

THE SOFT SKILLS PROFILE

GUIDELINES TO COUNSELLORS AND/OR TRAINERS

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Table of Contents

Background, Theories and Practice	5
Soft Skills Framework in VET_GPS project.....	6
Square of values - Development of goals for counselling	7
Problem solving & creativity	9
Readiness to learn & critical thinking	10
Adaptability	10
Self-motivation & positive attitude	10
Communication	11
Teamwork	11
Motivational Interviewing	12
Application	12
Method	12
Techniques	14
Change talk	15
Structure of the change talk	24
The Soft Skills Profile	25
The Main Goals	25
Structure	25
The Clusters - Overview	25
Establishing concrete development goals on the basis of the squares of values	27
Counselling Sessions	28
The First Counselling Session – Collecting Information	29
Scheduling Preventive Steps	29
The Last Session – Making My Steps for the Future	30
Annexes	31
Annex 1 - My Steps for the Future.....	32
Annex 2 - Clusters - Diagrams	35
Annex 3– Square of Values	39
Annex 4 – Evaluation	43
References	46



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Background, Theories and Practice

The **Soft Skills Profile** is a structured interview scheme for counsellors and other specialists to use when working with individuals at transition points in their lives. These transition points could be career development, searching for educational/training opportunities, changes in relationships and/ or other life challenges. The **Soft Skills Profile** is designed for qualified professionals in fields such as counselling, psychology or human relations and can be used in upper secondary schools, higher educational institutions, adult education centres, job centres etc. The professionals bear the welfare and best interest of the individual in mind. The **Soft Skills Profile** is not intended for use where an individual needs psychological treatment, guidance or support.

The **Soft Skills Profile** approach for interviewing individuals is based on the theoretical framework of Motivational Interviewing (MI). This framework is combined with Friedemann Schulz von Thun's theory of the „square of values“ for the interests of interpersonal communication and personality development.

The **Soft Skills Profile** offers a holistic approach for facilitators and other professionals to systematically examine and strengthen the soft skills of the individual to be more able to think and act in an emotionally intelligent way and therefore live a more fulfilling life.

This means that, when it comes to soft skills, there is another factor that needs to be considered: Emotional Intelligence, once it is a part and a basic prerequisite for all soft skills. Emotional Intelligence can affect the way how one can deal with one's own feelings and the emotions of others. The higher the Emotional Intelligence, the better the ability to perceive and manipulate one's own and other's sensations. By refining their existing soft skills, as well as learning and training new ones, they can increase their Emotional Intelligence. At the same time, the higher a person's emotional intelligence is, the more pronounced many soft skills will be.

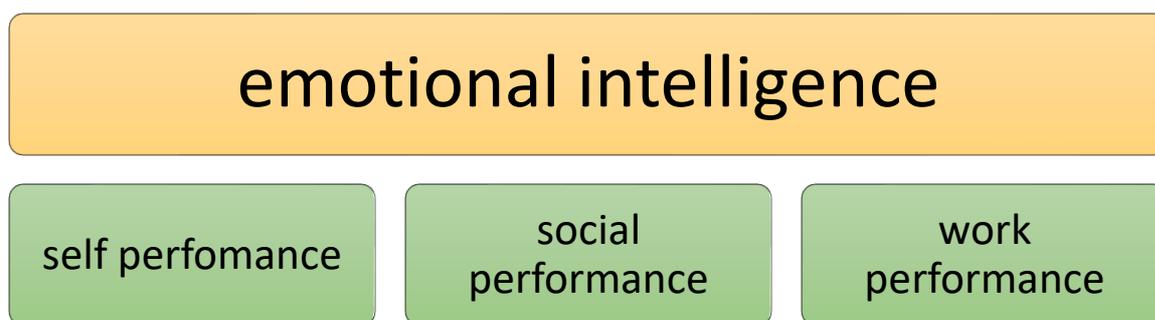


Illustration 1 – The three spheres of emotional intelligence.

The **Soft Skills Profile** is a method used in a conversation between two people, the professional and an individual, searching for support.

Soft Skills Framework in VET_GPS project

Overall, partners selected six soft skills to be addressed in the VET_GPS project, identified with the support from VET professionals, business consultants and representatives from companies:

Problem solving & creativity

- Ability to think and identify a solution to a complex situation and problem, using imagination or original ideas.

Readiness to learn & critical thinking

- Readiness to learn is related to the availability of a person to seek and invest in learning and in behaviour change. Critical thinking is related to the ability of analysing situations and information and make a reasoned judgement about it.

Adaptability

- Ability to change and to be able to adjust to new situations, conditions, and contexts, without compromising our beliefs, ideas and personality.

Self-motivation & positive attitude

- Ability that drives a person to do things without the influence from other people, with a positive mental attitude that focuses on the bright side of life and a mindset that envisions favourable results.

Communication

- Ability to interact with others in several contexts, to exchange information, ideas, knowledge, expertise, etc.

Teamwork

- Cooperation between the members of a group of people to achieve a common goal.

Figure 1 – Identification and definition of the soft skills approached in VET_GPS project.

