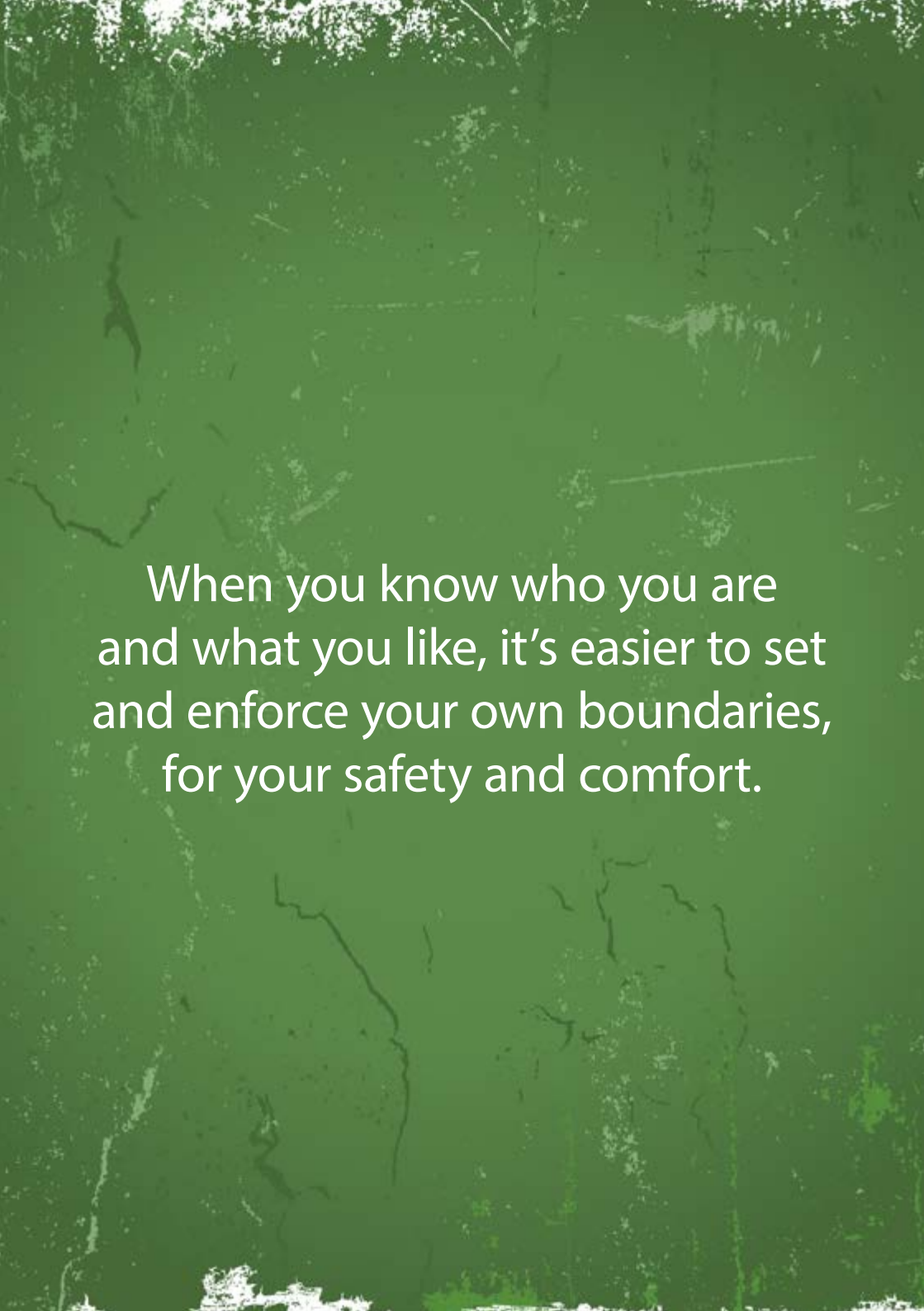
Use this page to reflect on your own experience and discover what's truly yours.

Which statement in the previous activity surprised you most? Why?

Have you ever felt pressured into behaving a certain way only because you are a boy/girl?

What things do you feel truly represent you, regardless of other people's expectations?

! *All people are different. Knowing yourself is noticing the things that stem from inside you and those that are external. Sometimes, freedom starts when you are able to be yourself.* !



When you know who you are
and what you like, it's easier to set
and enforce your own boundaries,
for your safety and comfort.

➤ **My personal boundaries** ⚡

Personal boundaries are limits that help you feel safe and respected in your relationships with others. They define your comfort zone. Having boundaries is not the same as being distant, selfish or mean. Having boundaries is looking after your emotional space.

Everyone has different boundaries and it's perfectly ok to **have them, make them known and ask others to respect them.**

What is comfortable for me?

Fill in the blanks.

I feel good when people _____

I like it when others _____

In a relationship, I need _____

What is **NOT** comfortable for me?

Things that make me feel uncomfortable:

An indicator that my boundaries have been crossed is the feeling of:

! *When people cross our boundaries, we normally feel angry, frustrated, or hurt. We feel like hurting them or, on the contrary, running away. !*

What does 'NO' look like for me?

We sometimes say 'yes' even though we don't feel ready or don't want something.

Picture a situation in which you need to refuse something.

How could you say 'no'?

What do you think you'd feel if you said 'no'?

Important personal boundaries

Put down 3 things or boundaries you want to respect more.

! *Boundaries don't push the right people apart. On the contrary, they make relationships safer, clearer and more respectful, including your relationship to yourself.* !



