

Finnish Institute of  
Occupational Health



# Towards Successful **Seniority**<sup>®</sup>

**TRAINER'S MANUAL**

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**Towards Successful Seniority® group method**

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# The Towards Successful Seniority® group method promotes well-being, career management and expertise

The Towards Successful Seniority® group method has been developed to promote the career management, expertise and mental well-being of employees and supervisors in today's rapidly changing world of work. The method increases participants' opportunities to discover successful career-related solutions and strengthens their ability to cope with potential setbacks.

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## **The goals of the Towards Successful Seniority® group method are to:**

1. develop career management skills
2. develop change management skills
3. encourage participants to plan career-related goals and solutions
4. promote mental well-being and the continuation of one's career
5. prevent burn-out and depression
6. prevent early retirement, especially due to work-related mental problems
7. reinforce lifelong learning
8. help people successfully carry out their work
9. act as a tool for people in charge of matters related to the maintenance and development of occupational health and human resources.

The Towards Successful Seniority® group method is a tool designed to be shared by HR management and occupational health services. Its guided teamwork and implementation at workplaces offers opportunities for actors to share information, for example, when anticipating the impact of organizational changes on human resources and in needs assessments. The programme offers participants the opportunity to learn about the role of the workplace in maintaining occupational health and work ability, in facilitating work arrangements and in participants' career planning. It also offers guidance in directing the participant to other health services if necessary. Plans made during the group process can be used during performance appraisals to support career-related issues, self-development and well-being at work.

According to the tailored programme, group work begins by examining the participants' career goals and identifying their personal strengths. At the end of the programme, every participant compiles an action plan to promote their own career management and well-being in the immediate future.

The goal is that the participants make an action plan that has concrete stages and that they commit themselves to carrying it out.

The career is seen as a process in which it is possible to rise to the challenges of changing situations through, for example, training and learning. During the programme, participants learn about the idea of lifelong learning, identify their own ways of learning and their development needs, and set their own development tasks. In addition to learning throughout one's life, the concept of lifelong learning also means learning across one's life: that is, skills and knowledge learned in different environments can be transferred and adapted to new situations.

In this programme we pay attention to change management and setbacks at work. Research results show that preparing for setbacks can prevent depression connected to career problems. When participants prepare for potential problems in advance, they are able to act constructively even when their original plans are not realized. Preparing for setbacks helps us see changes as opportunities. To help people prepare for difficulties, we have chosen problems related to burn-out as examples in this programme.

We also seek solutions for promoting a balance both between work and rest and between work and leisure time in a way that will improve people's life control and overall well-being. Because self-fulfillment and the realization of our own goals boost our well-being, work can, at its best, be a significant resource for this.

# Programme implementation and participants

The Towards Successful Seniority® programme is designed to be carried out intensively over 16 hours. The programme consists of 4 x 4-hour sessions with exercises on various issues. We advise trainers to spread the sessions over four separate mornings, so that participants can return to work in the afternoons. In special cases this programme can be executed in a more compact form, over no more than two days (2 x 8 hours). As such however, the programme will be considerably harder work than a programme of four half-days.

The way in which the exercises have been divided into different phases can be seen in the module map (p. 12). The programme has been planned in such a way that all the exercises build on that which participants have learned in the previous exercises.

For the programme to be beneficial, it is important that it is executed as intensively as possible, within one or two weeks, which means it is easy to recall matters dealt with and to combine them into larger entities. Intensive implementation also promotes the solidity of the group.

## **Whole personnel**

When the method is open to the whole personnel, it serves as a tool that promotes mental well-being and the development of expertise. The method can be implemented as, for example, part of early intervention in accordance with the well-being at work plan. The group method offers participants an opportunity to pause and look for new perspectives to their career, to take care of both their own and the work community's well-being, and to expand personal support networks.

## **Special groups**

The method can also be allocated to special groups according to age, change of work situation or organizational status (e.g. a group of superiors). Elements of promotion of physical fitness can be linked to the programme. The group method offers excellent opportunities to provide additional information regarding, for example, health and one's own organization and its operations.

## **Individual participants**

Occupational health services or superiors can invite or refer individual participants to the programme. It must, however, be noted that the method is not suitable for solving organizational conflicts, because when there is tension in the group, it may not be possible to achieve a confidential, open atmosphere. The method is also unsuitable for use as an individual therapeutic tool.

## **Role of supervisors**

The supervisor's support and consent to participation in the programme is important for recruiting and motivating participants, as well as for achieving the method's goals. The participant and supervisor can, if they so wish, agree upon a meeting after the programme, in order to go through the participant's goals and future action plans together.

At the end of the programme is a list of the issues dealt with, which is designed to help structure discussion with one's supervisor. This list contains matters most workplaces deal with in their regular performance appraisals. Distributing the organization's own performance appraisal form, so that participants can fill in the applicable parts, is another way to support their action plans. It is important that already during the group sessions, participants receive information and support that promote their personal action plans.

## **Peer groups**

Group work is based on peer group realization. Others' views and suggestions for action increase one's readiness to act and are helpful for managing one's own situation. When the group is sufficiently heterogeneous, it will produce different views and ideas. When forming groups, pay attention to group size. Starting a discussion and collecting opinions in small groups (under 10 participants) is more laborious and more trainer-dependent than doing so in larger groups. On the other hand, very large groups (over 15 participants) are also demanding for trainers, because it is not so easy to observe the group process.

Participants generally benefit from the trainer changing the composition of the groups during the programme. Trainers can sometimes place certain participants together if this is useful for group work or group atmosphere.

## Online implementation

The Towards Successful Seniority group can also be organized online. Online meetings can be organized by using any software (e.g. Microsoft Teams) that allows audio and video communication between groups and the division of participants into virtual breakout rooms. The breakout rooms are used for discussions in pairs and small groups during group meetings. In addition, during the group, the trainers either share materials via screen sharing or a shared online platform (e.g. Howspace), from which the participants can see the materials previously saved by the trainer on the platform.

Trainers should practise online implementation carefully in advance. It is a good idea to try dividing the participants into breakout rooms and test other functions that are used during group meetings in advance. During the online implementation, you should focus on positive non-verbal communication using the camera and talk about your own actions and thoughts out loud, as silent moments in online implementation can be confusing.

During group meetings, both trainers and participants should keep their cameras on to increase interaction. Participants should be informed in advance, for example, in an email invitation, that cameras must be kept on during the group meeting to foster non-verbal interaction between the participants and thus improve the group's performance. It is good practice to ask the participants to join the first group meeting about 15 minutes in advance to test the connection. This also allows the participants to check that their camera and microphone work properly. During individual tasks and breaks, the participants are asked to turn off their cameras and microphones, and once the joint activity resumes, they are reminded to turn the cameras back on.

The workbooks are mailed to the participants in advance by the trainers, as everyone may not have access to printers, and the group's activities will suffer a setback if some of the participants forget to print them out on time. If the participants have access to computers with a PDF program, they can be directed to use the fillable PDF version of the workbook.

Remember to kick off the first meeting by instructing the participants on how to use the online platform (e.g. muting the microphone, sending chat messages). Also remember to include your phone number in the email invitation in case of any technical difficulties.

## **Writing things down – Flip chart replacement**





The trainer can write things down during group meetings with their own computer while sharing their screen with the participants (e.g. taking notes in PowerPoint and sharing the screen on the video meeting platform). They can also take notes on a shared online platform (e.g. Howspace), where the written text is visible to all logged-in participants. The trainer can also share pre-written text or saved images in the same way. Participants can also write down their own answers on a shared online platform or, for example, use the video meeting platform’s chat feature. Trainers should also practise these functions in advance and find the best approach for themselves before the first group meeting. You can also utilise different comment-liking features in the group.

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## **In-person implementation**

In this manual, the term “in-person implementation” refers to the opposite of online or remote implementation, meaning group meetings where the participants meet physically or face-to-face in the same room. When trainers are asked to take discussion notes, we recommend using flip charts in in-person implementation.

Session 1.	Session 2.	Session 3.	Session 4.
Introduction of the programme and orientation towards the topics 	Lifelong learning 	Structure of work community and own job description, resolving conflicts 	Coping with stress and mental well-being 
Work life goals -interview 	Developing at work 	Personal networks and social support 	Orientation towards work life action plan 
Identification of strengths, skills and transferable skills 	Managing changes at work and in one's career 	Controlling workload 	Compiling an action plan 
Work and leisure time 	Personal change situations 		Committing to the action plan 
Career expectations 	Information interview 		Conclusion of the programme 

-  Orientation towards the topic and conclusion of the programme
-  Action plan for goals
-  Recognizing personal strengths and development goals, lifelong learning
-  Managing work and career



# Central elements of group activity

## **Reinforcing perceived self-efficacy**

Group work reinforces the participants' perceived self-efficacy, i.e. helps them trust that they are able to navigate and manage the course of their careers. Reinforcing self-efficacy promotes the creation of career-related goals and the use of effective methods for achieving these goals. Effective methods in turn serve to foster positive development in both career management and well-being.