According to the VET_GPS approach, these soft skills are organised in three main groups:

- (1) Self-performance – related to personal awareness and contribution;
- (2) Social performance – skills focused in the relationship with others and the world;
- (3) Work performance – skills more related to the efficiency of trainees and to the idea of creating outputs.

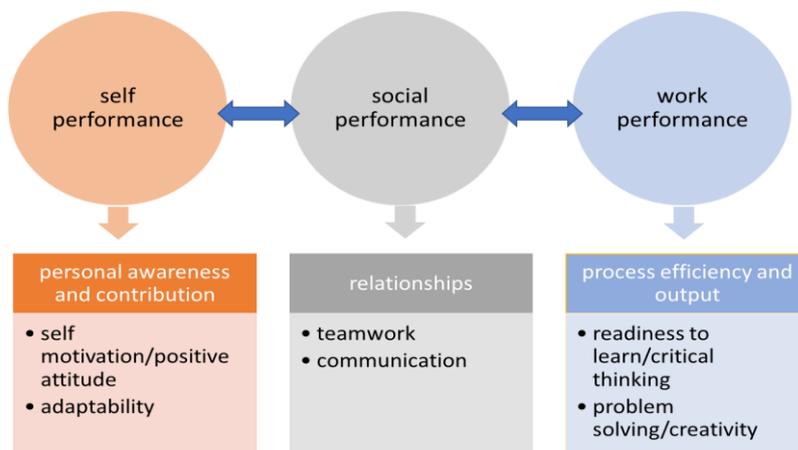


Illustration 2 – Soft Skills Model developed in the VET_GPS project



Square of values - Development of goals for counselling

The commitment between the professional and the individual is always central when speaking about counselling.

Now, one way might be to focus on the mistakes someone has and to try, together with the one you want to consult, to correct those mistakes. That's no fun! And it does not help much either, because those whose mistakes are closely scrutinized often lose the desire to carry on with this work, mending the mistakes. So, it would be a counselling approach that does not promise much success!

But what if you told somebody you wanted to discuss that she/he did not have such bad mistakes at all? That there would be some things, some behaviours, that would not work so well here and there. What would happen if you told someone that her/his behaviours, that do not work so well for her/him, with which she/he would not be so successful in life, basically had a good core, but that these behaviours are just too exaggerated: of the good too much! to gild the lily!

Wouldn't the work, the improvement of these qualities, be much more fun? Wouldn't you approach the whole thing much more motivated? That's what the square of values is about!

Square of values

The basic idea of this model is due to Aristotle (about 350 BC), was further developed by Nicolai Hartmann (1926). and by Paul Helwig (1967). Friedemann Schulz von Thun (1989) combined this model with the concept of development for the interests of interpersonal communication and personality development. With the help of the square of values and development, we can succeed in keeping our values and personal standards in dynamic balance and in a constructive way. In particular, we can discover the upcoming development direction for ourselves and for others. This feature uses the value and development square for goal-setting discussions.

The premise of the value and development square is that every value (every virtue, every guiding principle, every human quality) can only develop its full constructive effect if it is in sustained tension for a positive counterpart, a "sisterly virtue". Without this balance, a value degenerates into its depreciated exaggeration.

With the help of the square of values and development, it is possible to find the necessary counter-quality ("sister-virtue") for every human quality (e.g. honesty) (e.g. tact and sensitivity); The development direction can be found in the diagonals.

SQUARE OF VALUES – FRIEDEMANN SCHULZ VON THUN

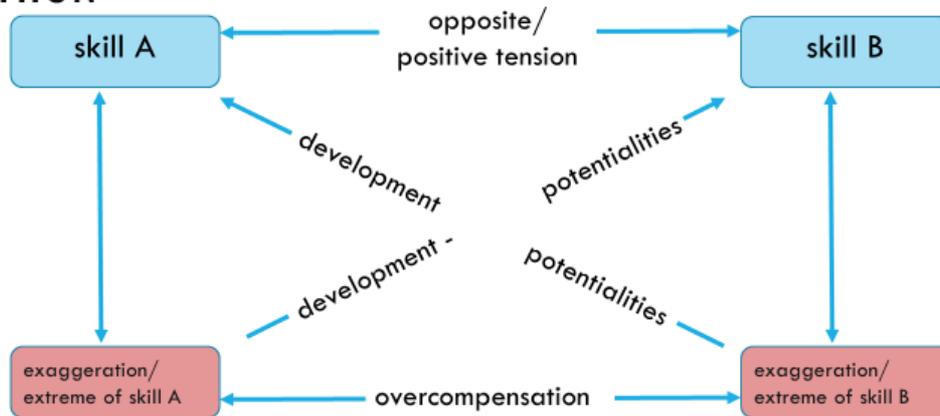


Illustration 3 – Representation of the square of values and development.

In discussions, such a pictorial representation sharpens the view that in a lamented error not something "bad" ("evil", "morbid") must manifest, which must be "eradicated". On the contrary, it is always possible to discover a positive core, whose presence is to be appreciated, and whose overdose alone (of the good too much) seems to us to be problematic.