Consent - saying 'YES' freely



Have you ever heard the word 'consent'?
What does it mean to you? Jot down your thoughts.

Reflection time

Read the situations below and put down how you would feel or what you would do.

- Somebody hugs you without asking first.
 - How would you feel?

- A friend wants to post a photo of you online.
 - Do you think they should ask you first? Why?

- Someone insists you do something after you've said you weren't sure.
 - What does this situation tell you?

What is consent?

Consent means freely, clearly and honestly choosing whether you want to do something or not.

- It's saying 'yes' because you want to, not because you feel pressured or afraid.
- Consent might come up in various situations, such as when somebody wants to:
 - ✓ hug you,
 - ✓ use your things,
 - ✓ take a picture of you,
 - ✓ make decisions in a relationship.
- A real 'yes'
 - ✓ is said free of any pressure;
 - ✓ may be changed at any moment;
 - ✓ means feeling comfortable and safe.
 - ✓ It's perfectly fine to say 'yes' to something today and 'no' next time!

Not saying 'no' doesn't automatically mean 'yes'!

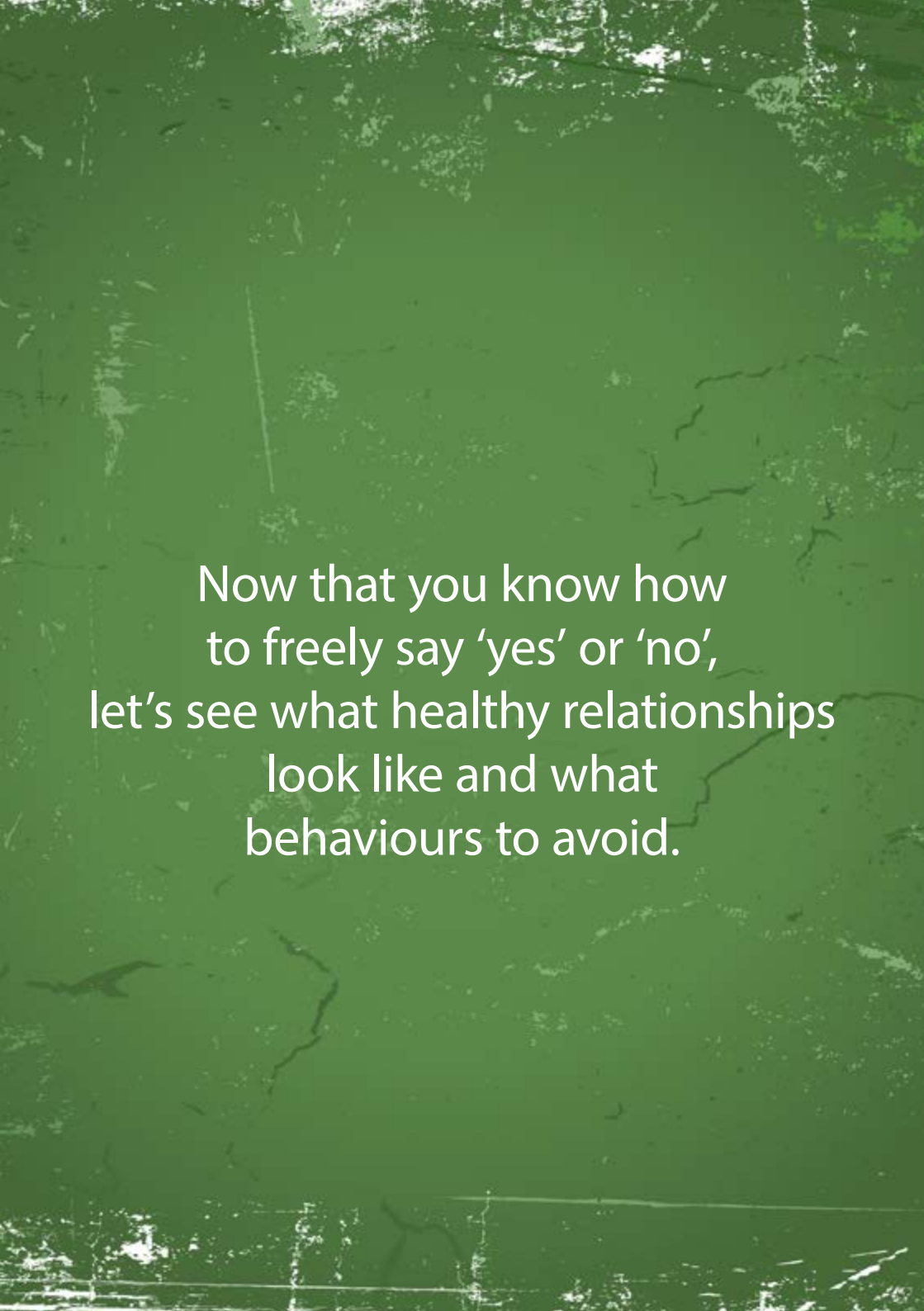
At times, people are afraid or don't know how to say 'no'. Other times, they simply stay silent, afraid they might offend someone or sound rude.

Ce trebuie să știi:

- Not saying 'no' doesn't mean you automatically agree.
- True consent is only valid when you say a clear, free 'yes', with no pressure or fear.
- You have the right to refuse, say 'no', ask for time to think about it or change your mind.
- Respecting your own and other people's boundaries starts when you acknowledge that silence does not equal yes.

Mutual respect

- It's important to express consent when it is about you.
- Nevertheless, respecting others' consent and asking for their permission (e.g. when posting a picture of them, hugging them, etc) is as important.