According to the theory of social learning, the three learning mechanisms below, all of which are used in the Towards Successful Seniority® group method, contribute to developing experienced self-efficacy.

1. Personal experiences of own performance
2. Observing how others perform
3. Feedback from others on one's own performance

In addition to these three learning mechanisms, a fourth factor contributes to functionality and effectiveness:

4. Emotional state

Receiving positive feedback is an important factor in participants' emotional experiences, in their belief in self-efficacy and for their confidence. The group work has been planned so that participants receive feedback both from trainers and other group members, which reinforces their motivation to participate and learn, and strengthens their skills for managing their own careers.

## **Active learning**

The Towards Successful Seniority® programme is based on the systematic use of the principles of active learning. Trainers do not give set operation models and solutions to the group; the participants do the reflection themselves. At the same time, the participants contribute to their own way of learning: active participation in group activity and looking for solutions promotes learning.

In this programme, learning has been planned as a process in which participants revert to the same themes from different perspectives. Intensive implementation helps participants connect an earlier discussion of a given topic to expanding concepts.

The information interview applies methods of active learning, which are part of the programme. A visitor who can act as a positive role model for the group in career management and coping with one's workload is invited to join the group. Participants compile questions in advance, which may relate to, for example, the visitor's working time arrangements, retirement plans or experiences of change.

It is important that participants have the opportunity during the interview to actively take an interrogatory role. Preparing in advance gears the participants towards the interview and ensures that all the important issues are covered.

## **Returning issues to the group**

The central technique of monitoring a group interview is returning issues to the group. In this technique the trainer returns emerging problems and questions to the group for a solution. Trainers must trust in the thinking ability of the participants and motivate them to present solutions.

When participants are encouraged to discuss and share experiences, they come to discover their abilities and competence as problem-solvers. For each group discussion, the conclusions, towards which the trainers should guide participants to spontaneously realize, can be found in the Trainer's manual.

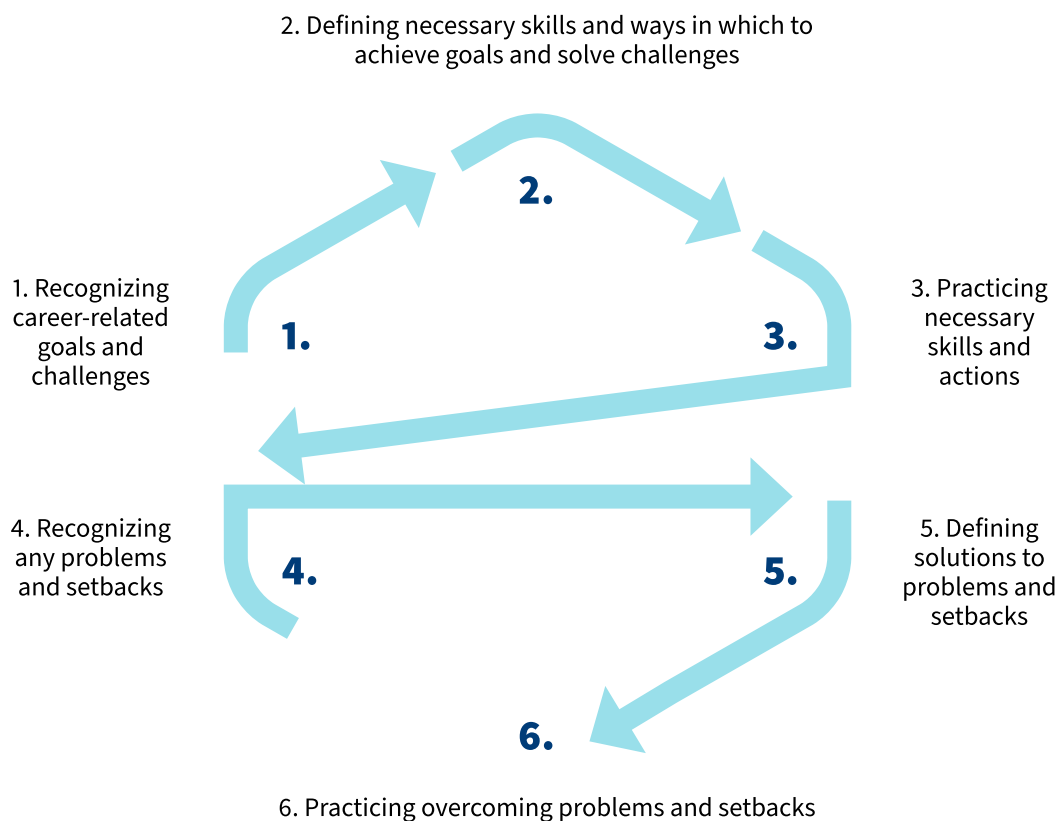
## **Preparing for setbacks**

It is normal during one's career that not all original plans are realized and that one encounters various unforeseen situations or setbacks. This method strives to identify these situations beforehand or as early as possible. It has been discovered that preparedness enhances the use of constructive methods when we confront problematic situations. In the programme, setbacks are approached through short fictional cases or examples. This means that participants can keep matters at arm's length and do not have to contemplate their own personal situations right away. This avoids defensive attitudes and makes it easier to approach problems.

When any problems have been defined, it is time to start a discussion on ways in which to solve them. Participants find new ways to solve problems when they share experiences and give each other advice and present proposals. Each participant will anticipate and choose the best suitable means for their own use

and own situation on the base of group discussions. Sometimes participants may even oppose effective suggestions. In this case the trainer should not try to change their views, but instead start a discussion on different ways of solving the problem in accordance with the principles of returning issues to the group and active learning. The idea is that the group makes its own decisions on proposed effective solutions, at the same time overcoming opposing views.

We offer models for overcoming setbacks and practice them through role-play. Trainers should be prepared for the fact that participants may create obstacles or find problems in unexpected contexts that are not included in the programme manuscript. Trainers should put the problem solution process back on track if this happens.



Necessary learning skills for career management and preparation for setbacks in the Towards Successful Seniority® group method.

# Leading the group

## **Trainers’ tasks**

The task of the trainers is to encourage group members, make observations and give them positive feedback on their participation. It is important to thank the participants for their comments and encourage silent group members to join the discussions. Positive feedback is effective when it is directed towards a concrete situation or task and when it is given as soon as possible.

The emotional state of the individual participant and the whole group can vary from feelings of stress to enthusiasm and sociability. A positive, safe, encouraging and sociable atmosphere motivates individuals to participate, share their experiences and use the group for their own benefit and the benefit of others. In contrast, tension and stress prevent positive group processes and the generation and acceptance of information and learning.

The trainers and the techniques they use play a vital role in creating an atmosphere that promotes learning. Trainers should learn the participant’s names on the first day to be able to address them personally. Nameplates on each desk make it easier to remember names. In in-person implementation, nameplates on each desk make it easier to remember names. In online implementation, it is a good idea to first make sure that the participants have logged in to the program with their calling names, so that it is easy for the participants to see each other’s names and use them in the discussion. Depending on the online platform used, the trainer should give instructions on how to change the display name or make it visible to others at the start of the first session.

## **Using the Trainer’s manual as a guide**

The Trainer’s manual is devised to guide the trainer with detailed advice when they start working with groups. It follows the programme structure, which is important for the trainer to learn during their own training.

The manual directs the trainer to proceed according to the programme, which ensures that all major career planning and management-related issues are dealt with and that the best possible use is made of the programme and its process-like structure.

The Trainer's manual contains detailed instruction for each situation. It also contains general directions that the trainers should bear in mind during the course of the programme and which they should follow in accordance with the basic principle of the method.

It will not disturb the group if trainers occasionally browse through the manual. It is important that trainers find their own style and informal tone, which is as concrete as possible, to express the issues presented in the book. As a trainer, being yourself is an important part of the programme.

## **Trainers' role**

Trainers effectively work as partners in the Towards Successful Seniority® group method. The intensive programme demands that both trainers divide their constant attention between many activities, such as following the manual, observing the group process, communicating with the group, writing down the main points of group discussions and exercises on a flip chart and attaching the pages to the walls of the workspace or, in online implementation, recording them in PowerPoint or some other program and sharing the screen with the participants.

The programme has been planned in such a way that dividing attention between so many activities works best when the trainers have agreed on their roles beforehand. In this way the training is not too stressful. When there are two trainers, the participants' motivation is easier to maintain and issues can be handled more effectively.