If a trainee first recognizes her/his own risk of exaggeration ("the good too much") and desires her/his own development direction, the upcoming development can be practiced in small, manageable steps.

On the other hand, this leads to the conviction that every person with a certain recognizable quality always has a "dormant" antipode, which she/he can awaken in herself/himself and bring to development. Whereby the intended (creative) ideal is not a static, but a dynamic balance.

An example...

The ability to establish contacts without the respect for one's distance can degenerate into a lack of emotional detachment, respect for one's distance without the ability to establish contacts to withdrawnness. If one has the balance of two equivalents before one's eyes, one can also discover the upcoming direction of development: one is inclined to the absolutisation of establishing contacts and must accordingly conquer respect for one's distance; the other exaggerates exactly this quality and should learn to establish contacts (please see Illustration 3).

SQUARE OF VALUES – FRIEDEMANN SCHULZ VON THUN

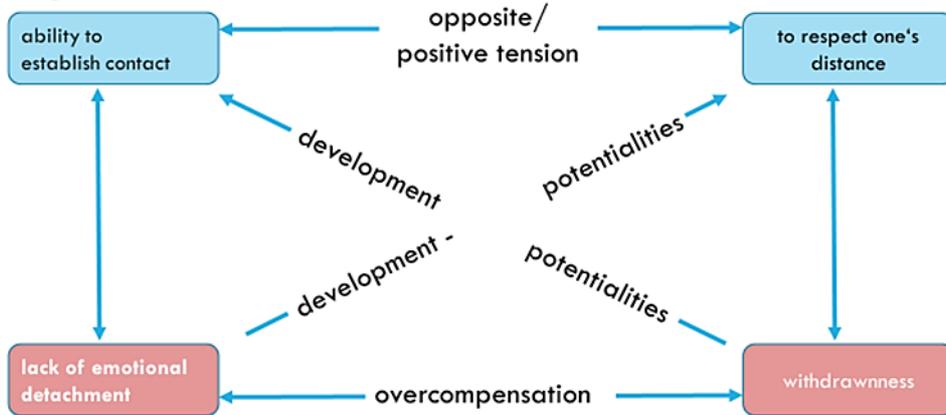


Illustration 4 – Example on how to use the square of values and development, namely in the design and understanding of the soft skills.

It is important to mention that there are ALWAYS several ways to make such a square. So, at the corners of the square there can stand different terms. It is always the work of the counsellor/trainer to work with the trainee to find the right terms for the trainee. These can be property words, or even keyword-like sentences. And it is quite normal that there are overlaps between different squares of values.

On the following pages are presented examples of squares of values designed for the soft skills to be addressed in VET_GPS project.

Problem solving & creativity

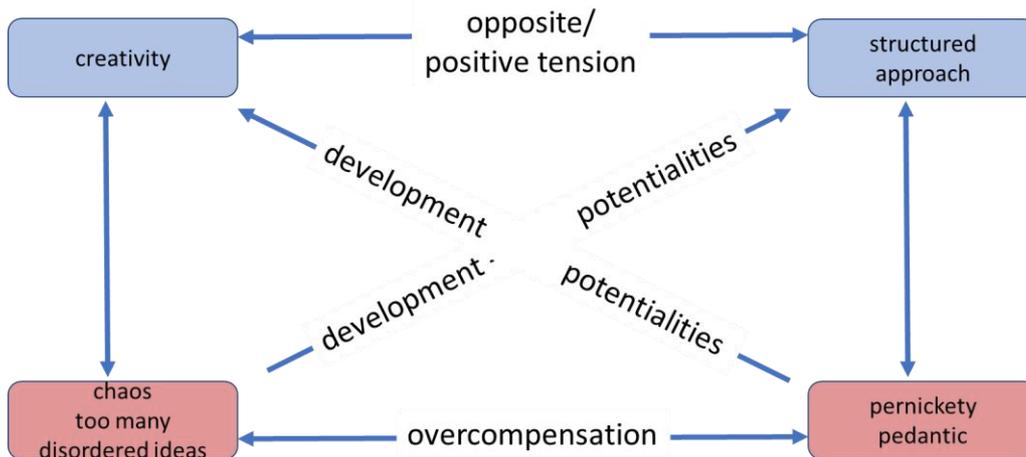


Illustration 5 – Example of a square of value for “Creativity”