Now that you know how
to freely say 'yes' or 'no',
let's see what healthy relationships
look like and what
behaviours to avoid.

Healthy relationships: the Good and the Bad

The way we feel in our relationships with friends, colleagues or the people we like speaks volumes. Some behaviours make us feel safe and respected, while others may lead to discomfort, confusion or pressure.

This chapter is an opportunity to reflect on different behaviours and decide whether they are healthy or toxic.

Read the statements below and mark them with:

Marchează în chenarul din dreptul ei:

H = healthy behaviours

T = toxic behaviour

- You don't mind when your friend spends time with their friends or family on their own.
- You like the way they dress and you tell them.
- They force you to do something you don't want to (e.g. sex, activities).
- You decide together how to spend your free time and what to do.
- They lie to you or you lie to each other.
- You trust and feel comfortable around each other.
- You are honest and speak openly to each other.
- They don't always know where and who you are with.
- You feel good and happy in your relationship.
- They mock, humiliate or belittle you.
- They get jealous quickly and claim that is a sign they care.
- You spend so much time together that you neglect your friends, family or things that are important to you.
- They offend or make you feel bad.
- If you don't pick up your phone, they keep calling until you do.
- They flirt with others even when you are together.
- When they get angry, they break things or scream at the top of their lungs.
- They respect your boundaries even if they don't agree with them.
- They encourage you to speak about your feelings.
- They encourage you to spend time with other friends, too.
- They apologize when they make mistakes.

- They make you feel guilty for things that you are not responsible for.
- They pressure you into doing things you don't feel ready for.
- They are happy for your success.
- You can be yourself around them.
- They check your phone or accounts without your permission.
- They make you feel at peace and respected.
- They judge your friends or break your personal things.
- You can express your feelings without any fear.
- They pressure you or your decisions.

Personal reflection space

What behaviours make you feel **safe and respected**?

What behaviours make you feel **pressured, uncomfortable** or **misunderstood**?

What could you do to set **healthy boundaries** in your relationships?



**RRRESPECT
HAS NO GENDER.**




➤ Online relationships and your digital safety ≤

Nowadays, a great deal of our relationships happen online, via messages, games, social networks or apps. The online world allows us to meet new people, communicate easily and express ourselves freely.

However, the digital environment can also be deceiving, as we can't always truly know who our interlocutor is and what their intentions are.

Online safety does not mean you should be afraid of the internet, but that you need ways to protect your personal space, your data and your wellbeing.

Jot down what your gut tells you about the statements below:

-  = makes me feel safe
-  = I'm not sure
-  = red flag

Reflection time:

- They understand if you don't reply on the spot.
- They ask for personal or private pictures.
- They want to quickly move your conversation on another app.
- They respect your decision to not share private data.
- They avoid talking about themselves, but ask a lot of questions about you.
- They make you feel your conversation should remain a secret.
- They make promises or offers that sound too good to be true.
- Your conversation makes you feel relaxed and respected.

Things that I choose NOT to share online:

Signs that it's time for a break or to put an end to the conversation

Mă simt inconfortabil/ă, presat/ă sau confuz/ă când

Nu știu dacă pot avea încredere în persoana respectivă când

Persoana de încredere cu care pot vorbi dacă ceva online mă neliniștește




➤ How safe does an online conversation seem? ⚡

The online world doesn't always show the whole picture. Sometimes, people only show select things about themselves, while other times they may claim to be someone else.

It's not about being suspicious of everyone, but about noticing those signs that help you stay safe and trusting your gut feeling.

Picture the situation below.

You start talking to someone new. Read the situations below and write down what you feel.

-  = seems safe
-  = I'm not sure
-  = red flag

- There are very few pictures on their profile and they all look like they've been borrowed from the web.
- They soon want you to move your conversation on another private app.
- They reply calmly and respect when you don't answer their messages.
- They avoid video calls or any other way in which you may check their identity.
- They ask a lot of personal questions very quickly.
- They call you 'special' after a very brief conversation.
- They respect your decision not to share personal details.
- They ask you to keep your conversation a secret from your friends and family.
- Your conversations makes you feel relaxed and respected.
- They promise you money, gifts or opportunities that sound too good to be true.

 **Remember:**

How can you tell if an online conversation is safe for you?

What are the signs that would make you pause or ask for help?

! As in the offline, in the online world you have the right to feel safe and respected and to say 'stop' when something feels off. !

You've learnt to notice
the signs of online safety.
In real life, people may try to
influence or pressure you.

Let's see some ways
to identify real trust vs.
manipulation.

➤ Trust or manipulation? How can you tell? ⚡

In your relations with others, whether online friends or people you like, it takes time to build trust, which sets in when you feel respected, safe and free to make your own decisions.

However, at times, people may try to influence your decisions through pressure, guilt, or exaggerated promises. This is manipulation.

It's not always easy to spot the difference from the start, which is why it helps to pay attention to how a certain situation makes you feel and how other people acts.

What does your gut tell you about the situations below?

● = seems trustworthy

● = I'm not sure

● = possible manipulation

- Someone tells you that you may take your time making a decision.
- They say: 'You would do it if you truly cared about me'.
- They respect it when you say you need time to think about it.
- They make you feel guilty for saying 'no'.
- They accept your boundaries and don't push them.
- They tell you not to talk to others about your conversations.
- They encourage you to talk to your friends or family before making an important decision.
- They very soon start promising all sorts of big things.
- After your conversation, you feel at peace and respected.
- You feel pressured into answering or making immediate decisions.

Remember

How can you tell if someone truly respects your decisions?