## **Authority and trust**

Leading a group successfully requires authority and trust between trainers and the group. Trainers have expert authority due to the research background of the programme and its development, as well as due to their knowledge of work life and occupational health, which is reinforced by their professional status. This expert authority is established at the very beginning of the programme by presenting the Towards Successful Seniority® method's background, goals and contents to the participants.

However, expert authority alone is not enough to create a confidential interpersonal teacher-student relationship. Over-emphasizing one's expert authority gives the impression of arrogance, which in turn conflicts with facilitating an active and self-steering learning process.

Success in group work requires, in addition to the trainers' expert authority, authority as a reference person, and related to this, the group's trust. The reference person role is successful when the participants respect the trainers, bond with them and feel that they are equals and can therefore influence their behaviour. In order to gain the role of a reference person, trainers can try to reduce their social distance from the group by sharing something of themselves, their own experiences of success or failure, their work situation, and by showing that they approve of the participants' opinions. The openness of the trainers serves to encourage and motivate group members to participate reciprocally and openly share their own experiences and future action plans.

Trainers should note that during the programme, group members also act as role models when they tell the group about their own choices, experiences and goals. It is helpful if trainers are tolerant of all comments shared in the group. When necessary, the returning issues to the group technique is a good tool for handling controversial questions and does not require the trainers to act in an all-knowing expert role, presenting answers to problems. In this way, group members will find that they can express their opinions about things, as well as listen to others and accept the fact that not everyone shares the same opinions. Each participant can choose the comment that best suits them out of those presented.

By the trainer setting an example and showing that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, the group atmosphere improves and the active learning process develops. Successful group work strengthens self-directed learning and problem-solving, also outside the group.

# Exercises

## Group discussions

During group discussions, participants try to find effective ways in which to promote their studies and careers, to identify any problems and think of ways in which to resolve them. In examples that deal with the reasons behind problems and setbacks, the trainers should ensure that at least one solution is found for each problem. In this way you can prevent participants from thinking that some things cannot be solved.

Sometimes the same solutions and action models can be applied to different underlying factors or problem areas.

## Pair or group exercises

Exercises can be carried out either in pairs or small groups. During the exercise, the trainers go round the groups and make sure that the exercise has been correctly understood, and encourage the participants. At the same time, the trainers observe group performance. After the exercise, the trainers return the findings to the group through positive observations. When necessary, the trainers ask the group whether they have any questions.

## Role-play exercises

Role-play exercises are also used in the programme. To start with, the trainers present the group with an example of a work situation that does not go well. The group then discusses the trainers' actions and puts forward proposals as to how the trainer who plays the role of the employee could improve their performance. After this, the trainers re-enact the situation, observing the group's feedback.

The trainers themselves present the role-play exercises for two reasons:

- To provide models for different social situations and to show different ways of behaving or acting. Every participant can then find ways in which to act in similar situations which suit them personally.
- To lower the participant's resistance to role-playing by the trainers themselves taking part.

The participants apply group discussion results to practice in three-person role-plays (p. 64).

Everyone plays the role of employee, supervisor and observer in these role-plays. The observer's job is to note positive things in the performance of the others and to promote their participation and learning by offering positive feedback. In this way, role-play consolidates the participants' social skills through subjective experiences of succeeding, observing others as models and through positive feedback from others.

The trainers can, when necessary, show other courses of action that the group has suggested during the exercises, even if these were not written down. The idea of role-play is to more clearly express how the various courses of action proposed by the group look, feel, and how they can be developed if necessary. One trainer can, for example, play the supervisor's role, while the other trainer plays the employee, who takes the courses of action proposed by the group. After this the group can continue by discussing how the employee's arguments felt from the employer's perspective.



# General instructions

## **Aims of the exercises**

The Trainer's manual has a short list of aims at the start of every exercise. These are meant to help the trainers piece together the exercises. The purpose is not to reveal the goals to the group. Rather than highlighting the theoretical background concepts of the exercises, trainers should strive to create clear practical examples.

## **Opening the day's session**

Each day, the trainers begin before the group members arrive. It is important that they have taken care of practical issues before the group members arrive, so that they can be there every morning to meet and welcome them. Each participant should feel that they are welcome.

In online implementation, the trainers should join the first meeting 30 minutes before the participants and test the functionality of the network connections and the online platform used. The trainers should also join well before the participants on the following meetings.

Each day begins with a short warm-up, during which the participants can, for example, discuss the use of supplementary material and sources of information presented in the group or what they have done regarding their career plans. Trainers can tell the group something about their own experiences. The goal is to create an atmosphere that is as safe and natural as possible from the very beginning. At the beginning of each day, it is also good to provide a short summary of the issues to be covered.

## **Ending the day's session**

At the end of each day, the supplementary material related to the day's issue is distributed and the thoughts that the exercises have aroused in participants are discussed. To end, a short summary of the issues presented during the day and a preview of what to expect the next day is presented. If the day contains several sessions, there is no need to carry out the exercises intended to open and end each day's session.

## Keeping to schedule

It is advisable to start and end each day on time. If a participant is late, welcome them and make sure that they are familiar with the programme. This is best done in such a way that one of the trainers continues supervising the exercise and the other explains the issues covered earlier to the latecomer. In online implementation, the trainer briefly goes over the previously discussed topics.

Keeping to schedule throughout the programme is important to maintain intensity, and experience has shown that participants value this greatly. Keeping to schedule also makes sure that important issues are not neglected. The Trainer's manual offers well-defined, effective instructions for exercises, and gives a predetermined time limit that you should not exceed. During the exercises, the trainers should make sure that the participants are aware of the time so that they can effectively use the time appointed. Discussions easily become drawn out and the trainer may optionally allow extra time for some exercises, because all discussions that serve the course interests are important and should not be cut out in order to keep to schedule. It is, however, advisable to stick to start and ending times.

It is also essential that the Information interview time is agreed upon with the visitor before the course begins. It is advisable to make personal arrangements regarding the interview with the visitor. The Invitation to the information interview letter (Appendix 1, p. 80) may be sent as a reminder.

## Participant's Workbook

During the programme, participants do several exercises in their Workbooks. Because Workbook tasks are essentially connected with the rest of the work, it is advisable to do them in the order presented in the Trainer's manual. The manual contains instructions on when to give directions for doing Workbook exercises and when the exercises should be completed. The Participant's Workbook also contains additional information on various issues.

The discussion exercises after the information boxes can be used as a warm-up for the next day or the next section. After the Towards Successful Seniority® programme, the Participant's Workbook and its notes serves as the participant's personal career management guide.

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## Before the programme begins, makes sure that:

### In in-person implementation:

- ☐ you have a flip chart and paper in the classroom
- ☐ you have large felt-tip pens of different colours
- ☐ you have masking tape to attach flip chart sheets to the wall
- ☐ you have paper (A4)
- ☐ you have enough Workbooks
- ☐ you have 3–4 pictures for the initial exercise
- ☐ the other trainer knows of the group and timetable
- ☐ you have a visitor for the Information interview in Session two

### In online implementation:

- ☐ Mail the Participant's Workbook to all participants
- ☐ Send an email invitation with instructions and a link to the group meetings, as well as your own phone number in case of problems. Explain that cameras will be kept on during meetings.
- ☐ Depending on the online platform used, prepare the materials to be shared via the screen in, for example, Powerpoint or Howspace (e.g. images for the warm-up exercise). It is easier to run a group if you have the names of all participants and the schedule ready in an easy-to-share format.
- ☐ Test the connection and practise dividing participants into breakout rooms in the online environment
- ☐ Agree on the schedule and division of work with the other trainer
- ☐ Ask the visitor to join the information interview on the second session

# Session



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**This session is designed to start group work and to guide participants to think about their own work life goals.**

In this session, personal strengths and skills will be charted and work-life is considered as an entity that also includes leisure time.

# 1.1. Introduction of trainers and the programme

Duration: 15 minutes

## Aim

The aim is to motivate participants to take part in group work and to create an open and confidential atmosphere for discussions. Participants acquaint themselves with the background, goals of the programme and the role of HR management and occupational health services in the implementation.

## Course of the exercise

- ➔ The trainers introduce themselves and the programme to the group. Group discussion on the confidentiality of issues dealt with during the programme.

## Instructions

Introduce yourself to the group and tell them something about your background or experiences as a trainer of groups such as this. You can also tell them in your own words about the background and goals of the method.

---

## Programme background and goals

The goal of the Towards Successful Seniority® group method is to improve career management in today's changing work life. Increasing work life challenges and changes in one's personal life mean that we need to strengthen our personal resources. Active use of stress management promotes well-being and makes it easier to cope with one's workload.

This programme outlines in general terms the skills that are important for managing one's work and planning one's career. This means, for example, identifying one's own strengths and development goals. During this programme, participants will predict potential setbacks and create solutions to overcome them. The goal is that every participant compiles a realistic near-future action plan to achieve their targets.