Readiness to learn & critical thinking

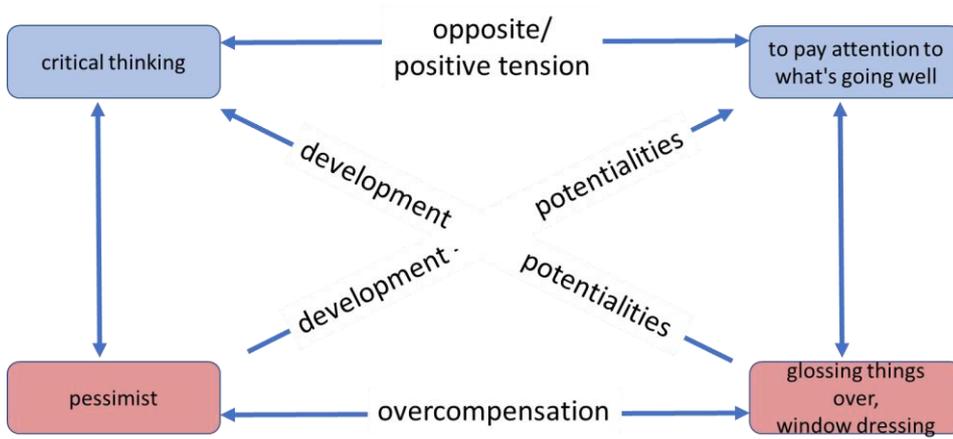


Illustration 6 - Example of a square of value for "Readiness to learn & critical thinking"

Adaptability

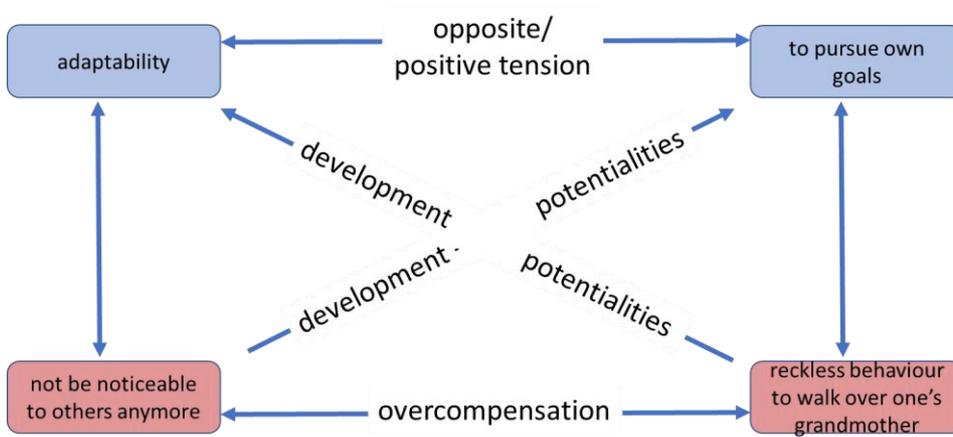


Illustration 7 - A example of a square of value for "Adaptability"

Self-motivation & positive attitude

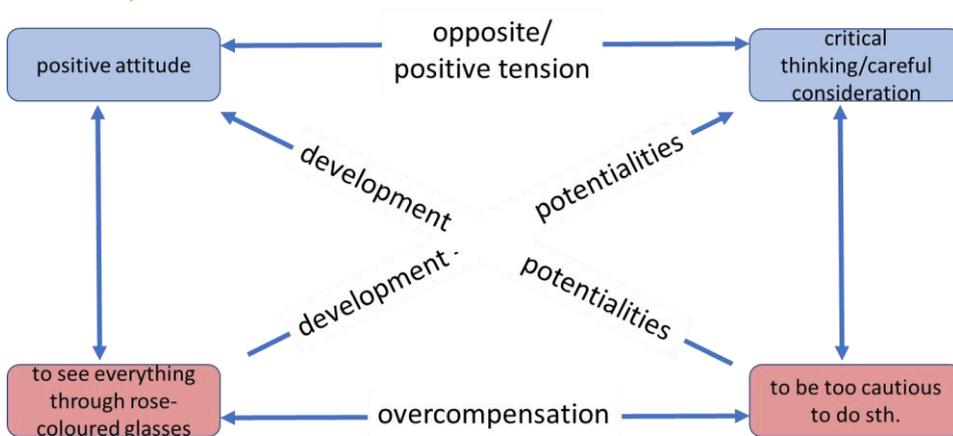


Illustration 8 - Example of a square of value for "Self-motivation & positive attitude"

Communication

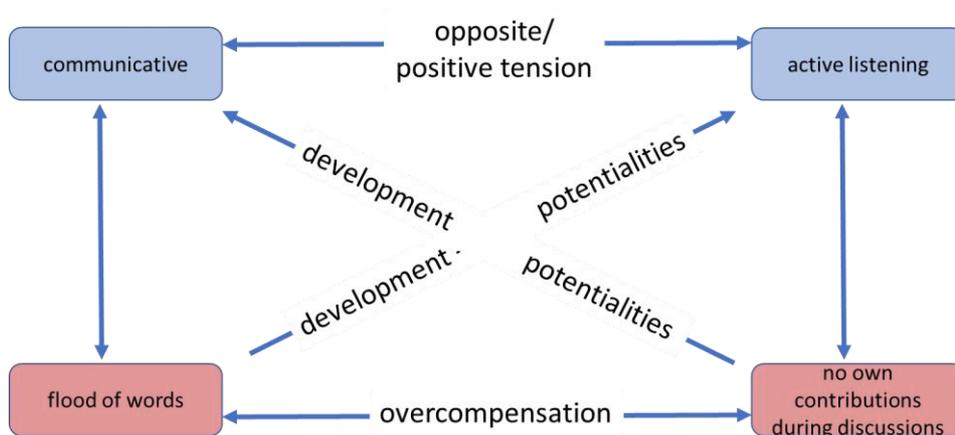


Illustration 9 – Example of a square of value for “Communication”