➤ **Setting personal boundaries and online safety** ≤

The internet can be a fun, useful place, but it also comes with risks, so protecting your safety is crucial.


Setting online boundaries is not about fear, but responsibility to yourself. By observing these boundaries, you will have a safe, positive, good online experience. We have identified some personal boundaries that you can use to cut risks and surf the web safely.

Personal online safety commitment

I commit to observe the boundaries below in order to protect my online safety and privacy.

1. *I will use privacy settings to control who can see my data and restrict access to unknown people.*
2. *I will be cautious about requests and messages from unknown people.*
3. *To prevent being followed or exposed, I will not check-in in places I visit often.*
4. *I will choose a username that does not disclose any personal data or sensitive information.*
5. *I will not post sexual pictures or content about myself. To protect my image and reputation, I will be careful about the content I post.*
6. *To prevent abuse, I will not send any sexual messages, pictures or videos, even if anyone asks me to.*
7. *For my physical safety, I will not accept to meet people I have only met online in real-life.*

Signed

The background features a vibrant pink color with two large, overlapping cyan circles. The text is centered in white, with the words "be the hero of your life," in a bold, sans-serif font.

Above all,
be the hero of your life,
not the victim.



Secrets. Good? Bad?





We are sometimes entrusted with or keep secrets. Some are harmless, even fun, while others may be dangerous or make us feel uncomfortable. This page will help you identify each category and decide how to react.

1. What do you think about secrets?

Fill in the blanks:

- A good secret is: _____
- A bad secret is: _____
- I feel good when I keep a secret: _____
- I feel bad/scared when I keep a secret _____

2. Categorize the examples below.

Check good secrets  and mark bad secrets with an 

- Your friend tells you about their gift for another friend's birthday.
- Someone makes you not tell your parents that you were forced to give them money or do a risky activity.
- Your friend showed you a surprise for school.
- Someone told you not to tell anyone they want you to meet alone.
- A colleague found out a funny secret about somebody else and wants you to keep it.
- Somebody says you will be punished if you tell anyone what you're going through.

3. How do I react to bad secrets?

Fill in the blanks:

- **When I get a secret that scares or makes me feel uncomfortable, I can:** _____

- **The people I trust and can talk to are:**
-

- **A sign that a secret is dangerous:** _____

 **Remember**

Good secrets can be fun and special, while bad secrets should not be kept to ourselves. Asking for help and talking to someone you trust protects and helps you make good decisions.

When you recognise pressure and manipulation, you also feel stronger to manage your money and financial decisions. Let's see how your personal budget can help you be independent



**Financial education
is more valuable
than money itself.**

➤ Money and choices ≤

As you grow up, you start making more and more money-related decisions. Whether it's pocket money, a scholarship or a small job, the way you manage your money may influence your feeling of independence and safety.

Money is a tool that helps us cover our needs and fulfil our goals. When used consciously, money can give us more control over our own choices

What is a budget?

A budget is a simple plan for your money.

A budget helps you understand how much money you have and decide how to spend it before you actually do it.

In short,

money coming in - money going out = what's left?

1. Income (money coming in)

Your income is the money you receive. For instance,

- allowance
- pocket money
- scholarship
- part-time job
- money you get as a gift
- money you earn from tutoring or helping other children do their homework
- babysitting money
- money you earn by selling personal items (clothes, books, games)
- money you earn from creative activities (painting, handmade items, photography)
- competition prizes or rewards
- money you earn from small online projects (design, editing, gaming, etc.)
- money from youth projects (sometimes from subsistence allowances), etc.

! *Even when it's small amounts of money, it's worth being aware exactly where it comes from and how you use it.. !*

I normally get money from:

2. Expenses (money going out)

Expenses are the things you spend your money on. For instance,

- transport
- food
- clothes, jewellery
- going out with friends
- subscriptions (music, films, online platforms)
- phone gadgets or accessories
- games or apps
- film, concert, festival tickets
- internet or phone services
- books, magazines or school items
- personal care products
- gifts for your friends and family
- activities or hobbies.

Expenses may be:

fixed – regular (e.g., transport, subscriptions, rent, utilities, etc.);

variable – differ from instance to instance (e.g., going out, clothing).

The things I most often spend money on are:

3. Why is a budget useful?

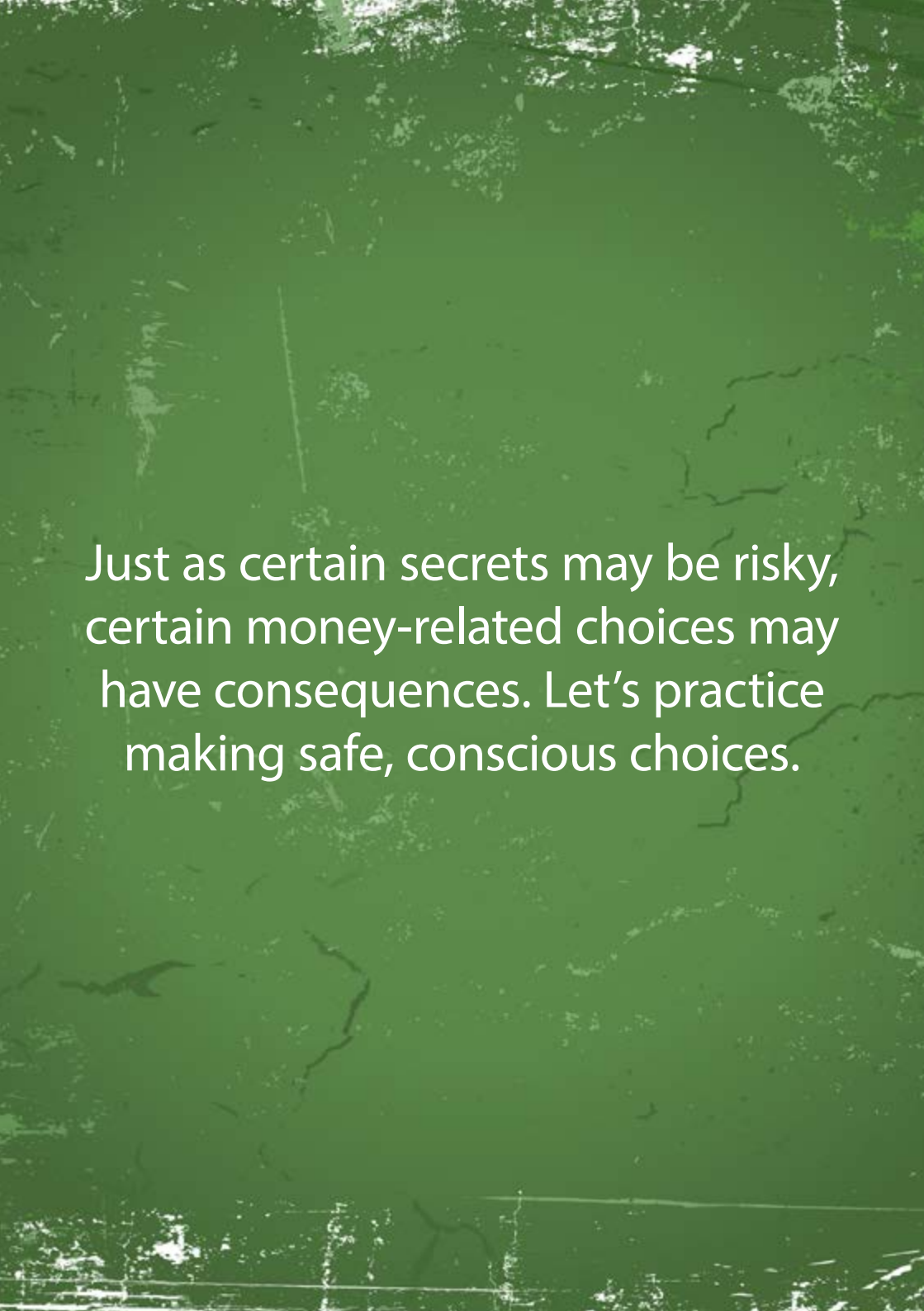
A budget may help you:

- not run out of money unexpectedly;
- reduce money-related stress;
- save for an important occasion;
- have more control over your choices.

Having a budget doesn't mean not spending any money. It means making conscious choices about what's worth spending your money on.

Remember

If I were to spend money for something that's important to me, that would be:



Just as certain secrets may be risky,
certain money-related choices may
have consequences. Let's practice
making safe, conscious choices.

➤ My relationship with money ≤

We all have different relationships with money. For some, money is freedom, for others safety or the possibility to do the things we enjoy. The way we look at money has an impact on the way we use it.

This page will help you reflect on how you see money and what role it plays in your life.

What does money mean to me?

Fill in the gaps with the first things that come to mind.

When I hear 'money', I think of:

Money makes me feel:

I mostly use money to:

I've learnt about money from:

Think about the last 7 days

and put down 3 things you've spent money on:

1.

2.

3.

Were these planned or impulsive buys?

Needs vs. wants - what's the difference?

We sometimes buy things we don't need, while other times things we simply want. While these are both normal, they aren't as important and we should be aware of the things that influence our choices.

Needs are the things we need to live, develop and do our daily tasks. If needs aren't met, it is difficult or impossible to live a good life.

Some examples of **needs**: food, weather-appropriate clothing, transport to/from school and other activities, school supplies or materials, hygiene products, etc.

Wishes are those things we like, that bring us joy or comfort, but which are not essential for our daily life. We may have these, but we can also live without them.

Examples of **wishes**: a newer phone than the one you already own, designer clothes or trendy accessories, games, in-game apps or skins, always going out for coffee or eating out, cool gadgets or items, etc.

Sometimes, the same thing can be both a need and a want, depending on the situation. For instance, a telephone may cover the need of communication, but changing the one you already have with a more expensive one may be a wish. Being honest with myself

Fill in the gaps below.:

I have been in the situation of wanting something because others had it, for instance:

- a newer cell phone
- trendy clothes or shoes
- a gadget or phone accessory

- _____
- _____
- _____

I am usually influenced by:

- friends
- social media
- ads
- trends
- influencers
- school mates
- others: : _____

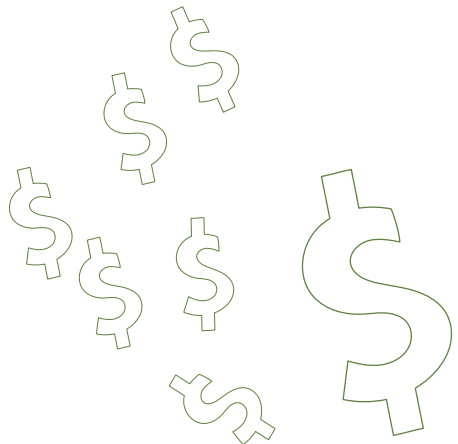
Sometimes, a wish may seem very important in the heat of the moment, but giving it some thought may eliminate the sense of urgency.