The Towards Successful Seniority® group method is a theory-based method developed by an expert group of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. The group work model is based on that launched by the University of Michigan, USA. The programme was designed as a mutual tool for occupational health services and HR management.

The success of the method relies on active participation in group work: small group exercises and discussions. The method utilizes the participant's own experiences, knowledge and skills. During the programme, participants discuss issues and work in small groups. Therefore it is advisable to agree upon the confidentiality of matters discussed together in the group. You can also remind participants that everyone may decide for themselves how much they wish to reveal about their own career and goals.

## **Note**

Get acquainted with the goals of the programme before group work begins. Together with the other trainer, put together a short example case based on your own career experiences. In the example, pay attention to the significance of personal strengths and interests in your own career. In addition to positive information, also describe some setbacks and how you overcame them. By doing this, you take on an expert position in the eyes of the participants, but also emphasize that you too are human. (See Trainers' role p. 17.)

## 1.2. Introductory exercise

Duration: approximately 15 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim of this exercise is to make participants think about work, work life and its contents. The exercise helps participants get to know each other and gives them an idea of the working methods of the course.

### **Course of the exercise**

- ➔ Participants look at pictures on the wall and think about how the pictures might be connected with work life.
- ➔ Small groups gather round the pictures and form a story.
- ➔ One of the trainers summarizes the stories.

### **Instructions**

Provide four pictures for this exercise. Hang the pictures in the classroom for the participants to see. You can, for example, cut pictures from magazines, use photographs, posters, paintings, drawings etc. In online implementation, share the pictures on the screen.

Ask the participants to stand up, look at the pictures more closely and think about how the pictures are connected with work life.

When the participants have examined all of the pictures, ask them to stand beside the picture that most appeals to them or that sticks in their mind or, in online implementation, to state which picture they selected (e.g. the number of the picture), for example, in the chat.

When everyone has taken their places beside their pictures, ask them to tell the other participants in the small group why they chose this picture and then discuss the common factors in their choices. In online implementation, divide the participants into breakout rooms. Start by briefly explaining the basics of the breakout room function if the participants are not familiar with it and provide instructions on how to return to the shared workspace.

When all of the groups have finished, ask each one to compile a story on the basis of what had especially appealed them in the picture they chose. Finally, each small group shares their thoughts with the whole group and the trainers.

## **Note**

In the event that there is only one group member beside a picture, one of the trainers can join them. One of the trainers can also take part in the exercise in some other way. This allows the trainers to get closer to group members.

## **Conclusion**

Thank the group for the stories.

Make a short summary of all the stories, for example what was common to them. Try to unite the stories without causing conflict between the groups, even though the stories may be different. You can tell the group that the forthcoming working methods will be like the exercise they just completed. Different work life themes will be contemplated both individually and in groups during the programme. The groups will discuss things, and exchange views and opinions. Every participant's contribution is important for the success of the group – each one plays a leading role.



## 1.3. Work life goal interview

Duration: approximately 45 minutes

### Aim

The aim of this exercise is to acquaint the group members with each other. The exercise encourages participants to consider their own work life and future goals and offers them an opportunity to compare them. The exercise gives the trainers basic information regarding the group members, which they can use later on in the exercises.

### Course of the exercise

➔ Group members interview each other and then present their partner to the whole group. A short presentation is made of the participants on flip chart sheets, or a shared screen in online implementation, based on the interviews.

### Instructions

Write the following text on the blackboard:

Instructions for presenting your partner:

- Your partner's name
- Where does your partner live?
- Their present work situation
- Their plans regarding work (e.g. further training, courses, flexible working times)
- Hobbies

The trainers divide the participants into pairs. They can also form one group of three. Try to direct participants to form a pair with a person they do not know well. The trainers can also suggest that group members seek the person they are least familiar with or with whom they have had the least contact. In online im-

plementation, the trainer can ask whether any of the participants know each other in advance.

Ask participants to interview their partners using the points above. Allow 10 minutes for the interviews.

The trainers also interview each other. Start by presenting each other and try to keep the presentation compact. The trainers' presentation serves as a model for the group.

After this, ask participants to present their partners. Record name, dwelling place, experiences, plans and hobbies on the flip chart (titles only if there is a lot of information). Make sure that you write something for each point. Try to write each pair's presentations on one flip chart sheet.

Alternative: You can give each pair a flip chart sheet and felt-tip pens. They can then write their presentations directly onto the sheet. This allows you to save time, especially with a large group.

## **Note**

It is important to write each participant's presentation on a flip chart sheet and hang these on the wall. Be sure to do this even for people who for some reason were not present during the introduction exercise. The trainers can interview them and write their answers directly on a flip chart sheet.

## 1.4. Summary of programme contents

Duration: approximately 15 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim of the summary is to offer an overview of the contents of this method and how it is connected with career management, which will ultimately promote the action plan participants will formulate during the final group session.

### **Course of the exercise**

One of the trainers presents the contents of the programme.

### **Instructions**

Write the following on the board or share your computer screen:

#### **Contents of the programme:**

1. Personal strengths and interests
2. Skills needed at work
3. Lifelong learning
4. Obtaining the information and support necessary for career management
5. Preparing for setbacks at work and in your career
6. Mental well-being and stress management
7. Formulating a work or career plan.

Go through each section:

### **1. Personal strengths and interests**

In the course of the programme

- we discover our personal strengths and skills
- we consider which jobs we might enjoy.

### **2. Necessary skills for work**

In the course of the programme

- we cover various work life changes and how to cope with them
- we learn how to control work and workload
- we develop the presentation and group work skills needed at work.

### **3. Lifelong learning**

In the course of the programme

- we assess the developmental needs of strengths and skills
- we recognize various learning environments
- we consider the importance of learning new things from a career management perspective.

### **4. Obtaining the information and support necessary for career management**

In the course of the programme

- we consider the significance of social support and networks in work life issues
- we explore channels that make it easier to obtain information regarding work.

### **5. Preparing for setbacks**

In the course of the programme

- we learn to anticipate the setbacks and challenges we may meet during our careers
- we plan solutions to overcome setbacks.

### **6. Mental well-being and stress management**

In the course of the programme

- we consider the meaning of well-being
- we learn ways in which to enhance well-being and stress management.

## **7. Formulating a work or career plan**

In the course of the programme

- we formulate a personal plan to achieve our work-related goals and expectations.

Tell participants that page 7 and 8 of their Workbook contains a more specific description of how the contents are divided into different sessions.

## 1.5. Participants' role

Duration: approximately 15 minutes

### **Aim**

This exercise is designed to motivate participants from different life situations and backgrounds to get involved in the exercises. Recognizing the significance of the exercises from the perspective of their own development and ability to cope has a positive impact on participants' motivation.

### **Course of the exercise**

- ➔ Discussion on participants' expectations and on the course topics they consider useful.

### **Instructions**

Inform the group that this programme utilizes the participant's own experiences, knowledge and skills. The success of the programme requires everyone's active participation in the group work exercises and discussions.

Discuss the expectations participants have of the programme and how they can benefit from the programme contents presented on the previous page.

Write down the benefits the participants decide upon on the flip chart.

Wait for group responses. Guide the group towards the following conclusions:

- Career management skills help you set and reach your own goals in today's changing work life.
- Good management of work maintains and promotes your ability to cope at work and your general well-being in different areas of life.
- When we discuss things together, we see new perspectives and become aware of things we might not have found on our own.

## **Conclusion**

Make a summary of the benefits.

End by reminding participants that things can only be learned during group work when everyone makes an effort and plays an active role in the activity.

## 1.6. Recognizing personal strengths

Duration: approximately 20 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim of this exercise is for participants to recognize their own strengths and skills. Recognizing their own strengths enhances their self-esteem and well-being and offers building blocks for plans and self-development. Through the recognition of our own strengths, talents and skills, we can perceive our own expertise, consider our own development opportunities and effectively direct our own work. During this exercise participants consider the skills necessary for their own career which they have learned at work, as well as skills they have so far only used outside work life.

### **Course of the exercise**

- ➔ Participants chart their expertise through a Workbook exercise.
- ➔ Participants consider the skills they like to use.
- ➔ In conclusion, participants note that it is preferable to direct their development towards their personally preferred strengths and skills.

### **Instructions**

Ask the participants to open their Workbooks on page 10, at the Personal strengths and skills section. The participants can use this list of skills when estimating their own strengths and skills.

The list of strengths and skills is not exhaustive. At the end there is room for skills that are not on the list.



## **Task**

Ask the participants to go through the list and tick all the strengths and skills they think they have. Allow several minutes for this.

Next, they examine the whole list again and underline skills they like or are especially happy to use in their own work. When necessary, participants may even underline skills they did not think they had. Allow few minutes for this.

Finally, ask the participants to consider concrete examples of situations in which they have demonstrated these strengths. Ask them to write down the situation on page 12 of their Workbooks.