Teamwork

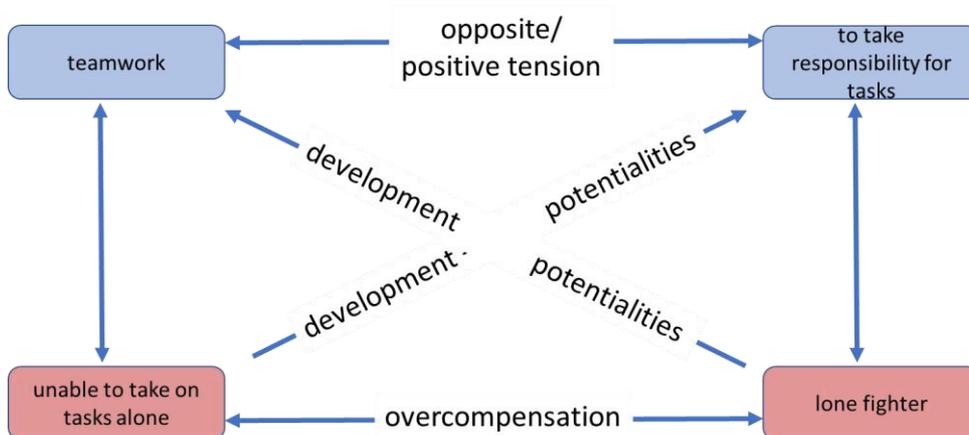


Illustration 10 – Example of a square of value for “Teamwork”



Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is defined as a client-centered, but directive counselling approach with the goal of building intrinsic motivation to change behaviour. Motivation should be achieved by exploring and resolving ambivalence. The concept was originally developed by William Miller and Stephen Rollnick in 1991 for advice to people with addiction problems. In contrast to many conventional procedures in this area, the motivational interviewing explicitly dispenses with a confrontational approach.

Initially, motivational interviewing was not theoretically derived but emerged through observation and specification of the impact factors of intuitive clinical practice. However, it is subsequently attempted to embed them in a theoretical context. Motivational interviewing is based on Rogers' approach of non-directive, client-centered conversation (Carl Rogers, 1946). Accordingly, an individual strives for self-responsibility and development. The principles to help a client in it are, according to Rogers, authenticity (congruence), empathy and acceptance. Motivational interviewing, however, also employs more active, cognitive-behavioural strategies, which are aimed directly at a target behaviour (e. g. the willingness to engage in self-discipline) (in the sense of the change model of Prochaska and DiClemente).

Furthermore, motivational interviewing builds on the theory of self-perception by Daryl J. Bem (1972). Its basic postulate assumes that attributions and attitudes follow open behaviour. As a result, people recognize their identities, attitudes, feelings, and other internal processes by observing themselves in certain circumstances or by listening to relevant content and drawing conclusions from it. In addition, motivational interviewing is conceptually close to the theory of cognitive dissonance (Leon Festinger, 1957). In motivational interviewing, people are encouraged to make change-related statements that (still) contrast with current problem behaviour. The cognitive dissonance generated in this way now creates the need to actually change the behaviour and to adapt it to its utterances.

Application

Motivational interviewing is aimed primarily at people with low or ambivalent readiness for change and can therefore stand at the beginning of addiction treatment. Meanwhile, motivational interviewing is also used in the field of psychotherapeutic work, general medical treatment, health promotion and social work.

Method

It is generally assumed that every person has good reasons for and against a certain behaviour as well as advantages and disadvantages of changing this behaviour. For example, someone with little self-discipline might argue that this behaviour allows him/her to keep on making new things, but it also means that he/she can never finish things and bring them to a good end. There interview comprises two phases:

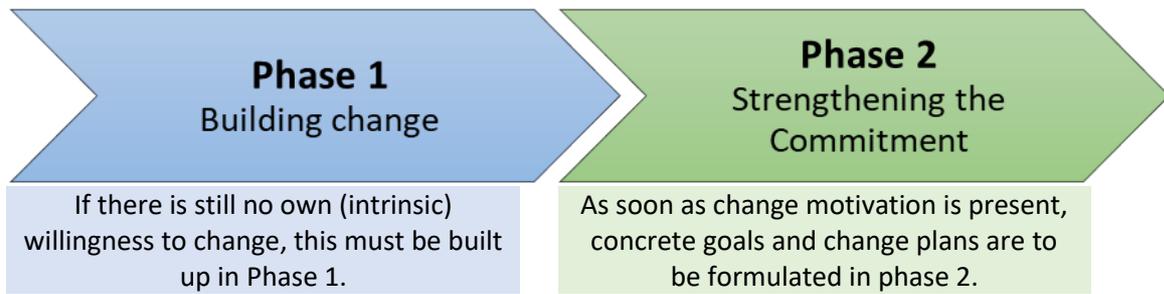


Illustration 11 - phases of motivational interviewing

Phase 1 – Building change

In the first phase of the motivational interviewing, it is the task of the counsellor to promote awareness on both sides, leading to some ambivalence and behaviour conflict. It is believed that direct pressure, confrontation, and argumentation about changing consumption, as often practiced by relatives and the laity, is counterproductive, as it gives priority to resistance to the trainee.