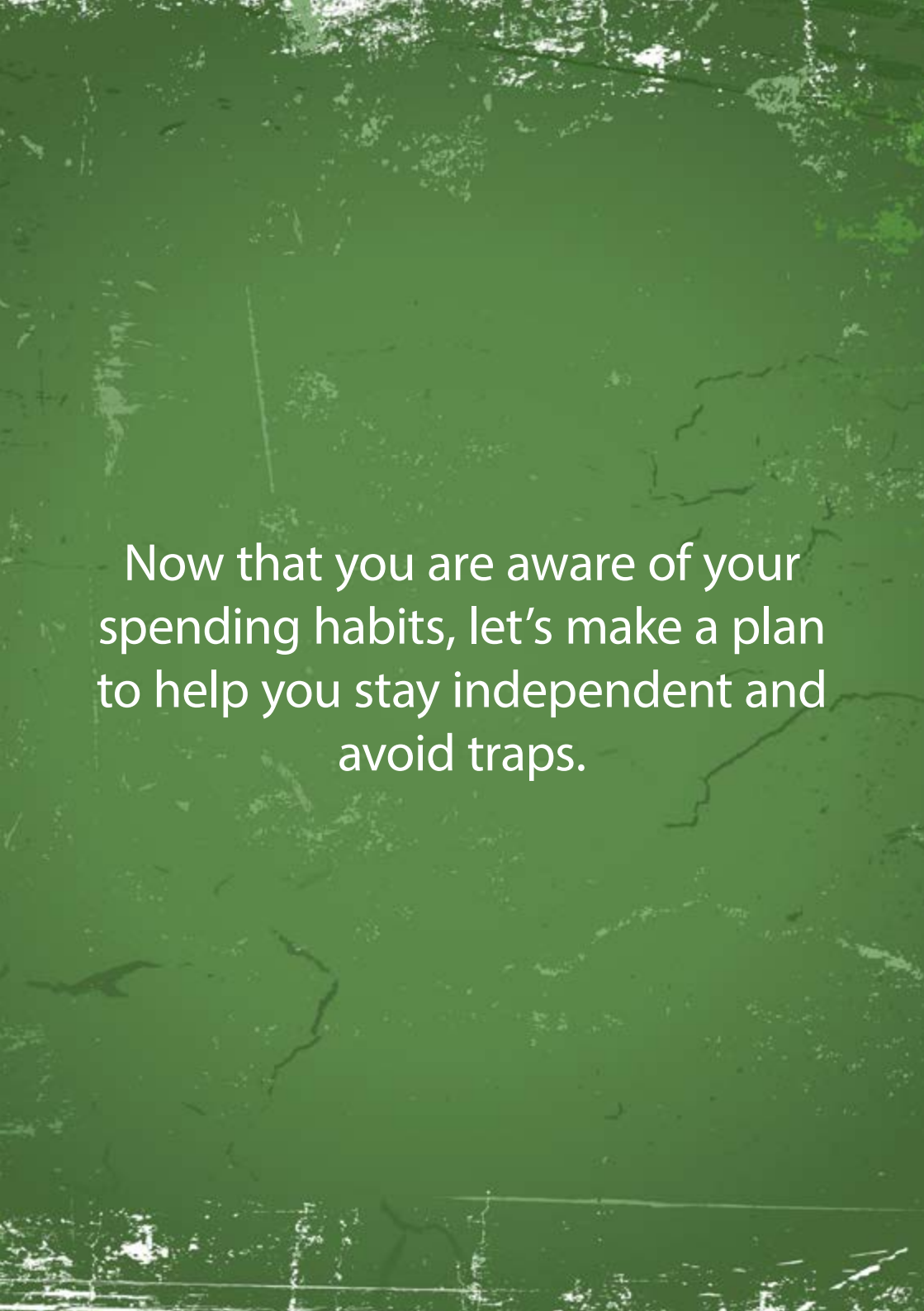
I can postpone a wish for:

_____ days before deciding whether to buy it or not.

 **Remember:**

When you've understood your relationship with money and your wants, it's easier to make decisions that truly matter to you, not because others have/do/say things a certain way.





Now that you are aware of your
spending habits, let's make a plan
to help you stay independent and
avoid traps.



My personal financial safety plan



Money comes with more freedom, but greater responsibility, too. Having a couple of simple rules about how you manage your money can help you feel more secure, organized and in control.

A financial safety plan should not be complicated. It may be enough to set some personal rules and know who you can go to for advice.

My personal money-related rules

Think about 3 rules that may help you make better decisions about your money. For instance: *don't spend all my money at once, save a little every month, take time to think before buying something.*

Rule 1:

Rule 2:

Rule 3:

Trustworthy people

When you have questions about money or need to make an important decision, it may be useful to speak to someone who has more experience.

A trustworthy adult I can talk to about money is:

For instance:

- a parent or family member;
- a teacher;
- a school counsellor;
- a mentor or a coach.

Practice to better understand my budget. Reading about how your money works is not enough, you also need practice. Every time you spend or save, you will see your money come in and go out and learn to make better decisions for yourself.

Something I would like to learn about money:

Weekly budget

Write down how much money you had this week and how you spent it.

- Income: _____
- Expenses: _____
- What I've saved/What's left: _____

List of wants vs. needs

Put down 3 things you want and 3 things you need. Decide how you will use your money to cover these.

Saying 'stop'

Picture a situation in which you feel like making an impulsive buy. What could you do or say to stop?

Financial goal

Set a goal for the next month or the next 3 months (such as saving for a book, a game, or a gadget). Put down the steps you will follow to meet that goal.