## **Conclusion**

Discuss once again the skills the participants have chosen and why.

Inform participants that this exercise is important for their own career management. The exercise demonstrates strengths and skills that are likely to prove useful in the future.

## 1.7. Transferable skills

Duration: approximately 15 minutes

### Aim

In this exercise, participants learn to see the significance of learning environments outside of work, such as home and hobbies, as support for one's vocational development. The transferability of skills helps expand our vision of the kind of work we could do in the future.

### Course of the exercise

- ➔ The trainers describe the idea of transferable skills.
- ➔ With the assistance of the Workbook, the participants outline their job description, list the skills needed in their work and think about other work for which these skills would be useful.

### Instructions

Tell the participants what the transferability of skills means: a transferable skill is a skill you have originally learnt in a different environment from the one in which it is needed. For example, the organizational skills necessary in families with children can be very useful when managing demanding work tasks, and orienteering skills might help clarify and plan the progress of a work project.

### Task

Ask the participants to reflect for few minutes the work tasks of their present job and the skills necessary for these (Workbook page 13, Exercises 1 and 2). Allow 4–5 minutes for writing notes.

Next, ask the participants to circle the work skills they have acquired in previous work tasks, hobbies or elsewhere outside their present work. In conclusion, ask them to think about other work tasks in which their skills could be utilized (Exercise 3). If there is time, you can also put the participants into pairs and let them work together on this exercise.

## **Conclusion**

Ask the participants what thoughts they had on benefitting from their skills, and discuss these. You can also ask them to consider whether they can find some examples that show how they have benefitted from the transferability of skills in their own lives.

## 1.8. Working hours and leisure time

Duration: approximately 30 minutes

### **Aim**

This exercise deals with the role of leisure time in promoting well-being and in counterbalancing work.

### **Course of the exercise**

- ➔ To start with, participants think about stimulating hobbies as a group.
- ➔ Small groups think of hobbies that counterbalance work life, which they note in their Workbooks.
- ➔ Participants think of hobbies that personally suit them best.

### **Instructions**

Leisure time has a central significance in promoting our ability to cope at work and for our mental well-being. Ask the participants what kind of hobbies and leisure time activities invigorate them and promote their ability to cope. What makes them invigorating? Write down the answers on the flip chart. When the group cannot think of any new hobbies, you can go over the list once again.

### **Task**

Divide the participants into groups of three and ask them to list hobbies that counterbalance different work situations (Workbook p. 14).

Allow 8–10 minutes for this.

Ask the participants to write down in the chart the hobbies that best suit them or their own situation.

## **Conclusion**

You can conclude by asking the participants whether they obtained any ideas or new thoughts on their own leisure time activities.

## 1.9. Expectations of work life

Duration: approximately 10 minutes

### **Aim**

In this exercise, participants consider their own expectations of work life. The exercise contributes to processing their own career prospects and motivates them to connect issues discussed during the programme to their own situations. This exercise operates as a foundation for drawing up an action plan.

### **Course of the exercise**

- ➔ Participants consider their career expectations and write them in their Workbooks.

### **Instructions**

Depending on your schedule, you can either ask the group to work on the next exercise as a group or to do it as homework.

### **Task**

Ask the participants to open their Workbooks on page 16 and consider their expectations and goals regarding work life, for example for the next five to ten years. Allow approximately 10 minutes for this.

### **Conclusion**

Ask some of the participants to tell you the kind of expectations they wrote down and the parts of the programme that they think may be especially useful for realizing their goals.

## 1.10. Concluding the first day and an overview of the next day's contents

Duration: approximately 15 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim of the concluding discussion is to summarize the day's experiences and to give participants an idea of the next day's programme. This will be repeated at the end of each day.

### **Instructions**

Ask a short round of questions at the end of the day regarding the participants' feelings and ask whether they have any questions on the section of the programme covered today or on future sessions. Make sure that everyone has the chance to speak.

### **Conclusion**

Thank the participants for their input and for their contributions to the group work.

### **Note**

When the group has left, go over group members' roles with the other trainer and talk about how the roles affect the group atmosphere. Plan how you might influence the roles if they are a threat to achieving a positive result.

As preventive means you can, for example, change the seating or composition of the small groups so that they are more functional, plan to pay special attention to certain participants or issues, or plan to interrupt if a group discussion begins to digress.

Finally, check the next day's distribution of work and make sure that the classroom is tidy for the next day and that the flip chart sheets are in the right order on the walls. All this makes it clear that you respect both your own work and the participants.



# Session

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**The second session concentrates on the significance of learning new things and professional development in maintaining one's own expertise and well-being in today's changing work life.**

## 2.1. Life course and learning

Duration: approximately 20 minutes

### Aim

The aim of this exercise is to create a positive mental picture of learning and of the significance of new knowledge for one's own career. The participants become acquainted with different learning concepts and learning difficulties.

### Course of the exercise

- ➔ The trainers present the ageintegrated reflection model and, on the basis of this, the group discusses the concept of lifelong learning.
- ➔ The trainers tell the group about adult learning and learning difficulties. Participants can reflect on their own learning styles by means of the learning concept box in the Workbook.

### Instructions

Present the age-integrated reflection model to the group (Workbook p. 19). Tell them that it is advisable to consider each life phase and situation as a whole.

Start the discussion by asking the participants what thoughts the picture and the concept of lifelong learning raise. You can write down the answers.

Possible ideas that may come up during the discussion:

- Society changes. The automation of industry, as well as the development of computer technology and telecommunications, has led to the disappearance of many professions and changes in job descriptions.
- Employment in your own profession may decrease so much that there is no point in studying any further.
- As temporary jobs increase, more versatile project skills and specialist knowledge are required of employees.

- Some people have to change profession for health reasons and have to learn a new profession.
- Expanding job descriptions may increase interest in work.
- The wisdom gained by experience is valuable.

If necessary, you can use the following auxiliary questions to encourage discussion.

- Are adult studies worthwhile?
- Are recent graduates more competent?
- Is learning in general part of a given life phase? Is learning only meant for young people?

Finally, ask the participants about the role lifelong learning has played in their lives. Ask for some comments.

Thank the group for their ideas.

Discuss different ways of learning in groups.

Actual learning does not change when we age, but the ways in which we learn may change, for example, learning things by heart may require more time. Motivation and personal interest in the matter contributes to learning. It is important that everyone becomes aware of their own ways of learning in order to find an effective, pleasant learning process. This positively influences both learning itself and the desire to take on new learning challenges later on.

As well as learning styles, it is important to recognize learning difficulties. In extreme cases these can cause lower self-esteem, burnout or reluctance to participate in self-development or work community development.

According to recent studies, adult learning difficulties are common. Behind negative attitudes connected with learning may lie learning difficulties, which may manifest as, for example, difficulties in understanding when reading. When we speak of learning difficulties we should understand that these do not affect a person's talent or intelligence, but that they merely reveal different ways of piecing together and processing information.

Page 20 of the Workbook has a list of the different ways of learning. You can briefly discuss which of these the participants prefer.

## **Conclusion**

Thank the group for their comments.

## 2.2. Developing at work

Duration: approximately 45 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim of this exercise is to motivate the participants to consider their development needs and opportunities to learn and study from a professional viewpoint. Updating skills is necessary due to changes in work and work life as well as from the perspective of personal well-being.

### **Course of the exercise**

- ➔ Participants use their Workbooks to help them think of skills that would be useful for them to develop and compile a development plan.
- ➔ They go through their plans in pairs.

### **Instructions**

Before the exercise, inform the group that it is important to identify not only their own strengths, abilities and skills, but also to be aware of the skills they need to develop. As skills are not necessarily permanent, it is worth keeping them up to date.

### **Task**

Ask participants to consider professional skills or skills connected to their work. What skills should be reinforced or would be worth reinforcing (Workbook p. 21)? Allow few minutes for this task.

Then ask them to write down in their Workbooks ideas for developing the way in which they carry out their work. The participants can use the list of different ways of learning for this exercise.

Put the participants into pairs or small groups and ask them to go through the development needs that arose and how these could be met. Participants can add to their lists during the discussion. Allow approximately 10 minutes for the discussion.

If there is not much time, you can move directly to the group discussion of the exercise without the pair or small group work.

## **Conclusion**

Ask the pairs or small groups to tell you what kind of issues they dealt with. Alternatively, you could ask each participant to offer one development idea.

Thank all the participants after the exercise.

## 2.3. Managing work and career changes

Duration: approximately 70 minutes

### Aim

The aim of the exercise is to anticipate various changes that may occur in work and in one's career, and to consider constructive courses of action for these situations, so that changes can be seen as positive opportunities.