Change process

Particularly critical is the phase of intention-making.

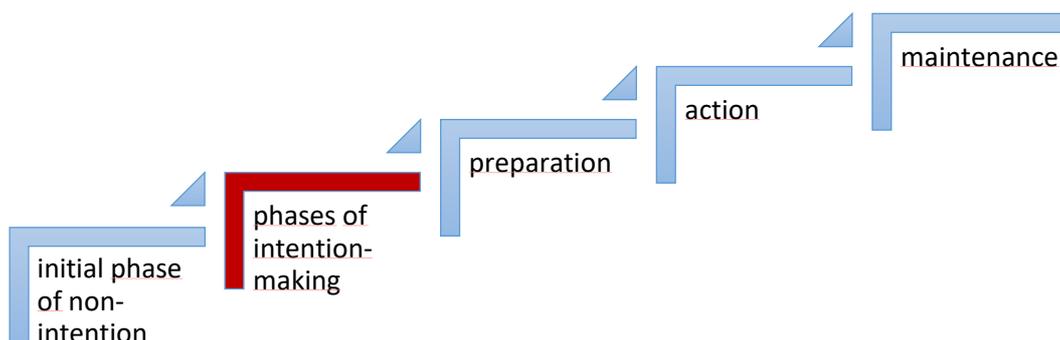


Illustration 12 - phases of change process

Thus, motivational interviewing is primarily about creating clarity by reflecting on one's own behaviour by illuminating all pro and contra points of view. This is to serve the trainee in the next step to overcome his/her ambivalence regarding his/her behaviour and its change. It is essential that the trainee provides all the arguments themselves, instead of being persuaded by outsiders to a change in behaviour.

Dealing with resistance and ambivalence is therefore at the center of this conversation technique. Ambivalence (e.g., having no self-discipline has its drawbacks, but also benefits) is accepted as normal in a behavioural change. The aim of the consultation is to work out and strengthen the motivation to change behaviour.

The counsellors accept this ambivalence and give young people the opportunity to accept both sides of their conflict. In doing so, they consciously avoid resistance and instead work out targeted expressions of the self-motivation of the adolescents to change behaviour.

Phase 2 – Strengthening the commitment

In the second phase of motivational interviewing, concrete goals and ways to achieve the goals are to be worked out.

Techniques

Motivational interviewing follows 5 principles. Of these, four are positive-formulated instructions and one principle describes what to avoid:

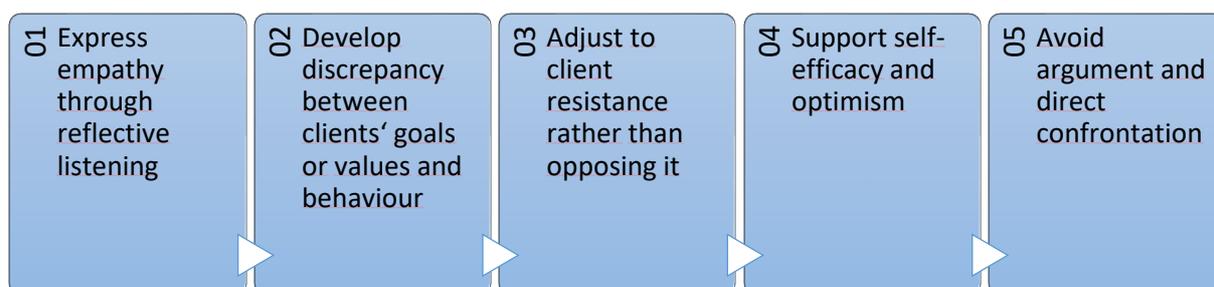


Illustration 13 - techniques of the motivational interviewing

Each one of these 5 principles are introduced in the table below (see Illustration 14)

<p>01 - Empathy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The counsellor takes a client-centered approach, accepting attitude and seeks to view and understand the situation from the client's point of view through active listening (reflective listening).
<p>02 - Develop discrepancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •This is done by means of targeted (open) questions, in order to help the trainee to develop arguments for a change (change talk). If the trainee realises that his present behaviour is in conflict with important goals and ideas for his future (cognitive dissonance), this can strengthen the willingness to change.
<p>03 - Flexible dealing with resistance (roll with resistance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ambivalence or resistance are regarded as a normal part of the process of change (and not as "pathological"), and confrontational action is avoided. Instead, various de-escalating strategies can be used (simple reflection, amplified reflection, double-sided reflection, shifting focus, reframing, agreeing with a twist, etc.) will again be supported finding their own solutions.
<p>04 - Strengthen self-efficacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •by encouraging the trainee in the confidence to achieve change. This is a central aspect of motivation, which has generally proved to be important for the success of guidance and support.
<p>05 - Avoiding evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •This means that the problem behaviour should not be demonstrated by facts and one should deal with stamping somebody as something like "not self-disciplined" rather restrained because experiences has shown that it can create resistance.