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____


Step 3: _____

What I've learnt about money

After a week or a month, write down what you've discovered about how you spend and save money:

Remember

Asking for advice and openly talking about money is not a sign of weakness. On the contrary, it's a way to learn faster and avoid decisions that may make your life difficult.

The background consists of a yellow area on the left and a pink area on the right, separated by a curved boundary. There are also abstract curved shapes in the bottom corners, with a pink shape in the bottom-left and a yellow shape in the bottom-right.

**Financial freedom
comes to those who
learn and work for it.**

Now that you know how to make conscious choices about your money, let's move to a different kind of choices, i.e. how to manage secrets and be safe in your relationships.




Protecting myself and staying safe



Sometimes, people try to take advantage of others, both online and in real-life. Even though some situations may seem normal or harmless, you should be able to pick up on the signs that make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

The golden rule is: you don't have to go through difficult situations alone. Talk to an adult you trust: a parent, teacher, counsellor, educator, social worker, psychologist or any other adult who may help.

Read the situations below and check  the ones you've been in or the ones that make you feel uncomfortable. No need to put down anything else, simply notice and write what you feel. If something seems dangerous or off, talk to an adult you trust.

- My best friend told me she wants to go away for a weekend with a boy she met online and has only ever seen on video.
- He never told me where we'd stay, just that he'll see me there.
- I met someone on Tinder and he asked me to go to a cabin with him for our first date, but not telling my parents.
- A guy offered me money to go on a city break with him, but he won't tell me anything about where we're staying or how we're getting there.
- A colleague who's been missing school told me she was 'secretly' working for this guy that pays her well.
- They offered me a job with no interview, but said I had to pay 100 Euro 'registration fee'.
- He asked me to go with him to another city for a job, but did not give me the address and is pressuring me to leave ASAP and not tell my family.
- They said I was beautiful and that they'd help me find a job as a 'model' to make easy money quickly. On condition that I have a relationship with someone.
- He promised me a job, but won't give me any details.
- I got a job offer without any interviews.
- An influencer contacted me on Instagram to work together, but he's asked me for money for the 'portfolio'.
- I got a modelling offer from an Instagram account, but they are asking me for pictures in my underwear for the portfolio.
- A friend said he was going abroad for a job, but hasn't signed a contract.
- I got an internship offer, but I cannot find the company online and they

haven't interviewed me yet.

- Somebody is trying to convince me to leave school for a 'safe' job.
- I was invited to work in a field I don't know and they are offering a big salary from the start.
- He promised me a summer job in another city, but when we got there, he took my ID away and said I'd get it back at the end of the month.
- My uncle said he had a 'surprise' for me and asked me to see him in a secret spot and not tell anyone.
- An older relative is caressing my leg and saying it's 'our secret'.
- They said they had a job for me and that I shouldn't tell anyone.
- An adult I don't know started following my social accounts and posting weird comments.
- I am being touched in a way that makes me feel uncomfortable, even though I've said 'no'.
- A grown-up is constantly sending me messages 'as a joke', even though we haven't met.
- A boy keeps sending me Discord messages and asking to see me alone.
- An older neighbour has asked me to go see a movie at his place, but insisted I didn't tell anyone.
- They've sent me private pictures without asking whether I wanted to see them.
- They said they loved me and sent me nude photos. They said I would do the same if I loved them.
- They asked me to send pictures in my underwear. They said they were keeping them for themselves.
- I got an anonymous message with a nude picture of me and was asked for '200 Euro or I will send it to all your friends'.
- He blackmailed me by saying he would publish all the nude pics I sent him if I didn't perform certain 'services'.
- They recorded me unknowingly and are threatening to post the video if I break up with them.
- A guy offered me a 'modelling' job, but asked me to pose naked for my portfolio.
- My younger brother received weird photos on his phone from someone he hasn't met.
- Someone on TikTok is asking me for a provocative video 'to get viral'.
- A man gave me a lot of money to help 'make a video', but asked me to be naked.
- They are threatening to hurt my family unless I do what they ask me to.
- I am being blackmailed to do as they say or else they will share a

personal secret of mine with everyone else.

- They are threatening to hurt themselves unless I do what they ask.
- They said: 'if you love me, you will do it for me' and refusing makes me feel guilty.
- They said: 'you don't need any other friends if you love me'.
- They are buying me expensive gifts and then always remind me I own them.
- They are humiliating me in public and making me feel worthless.
- They said my family was 'jealous' of our happiness and I should break it off with them.
- They make me feel afraid to go out with my friends because they get angry.
- They hit me and then claim it was my fault.
- They text me jokes that bother me and when I mention it they reply I am 'too sensitive'.
- They said it's best if I didn't tell anyone we were going out.
- My friend wants to run away with her boyfriend 'to get away from her parents' and I feel it is my duty to help her.
- This guy said I should sell drugs for him and that I'd make 'a lot of money'.
- They forced me to drink alcohol even though I said no, claiming it was 'just a joke' and it would 'help me relax'.
- He's following my social accounts, despite me blocking him, and creates fake accounts to text me.
- I was invited to a party where I don't know anybody and I feel scared.
- A friend has asked me to keep a secret about a weird relationship and it's making me feel extremely uncomfortable.
- I got invited to a 'secret' party and I don't know where it will be.
- A friend has told me he's in a secret relationship, but seems very scared.
- A friend has asked me to hide something risky for him.
- I have the feeling I can't ask for anyone's help, even though I need it.
- I've been asked to do something I know is wrong.

Remember:

Recognising signs is the first step to being protected. No need to feel alone, you have the right to ask for help and say 'no' when you don't feel safe.