### Course of the exercise

- ➔ Using example cases, the group discusses the factors that cause uncertainty in change situations and how one's own actions can help in these situations.
- ➔ Small groups brainstorm different change situations and deal with them according to the model of the example case.
- ➔ Participants think about their own future changes using the Workbook.

### Instructions

Start the conversation by reading or asking someone to read aloud J's case (Workbook p. 23):

” J has been working at the same workplace for a long time. Now the workplace is implementing changes that mean that J would become a member of a work group. J has previously mainly worked alone. He feels insecure about his future.

Write Changes at the workplace on the flip chart or the shared online platform you use for online implementation and ask the participants why J feels insecure moving to a work group. Write one column for insecurity factors and another for solutions. Try to record the suggestions that arise in the discussions and make them into concrete plans of action for J.

## Task

Divide the participants into small groups.

Ask them to think of a change at the workplace that has an impact on the work situation or the performance of work, and to break the problem down in the same way as above: What about this change might cause uncertainty and how should a person act in such a situation?

Ask the groups to write down their thoughts either on the flip chart or the shared online platform.

If you only have a few participants, you can ask each small group to choose two possible changes at the workplace. Allow approximately 20 minutes for this exercise. Circulate the groups and allow extra time if needed.

Ask each small group to present a workplace change and ways in which to cope.

## Note

Try to direct the solutions so that the person being affected by the change is the actor. For example if someone suggests that the supervisor should intervene, you can ask the participant how they might take the matter up with the supervisor and thus progress further.

## Task

Finally, ask participants to open their Workbooks on page 24 and complete Work and career changes exercises 1 and 2. Tell the participants that they may use the suggestions on how to act that they made during their group work for this exercise.

## Conclusion

Discuss with the participants how they have acted in workplace change situations and what impact their actions have had. It is advisable to pay particular attention to the positive effects of their actions in change situations.

Finally, thank the participants.



## 2.4. Information interview

Duration: approximately 45 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim of the information interview is to encourage the participants to find new perspectives to their own future plans.

### **Course of the exercise**

- ➔ A visitor is invited to join the group to be interviewed by the participants on career issues.
- ➔ The interview questions are pre-planned.

### **Instructions**

Preferably invite a person with a long work history in the organization to the information interview. This person does not necessarily have to be in a high position, but rather someone who considers their work meaningful. They should be suitable for a positive role model.

This exercise is interesting to the participants because they get acquainted with actual career paths and may also obtain additional information on dealing with different changes at the workplace.

In order to keep to schedule it is useful to offer the visitor information in advance. This ensures that there is time to cover important matters within the given time frame (approximately 45 minutes). If you need support in briefing the visitor, you can use the Invitation to the information interview on p. 80.

Inform the group by way of introduction that the aim of the information interview is to offer new perspectives to career planning and work life.

## **Task**

Ask the participants to think for approximately five minutes of questions they would like to ask the visitor. Page 25 of the Workbook has space for these questions.

The questions can, for example, relate to achieving goals, changes at the workplace and work contents.

## **Conclusion**

Conclusion and an overview of the next day's contents (see General instructions pp. 21–22).

# Session

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**The third session concentrates on work community issues.**

During this session participants consider their own roles and support and information channels, and practice managing conflicts in the work organization.

## 3.1. Work organization structures and job descriptions

Duration: approximately 20 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim of this exercise is that participants recognize their own roles in their work community and consider whether these roles are in conflict with one another. This exercise acts as an introduction to the social conflict exercise on the next page.

### **Course of the exercise**

➔ Participants discuss various work roles and related conflicts as a group.

### **Instructions**

Begin the discussion by telling the group that an organization's internal structure consists of employees in different roles. Roles are connected on the one hand to performing work tasks (job role) and on the other hand, to an employee's status in relation to other work group members (team role). Different organizations have different structures. Some organizations have distinct roles and an internal hierarchy between these roles.

An employee may see their role and role-related goals as somewhat unclear and contradictory. Vague roles are a central cause of work stress. Therefore it is useful to think about one's own work community roles and any expectations regarding these.

Discuss briefly as a group the sort of ambiguities regarding job and team roles that may exist in a work community. Have the participants been in a situation in which others' expectations of them were confusing? How did they resolve these situations?

### **Conclusion**

Briefly go through the thoughts this conversation raised among the participants.

## 3.2. Resolving work community conflicts

Duration: approximately 45 minutes

### Aim

This exercise covers social conflict situations that the participants may encounter in a work community. They will think about the reasons behind these conflicts and find constructive solutions by means of example cases.

### Course of the exercise

- ➔ Participants discuss conflict situations at the workplace by means of example cases.
- ➔ They choose their own ways in which to resolve these situations.

### Instructions

Begin the discussion by reading or asking a participant to read aloud M's example case (Workbook p. 29).

” New employees joined M's department. One day M's supervisor assigned her a task that was challenging, but which she felt she performed well. Later M accidentally overheard colleagues wondering why the task had been given to her even though, in their opinion, she was not at all qualified for it.

Consider together why this situation arose. Write down background factors. Then ask what solutions they would suggest for dealing with the situation. Record the solutions beside the background factors.

Possible solutions:

- open flow of information and discussion
- disclosing one's own expertise
- well-defined rules
- assessment of actions and results.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, ask the participants to state which means mentioned in the discussion they would personally use in the event of a conflict.

If there is still time, you could for instance circle the most popular means on the flip chart or ask the participants to like their favourite solution proposals by using the comment voting feature.

## 3.3. Personal networks and social support

Duration: approximately 20 minutes

### **Aim**

Social support promotes our health and well-being as well as ability to better manage our career. The goal of this exercise is to recognize the significance of social support and to recognize people who can offer support and important information regarding work.

### **Course of the exercise**

- ➔ Participants discuss sources of support and the kind of situations for which support and information are available.
- ➔ Participants draw their own support networks in their Workbooks.

### **Instructions**

Inform the group that close social relations are important for support and mental well-being, but that acquaintances may also be a source of information on, for example, how to carry out their work tasks. Lack of support may make it harder to cope with work. If you feel that you do not receive enough support, it is important to think about which people or sources may have information regarding work-related or career issues and how might you contact them.

Ask the group the following questions. Write the answers.

**1. Who are the people who offer you support in difficult work-related issues?**

Possible answers:

- co-workers
- supervisor
- spouse
- friends
- acquaintances, relatives
- occupational health physician or nurse.

**2. What other kind of help or information can you find through collaboration or networks?**

Possible answers:

- help and advice regarding work tasks
- discussion can help in challenging situations
- information on job or assignment vacancies
- information on what to do when changes take place at the workplace.

**Task**

Ask participants to individually complete exercises 1, 2 and 3 on page 30 of their Workbooks.

Allow 5–7 minutes for this task.



## 3.4. Expanding personal networks

Duration: approximately 25 minutes

### Aim

The aim is to activate the participants to use and expand their own networks.

### Course of the exercise

- ➔ One of the trainers explains the idea of a personal network to the participants.
- ➔ They reflect in groups on what might cause difficulties in expanding networks and how these can be overcome.
- ➔ Participants devise a plan in their Workbooks for expanding their own personal networks.

### Instructions

Draw a picture of an expanded network on the flip chart or, in online implementation, share your computer screen (network picture p. 63).

First explain the idea of a personal network to the participants:

- ❗ Constructing a network begins with one person. This first link can be anybody, for example a co-worker, relative or an acquaintance. This person knows a lot of people, among whom there may easily be someone who has information regarding issues related to performing work tasks or who is otherwise able to answer career-related questions. In a network it is not essential to directly know all these people; all you need is to get to know about them through your own proactiveness and through other people.

## Note

It is advisable to have an example case of your own, for example, how through your personal network you obtained help in work-related issues, information on job vacancies or perhaps heard of vacant housing. Your example case should make the functionality and profitability of a network clearer.

Ask the participants to consider why creating connections with people who might provide important information might prove difficult.

Record their answers.

How can you promote interaction in these situations? Enter solutions next to the suggested difficulties.