Illustration 14 - Explanation of the 5 techniques of the motivational interviewing

Technique	Description	example
01 – Express empathy	<p>identify and understand reasons for resistance without judging</p> <p>Creates trust and shows that the counsellor is on the trainee's side.</p>	<p><i>You are frustrated because you've tried to pass exams before without success.</i></p> <p><i>You feel _____ because _____.</i></p>
02 - Develop discrepancy	<p>Strategy to create dissonance</p> <p>Motivate change by creating a discrepancy between present behaviour and personal goals /values</p>	<p><i>You want to earn enough money to have a good life, but you recognize that you need a good education to get such a job.</i></p>
03 – Rolling with resistance	<p>Working with resistance rather than opposing it</p> <p>Balancing the perspective</p>	<p><i>Okay so you are not up for trying out some new learning methods. What other options have you heard of?</i></p>
04 - Support self-efficacy	<p>Point out the positives</p> <p>Praise the trainee for what he/she is doing to accomplish a change.</p>	<p><i>You have tried to pass exams before. That's great!</i></p>
05 - Avoid arguing	<p>Avoid adding additional resistance for the trainee</p> <p>Feelings are not arguable</p> <p>Confront not argue</p>	<p><i>Fair enough, you don't want to deal with learning methods now? Would you be willing to talk about your future goals?</i></p>

Illustration 15 - Examples of the 5 techniques of the motivational interviewing

Change talk

Typical of motivational interviewing is the so-called "change talk" - talking about change so; Working out the motivation for change, focusing on the ambivalence (weighing up the advantages and disadvantages).

Change talk is statements made by trainees that indicate that they are moving towards making a positive change in problematic behaviour (Rosengren, 2009). It is important to listen to your trainee carefully and understand what indicates change talk. To be successful at motivational interviewing, providers must listen for, elicit, reinforce, and point out change talk to trainees. According to Sobell and Sobell (2008) change talk is associated with successful behaviour change. Therefore, the overall goal of motivational interviewing is to elicit as well as reinforce trainee change talk related to the specific problematic behaviour. It is important to remember that recognizing the specific type of change talk is not as important as being able to determine if change talk is present or not in a conversation with a patient trainee (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Rosengren 2009).

There are four elements that can help counsellors/trainers recognize trainees' statements as "change talk".

Change talk are statements about change. This would include client statements that indicate that they want or desire to change. This would also include statements revealing that they have the ability to change and/or see the benefits of behaviour change. Clients may also see the difficulties associated with their problematic behaviour or may be taking steps to change. Change talk can also include statements about being committed to change.

Change talk includes statements that are connected to the problematic behaviour. Therefore, change talk is specific.

Clients are typically the source of change talk. This indicates that clients are often the source of change talk. However, a counsellor could reflect on a trainee's change talk and if the trainee endorses this reflection as accurate, then this would also be considered to be "change talk".

Change talk should be in the present tense.

Illustration 16 – The four elements that can help counsellors/trainers identifying trainees' statements as "change talk".

Reflections

Reflections are an important aspect of reflective listening. Reflecting in motivational Interviewing involves listening to the trainee and then making statements not asking the trainee questions (Rosengren, 2009). Reflections are defined as statements of understanding (Miller & Rollnick, 2103). Utilizing reflections and reflective listening involves the practitioner listening to the trainee's statements and the counsellor then making a statement that is a reasonable guess at the meaning of what the trainee has said (Miller & Rollnick, 2013: Rosengren, 2009). At first many feel uncomfortable with the idea of guessing at the meaning of client statements because they are afraid of being wrong. However, reflections, even if incorrect, can lead to more trainee conversation and an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the trainee perspective. Usually, trainees do not get upset, they typically clarify what they really mean and continue the conversation. Reflections also go beyond parroting what the trainee has said and try to

get to the deeper meaning. When reflections are well crafted, they allow a natural flow to trainee conversation.

Why Reflect When You Could Ask the Patient Trainees Questions?

Questioning trainees can and does occur in motivational interviewing sessions. However, questions are used limitedly, and reflections are essential in conversing with trainees. Miller and Rollnick (2013) state that asking questions of trainees that necessitate them having to explain themselves and/or their meaning actually distances them from what they are experiencing. Also, questions are more likely to cause the trainee to become defensive. Using reflections are more likely to continue exploration.

Depth of Reflection

Reflections can be simple or complex. According to Miller and Rollnick (2013) simple reflections rephrase what the trainee said, and they add little to what was said. Complex reflections are used to inject some meaning or emphasis on what the trainee has said. Simple reflections tend to get at the surface while complex reflections dig deeper. It takes time, practice, and training to become skilful at using reflections well during MI sessions. Rosengren (2009) points out that counsellors should vary the depth of reflections when working with trainees.