Reflection time

Put down 3 recent situations when you felt something was off.

Who could help you solve that situation?

What could you do differently next time in order to stay safe?

! *Staying safe starts with reading the signals your body sends you and talking to somebody you trust.* !

Now that you can recognise dangerous secrets, let's learn about even more serious situations: preventing human trafficking and exploitation.

➤ Human trafficking - what you should know ≤

Life is full of new experiences and interesting relationships. Nevertheless, at times, certain people try to take advantage of others or put them in dangerous situations. Learn to read the signs, protect yourself and help others that may need it.

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery and a serious human rights violation. Human trafficking refers to forcing, manipulating or fooling somebody into repeatedly doing certain things against their will while someone else makes money or gains power from it.

Anyone may be exposed to the risk of human trafficking. However, people who have been through traumatic events, have low self-esteem, an uncertain financial or living situation, young people in the social protection system, those who run away from home, substance abusers and young people in LGBTQI+ community are most vulnerable.

Human trafficking can happen in Romania and in other countries and may affect both adults and children.

Red flags

- Somebody is forced to do something they don't want to.
- They only get money or gifts if they do what they are told.
- They are isolated from their friends/family.
- They have to keep secrets about what they do and who they see.
- They are threatened if they refuse to do something or follow instructions.
- They are pressured into sending private pictures, messages or personal information.

What human trafficking looks like

Human trafficking is forcing somebody into working or doing certain activities, exploiting and controlling them against their will.



Sexual exploitation – orcing somebody to send nude pictures or videos, blackmailing them online or in real life, forcing them to work in the sex industry.



Labour exploitation – working hard or long hours for very little money or no pay at all, including begging or domestic servitude.



Domestic servitude – coercing somebody to work for an adult for little money or material goods, preventing them from leaving.



Forced labour/slavery – working under the threat of violence, with no pay, as if owned by someone else.



Forced labour to pay a debt – forcing somebody to work to pay a debt that keeps growing, with no possibility to leave.



Forced marriage – forcing somebody to get married without their consent.



Other forms of exploitation – illegal adoptions, forcing people to commit crimes or make pornographic material.



Grooming – an adult tries to gain your trust in order to have sexual intercourse, whether online or in real life.




Sexting/sexual blackmail – somebody forces you into sending nude pictures or private videos and uses blackmail if you say no.



Forcing somebody to go into the sex industry – victims are held against their will and forced to have sex or make sexual content.

! The key here is the lack of consent. When you feel you don't want to do something and that someone is pressuring you to do, that's a sign of danger. !



Sometimes, danger is dressed as
affection. Let's see how
these methods work
and how you can stay safe.

➤ Who is 'lover boy'? ➤

'Lover boy' is somebody, normally an adult, who:

- seems very nice and romantic at start;
- makes you feel special, loved, understood;
- wins you over through his attention, gifts, compliments.

His hidden objective is not true love, but manipulating you.

- He makes you do things you don't want to do (nude pics, sex, favours).
- He isolates you from your family or friends.
- He uses emotional or financial blackmail.
- He may put you in situations of exploitation or human trafficking.


Red flags:

- He pressures you to prove you love him very early on.
- He makes you feel that 'you don't truly love him' if you say no.
- He uses gifts or attention to get something from you.

Remember

Answer the questions below.

1. Have I ever met someone who tried to make me feel like 'I had to' do something I didn't want to do?
2. How would I feel if I saw a friend was in a relationship with a potential 'lover boy'?
3. Who is the adult I could trust to ask for help?

 **Remember:** Not everything that may first seem like 'love' is safe. It's important to read the signs of manipulation and ask for help when something feels off.



What to do to stay safe?



1. **Notice red flags:** somebody is pressuring, isolating, blackmailing you or promises you'll make money easily.
2. **Talk to someone you trust:** a parent, teacher, counsellor, responsible adult.
3. **Report:** call the police or specialized organizations.
4. **Don't be alone:** look for allies and support.

Remember

Answer the questions below honestly:

What red flags could I notice in the case of my colleague and friends?


Who is the adult I trust and can talk to if I need help?

How would I feel if I noticed someone was in danger and I could help?

In your teens, it's normal to look for attention and find yourself. Many young people share personal details or pics online, because they feel the need to be seen and understood, especially if they don't have someone safe to talk to at home or in their close circle.

Unfortunately, some people may use these signs of vulnerability to take advantage of you. It doesn't mean you did something wrong, but that it's important to exercise caution and look after yourself.

Your best protection is finding people you trust, such as friends, family, teachers or mentors, and building health relationships. This way, you will improve your self-image, be able to talk about your feelings, and express yourself safely.

 **Remember:** Listen to your gut: it will tell you that you are safe if you say 'no', ask for help and protect those around you.

Useful contacts

112 – EU emergency phone number

119 – Helpline dedicated to children. Call if you want to report cases of abuse against children, including disabled children

116 111 - Helpline dedicated to children

113 (SMS) - Emergency services for hearing or speaking disabilities

0800 500 550 - Helpline supporting disabled children and adults

0800 800 678 – Helpline of the Romanian National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP)

0757 749 845 (WhatsApp) - eLiberare Association

0753 893 531 (WhatsApp) - A.L.E.G. Association

With each page of this journal,
you will be more informed,
able to make more conscious
decisions and feel safer.

By understanding your
boundaries, how money works,
relationships and their risks,
you are stronger and better
prepared to look after yourself
and those around you.

You are the most valuable link in
your safety!



THOUGHT JOURNAL

The level of confidence in myself



The level of confidence in myself