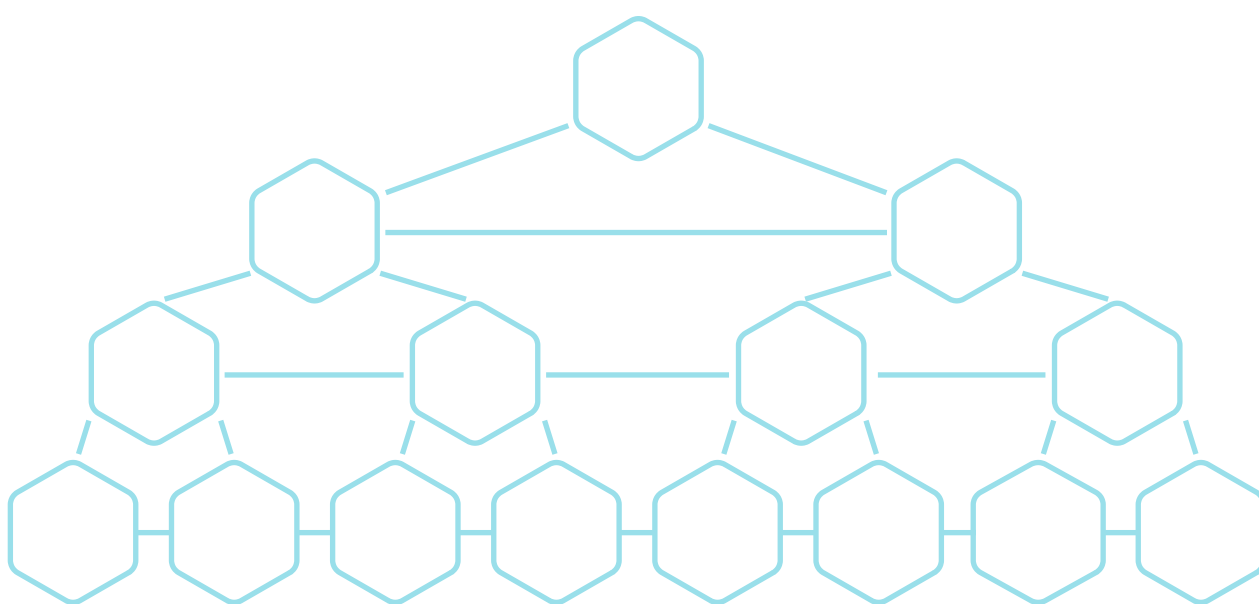
## Task

Ask participants to think of new people for their personal network with the help of their Workbook exercises (pp. 31–32): What kind of co-operation may help them in their work and how might they promote interaction with co-operation partners? Remind the group that they may use the methods written.

Participants can outline their own network on page 33 of their Workbooks.

## Conclusion

Finally, discuss whether the participants gained new perspectives to the use of personal networks from this exercise and what thoughts their own network inspired.



## 3.5. Controlling your workload

Duration: approximately 70 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim of the exercise is for participants to learn to prevent work overload by controlling their workload. To achieve this, they should learn to set themselves limits and learn to clearly express their needs and desires.

### **Course of the exercise**

- ➔ The trainers present three examples of a situation in which a supervisor assigns a job to a busy employee. Participants provide proposals for constructive courses of action.
- ➔ In small groups, they rehearse how to act in such stressful situations.

### **Instructions**

Inform the group that an overly conscientious employee may find it hard to refuse new work tasks, even when they are already having trouble keeping up with their existing work.

It is important to be able to express your needs, desires and opinions in order to avoid burnout or workplace conflicts.

One of the trainers can play the supervisor's role and the other can play the employee. Act out the first two example situations according to the dialogue below.

## Example situation 1

**S** = supervisor

**E** = employee

Location: employee's room

The employee is writing at their desk. The supervisor walks into the employee's room. In online implementation, you can also act out a situation in which the supervisor makes a video call to the employee.

**S** Hi, this report needs to be finished as soon as possible. How soon do you think you can do it?

**E** (sits slouched, avoids eye contact with the supervisor, answers hesitantly) I might get it done by tomorrow if I work overtime.

**S** Excellent! I'll let the customer know that I'll send it over first thing in the morning.

Inform the group that the following incident takes place approximately one year later. Stress that the characters are the same people as in the previous example.

**S** Hi, this report needs to be finished as soon as possible. How soon do you think you can do it?

**E** (aggressive pose, stares at the supervisor, shouts) You can forget it! I'm not going to work overtime for it! Sometimes it feels like nobody else does anything round here!

Supervisor leaves the room embarrassed or ends the video call.

Ask the participants for advice on how an employee should act constructively in this situation. Write down the advice.

Now act out the situation again, observing the participants' advice.

## Example situation 2

Inform the group that again the characters are the same as before. However, the employee is now prepared for the conversation.

- S** Hi, this report needs to be finished as soon as possible. How soon do you think you can do it?
- E** What was the schedule you had in mind?
- S** It would be nice if I could send it tomorrow.
- E** (sits upright, looks directly, answers with a calm voice) I'm sorry, but I can't do it without working overtime. I need to finish this other pressing task first, so I don't think I'll be able to finish your report until the day after tomorrow.
- S** Well, I'll negotiate with the client and if it can't be rescheduled, I'll ask someone else to do it.

Discuss with the group what exactly the employee did differently. Add the missing points to the flip chart.

## Task

Divide the participants into groups of three to take the roles of supervisor, employee and observer.

Now ask the participants to consider how they would act in a stressful situation like the one above. The participants write a short interaction in their Workbooks (p. 35) and present it to the group. The participants take turns to play the roles of supervisor, employee and observer. The job of the observer is to follow the exercise and to point out to the employee in which particular aspects they succeeded and which of their actions helped the situation progress constructively.

## Conclusion

Finally, discuss what thoughts playing the employee's role inspired.

Conclusion and an overview of the next day's contents (see General instructions on pp. 21–22).

# Session



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**During the fourth and final session, participants concentrate on drawing up a career plan.**

Before this they more extensively discuss stress management and how to keep control of one's workload.

## 4.1. Stress management

Duration: approximately 50 minutes

### Aim

In this exercise participants look at how to recognize and predict typical warning signs of stress and burnout on both general and personal level. They compile a list of active means of stress management and a plan to restore their well-being in stressful situations.

### Course of the exercise

- ➔ Relaxation exercise.
- ➔ The group discusses mental well-being and stress warning signs. Participants consider courses of action to relieve stress.
- ➔ Participants write down their own warning signs and successful methods for counteracting them in their Workbooks.
- ➔ The group discusses the use of alcohol as a means of coping with stress and fills in the AUDIT addiction test form.

### Instructions

If you wish, you can begin the exercises with a short relaxation exercise. There is one at the end of this Trainer's manual (Appendix 3, p. 82), but you can also use a different exercise.

Begin the discussion by asking the participants how mental well-being can be seen and how a person knows that they are well.

Continue the discussion by telling the participants that stress or burnout may have distinct warning signs. Ask the participants which signals generally show that a person is either stressed or burnt out. Write down the answers.



Typical answers might be

- exhaustion, trouble sleeping
- being bad-tempered, tension
- headache and other physiological symptoms
- withdrawal, apathy
- increased alcohol consumption.

For later discussion it is advisable to mention that even a small increase in alcohol consumption is a warning sign of stress and burnout. Add “heavy or regular alcohol use” to the list if the group did not spontaneously mention it.

Ask the participants to consider what they should do if they detect in themselves any of the warning signs of stress or burnout that came up in this discussion. Record the proposals next to the warning signs.

## **Note**

For each warning sign, write a proposed solution.

## **Task**

Ask the participants to consider whether they have noticed typical warning signs in their own behaviour (Workbook p. 39). Ask them to reflect on ways in which to help them deal with the situation. Allow 8–10 minutes for this task.

Finally, ask the participants what means they use to overcome stressful situations. You can tell them it may be helpful to refer back to these Workbook pages now and then in the future.

In conclusion, discuss alcohol consumption.

If there is time, you can fill in the AUDIT addiction test form at the end of the Workbook, which occupational health services generally use. Allow four minutes to complete the form. Inform the participants that they can compare their score with the table on the next page. If required, they can fill in the form at home.

Remind them that the effects of alcohol are typically relaxing at first, but that continuous alcohol consumption impairs sleep quality, even when the amounts consumed are small. Finally, stress that the AUDIT addiction test form results will remain known only to themselves. You may also inform them that the purpose of the form is to offer tools for monitoring their own consumption. If the participants become worried about their own alcohol consumption or ask for additional information on the effects of alcohol, you can encourage them to contact their own occupational health services or their own doctor.

## **Note**

The employer is responsible for their employee's safety and health at work. As well as the employee's physical and mental safety, the employer is also obliged to monitor the work community's social functionality, which should already be taken into consideration when designing work and the work environment. However, one should remember that in order to move things forward, it is important to participate actively and constructively in presenting needs for change and in developing activities.

## 4.2. Managing your work and career

Duration: approximately 45 minutes

### Aim

The aim is to encourage participants to think about their expectations and the opportunities of their future career. This exercise acts as a basis for an action plan. The participants also receive information on opportunities for flexible working time arrangements.

### Course of the exercise

- ➔ The group discusses the contents and significance of work through an example case.
- ➔ Participants look at different options for work and working time arrangements.

### Instructions

Read or ask someone to read aloud the following example case (Workbook p. 43).

” L had been working as a nurse in a hospital for a long time. Suddenly a head nurse's position opened up and L was asked to take it. L hesitated but finally agreed to accept the position. After some time, however, L noticed that the work was no longer enjoyable.

Discuss in the group what had happened to L. Write down the answers. Then ask for ways in which to resolve the situation. What should L do?

Continue the discussion by informing the group that temporarily lightening your workload or some other arrangement is sometimes necessary to, for example, facilitate commuting or a particular life situation. Ask the participants what sort of options they know of that are already in use.

Make sure that the following arrangements are mentioned:

- sabbatical
- study leave
- reduced working hours
- part-time work
- partial retirement.

Page 73 contains brief explanations of these options. Stress that all agreements to lighten one's workload must always be negotiated with one's employer. The employer has no obligation to arrange, for example, part-time work.

It is advisable to provide up-to-date information on working time arrangements.

## **Note**

It is important to discuss the options specifically available in the participants' own organization. It is useful if you can provide the participants with material on the opportunities their employer offers regarding flexible work, other working time arrangements or, for example, retirement.

# Flexible working time arrangements

## **Sabbatical**

A sabbatical refers to a longer-term unpaid leave of absence from work. Some sabbaticals may also be statutory, for example, study leave.

## **Part-time work**

Part-time work refers to work in which the employee's working hours are shorter than regular working hours.

## **Reduced working hours**

Reduced working hours refer to a temporary solution in which the employee and the employer agree to reduce the length of the employee's working day for a fixed period.

## **Partial retirement**

Taking partial retirement means changing from full-time work to part-time work, in which case a pension covers part of the diminished earnings.

## **Note**

Possibilities for working time arrangements may vary. All agreements must always be negotiated with employer.

## 4.3. Summary of the programme

Duration: approximately 10 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim of the exercise is to sum up the tools for promoting one's own work, career management and well-being that have been covered during the programme.

### **Instructions**

Allow the participants few minutes to flip through their own Workbooks and recall the themes covered during this programme. Then ask them which of the topics or themes have been most useful or important from the point of view of their own work and ability to cope at work.

Write these down on the flip chart and leave them on display for the participants.

Tell the participants that the next task is to compile an action plan to achieve a concrete work or career target.

## 4.4. Action plan

Duration: approximately 15 minutes

### **Aim**

This exercise forms the basis of an action plan. Participants think about their own lives and their objectives six months from now as concretely as possible.

### **Instructions and task**

Ask every participant to think as specifically as possible of how they see their own situation as regards work management, well-being at work, work and leisure time six months from now and to describe this in their Workbooks (p. 46). If a participant is content with their situation, they can write down the things they would like to remain unchanged.

### **Note**

Irrespective of the clarity of their career plans, everyone should compile an individual personal action plan concerning their careers. The plan may be either a precise, immediate action plan regarding a specific work issue, or a far-reaching career plan.

The main issue is that the action plan is realistic, as specific as possible and includes a plan for potential setbacks. A plan based on good self-knowledge and active readiness increases both the ability to cope with one's workload and the likelihood of successful work solutions.

## 4.5. Interim goals

Duration: approximately 30 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim is to compile a concrete, scheduled action plan to reach targets.

### **Task**

The Workbook (pp. 47–50) contains a space for an action plan. Ask the participants to consider their goals regarding their work tasks, development and expertise and how they might achieve them. Interim goals should be as specific as possible and pertain to the near future. Reaching interim goals motivates a person to proceed with determination towards a main goal.

If there is time after completing the exercise, you can divide the participants into pairs or small groups to discuss their respective action plans, for approximately seven minutes.



## 4.6. Committing to your action plan

Duration: approximately 30 minutes

### **Aim**

The aim is to commit each participant to their own action plan to promote their career management.

### **Instructions and task**

Ask participants to open their Workbooks on page 50 and write down their action plan in one or two sentences in the space provided. There is also “an empty picture frame” on page 55, in which participants can put their own action plans in the form of a drawing.

After the exercise, ask the participants to tell you about their action plans one at a time. There is, however, no obligation to make the action plan public if a participant does not wish to do so.

Then ask the participants to familiarize themselves with the form on page 53 of the Workbook, designed for feedback discussions or performance appraisals with their supervisors. Inform the group that the form acts as a checklist of what has been covered during the programme and that they can use it in performance appraisals as well as in feedback discussions with their supervisors. If you wish, you can present your own performance appraisal form. It is preferable that participants fill in the form during the group work.

### **Conclusion**

After the exercises, discuss how the week's programme has helped the participants develop goals and promoted work management and their ability to cope at work.

Finally, thank the participants for their action plans.

# Concluding the programme

If you would like to arrange a post-programme meeting with the group, you can do so at this point. In the post-programme meeting you can sum up the action plans devised during the programme, assess their implementation and make plans for any further action. A suitable date for the meeting is approximately six months after the programme.

## **Instructions**

Collect the participants' written feedback on how successful this programme was for them. You can ask for feedback on your own tutorship, group arrangements and other things related to the course. You can use the feedback form in Appendix 5 (p. 84) of this manual.

## **Conclusion**

Be sure to thank the participants for their involvement and wish them a good journey towards their planned goals.

Finally, distribute the course certificates.

# Appendices of trainer's manual

- 1.** Invitation to the information interview
- 2.** Participants' contact details
- 3.** Relaxation exercise
- 4.** Form for feedback or performance appraisals with your supervisor
- 5.** Group participant feedback form

**Appendix****1****Invitation to the information interview**

Welcome to the information interview!

Thank you for consenting to be a visitor in the Towards Successful Seniority® programme. The information interview is a part of the programme in which we deal with questions related to career management, lifelong learning and the ability to cope. We feel that when a person with a long career shares their thoughts or brings forth new positive viewpoints on self-development, continuing at work and managing changes, this enables course participants to further develop their own career plans.

Coming to the information interview does not require any special arrangements on your part. We will try to make sure that the most central development goals are addressed through the participants' interview questions within the time reserved for the interview (approximately 45 minutes). The questions may pertain to, for instance, the turning points of your career, working time arrangements or balancing work and leisure time. It would also be beneficial to hear of situations in which you have taken an active role in moving matters forward. Each person's career is personal and different and we are particularly interested in your experiences and choices.

Time and place of the visit or link to online meeting:

Place/link \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix **2**

### Participants' contact details

Name	Office/department	E-mail	Telephone

May be copied!

## Appendix 3

### Relaxation exercise

Find a comfortable position in your chair. You can take your shoes off. During this exercise you don't have to do anything, just let things happen of their own accord. Now let your feet and hands relax.

Picture yourself in a place you find nice and calm. It might be your own bed, a forest where you gather mushrooms, or the jetty of your summer cottage. It has to be a place where you can be calm, be yourself and concentrate on your own feelings. It is easy for you to go there and to be there. Breathe calmly and feel nice and safe.

Calmly breathe in and out. Concentrate on your breathing. You can feel your shoulders relax. They begin to feel heavier. They drop down every time you breathe out. Sounds around you fade, move further away and no longer feel interesting.

You feel how a warm and relaxed feeling descends on the crown of your head and from there moves onwards to your forehead. Your thoughts calm down. A warm and relaxed feeling descends further to your temples, eyes, down your cheeks and down to your chin. Your face relaxes and warmth spreads to your ears, from there onwards to your neck and neck muscles.

You breathe calmly in and out. A warm, relaxing feeling descends through your shoulders to your upper back, shoulder blades and your chest. Your whole upper body is calm and relaxed. All the strain that might have been there trickles down to your arm muscles, elbows, wrists and out through your fingertips. A relaxed, calm feeling descends further to your diaphragm, stomach, lower back and pelvis.

You now feel the warmth spreading to your thighs and knees; it trickles further down to your legs and calves. Your feet rest heavily on the floor. Your ankles, heels, feet and toes also relax.

Your whole body feels warm and relaxed. Your surroundings feel safe and peaceful. In your familiar place you summon up your resources and strengths. Breathe evenly and feel how you trust in your own resources. Rest for another moment.

When you feel refreshed, open your eyes.

## Appendix 4

## Form for feedback or performance appraisals with your supervisor

Attached is a list of topics you can bring up with your supervisor. An empty space has been provided at the end for any other important questions that may have come up during the program.

- What goals do you have regarding your work and career?
- Are these goals realized in your present job?
- What opportunities do you have to use your expertise in your present job? How would you like to develop your professional skills?
- What needs do you have to develop your work ability and promote your well-being at work?
- What changes would you like to see in your work?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

## Appendix 5



### Group participant feedback form

Please tell us about your thoughts regarding the Towards Successful Seniority® group method and working during the programme.

1. What was the most important tool for your own career management and well-being that you received during the programme?

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2. How do you plan to make use of the things you learned during the programme in your work?

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3. How did working in a group feel? Was it easy to share your thoughts?

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4. Was there too much or too little discussion on certain issues during the programme?

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5. What other thoughts do you have?  
(You can comment on, e.g., the teaching, trainers, material or presentation.)

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May be copied!