Types of Reflection

There are many different types of reflections. Often these reflections are used to respond to sustain talk. According to Rosengren (2009) as well as Miller and Rollnick (2013) these reflections include:

- This type of reflection is used by counsellors to demonstrate ambivalence. These statements often recognize a trainee sustain talk and combine it with change statements that the trainee has said previously. It is recommended to form these statements using the word “and” instead of “but” because “but” implies that the second half of the statement contains important information. It is also recommended that you reflect the sustain talk before the conjunction and finish the statement with the change talk
- An example of a double-sided reflection would be: “You know that it is very challenging for you to organize and structure all your good ideas, and you know that it is important that you also finish what you have started.”

Double Sided Reflections



- Metaphors tend to be very complex reflections. Use of metaphors can be tricky in practice but can assist trainees to see their situation in a new way while giving organization for adding to the conversation. Metaphors provide trainees with a new way to understand and hopefully, respond to a situation.

Metaphor



- A simple or complex reflection on what the trainee states. This can assist in eliciting change talk.

Straight Reflections



- This occurs when a provider makes a reflection that overstates what the trainee has said. This can help a trainee see through ambivalence and arrive at change talk.

Amplified reflection



Illustration 17 - Explanation of the different types of reflection

Overall, it is important to think about the behavioural goal when listening for trainee change talk. The goal is to get change talk that is specific to the behaviour and not general statements about change. However, sometimes just talking about change can be beneficial.

Preparatory Change Talk (DARN)

Preparatory change talk is labelled as such because each of these types of change talk alone or combined, indicate that a trainee is thinking about changing his/her behaviour but are not expressing commitment to do so. However, even though these statements lack commitment they are still important in the motivational interviewing process.

Desire

- Desire indicates wanting and wanting is a part of the motivation for change. It is helpful if trainees want to change their behaviour. However, trainees can and do make behaviour changes that they don't want to do. Typically these statements do not include commitment language.

Ability

- The trainee is aware that he can achieve the behavioural change. If a trainee makes statements that indicate that he has the ability to make a change, this signals that he believes that the change in behaviour is possible. Typically, these conversations with participants can include statements about participants' ability to change their behaviour and how they can change it. These statements tend to end before the obligation to change behavior is expressed.

Reasons

- In this case the trainee states a specific reason for changing his/her behaviour. These statements reveal that the trainee sees a specific reason why the behaviour change would be advantageous.

Need

- The trainee acknowledges that a change in behaviour is necessary. This can be seen in a language that reflects an imperative or urgency to change one's behaviour.

Illustration 18 - Explanation of the preparatory change talk (DARN).

Mobilizing Change Talk (CATs)

Mobilizing change talk demonstrates a trainees' movement towards resolving his/her ambivalence regarding his/her behaviour and are favouring behaviour change.

Commitment Language

- It is the clearest example of mobilizing change talk and indicates that the trainee will likely take action. Commitment language is an important predictor of change. Commitment language includes statements that demonstrate a decision to change but may still show some doubt.

Activation

- This includes trainee language that indicates that he/she is moving towards action but does not include commitment. These statements signal that trainees are leaning towards taking action.

Taking steps

- This includes statements a trainee makes that indicate that he/she has already taken actions in the direction of changing the desired behaviour. This can include a specific action, goal, or be less specific. Miller and Rollnick (2013) use the example that an alcoholic that attends Alcoholics Anonymous may not be making a commitment to quitting drinking but is taking steps in that direction.

Illustration 19 - Explanation of mobilizing change talk (CATs)

Techniques to elliptic Change Talk

It is important to remember that counsellors do not give or instil motivation in trainees to change their behaviour. With motivational interviewing, providers elicit or draw out motivation from their trainees. Meaning, motivation comes from the trainee. The following is a review of some skills that can be used to elicit change talk during motivational interviewing sessions. Rosengren (2009) recommends the following techniques for eliciting change talk:

Evocative Questions

- Evocative questions directly ask the trainee for change talk. The wording of the question can elicit different types of change talk (preparatory forms or mobilizing change talk)

Elaboration

- This occurs when counsellors ask for examples of situations that delineate change talk. Typically the trainee has made a change statement and the provider asks for a description.

Extremes

- This includes identifying the trainees' worse conceived outcome if the problematic behaviour is not changed as well as the best-conceived benefits if the trainee changes the behaviour. This can be helpful because identifying the worst possible outcomes can open the door to discuss other consequences. Discussing the benefits of the behaviour change can help make the benefits of behaviour seem like they are achievable.

Looking back

- This includes getting the trainee to recall how life was before problems occurred. This is done best if the trainee can compare how things were before the behaviour caused problems with how things are for them presently.

Looking forward

- This involves asking the trainee about how he/she views the future. The aim is to get the trainees' perspective on how life will be with and without the behaviour change.

Exploring goals

- This occurs when the counsellor probes about how the desired behaviour change fits with the trainees' values and goals.

Assessment Feedback

- This occurs when the counsellor gives the trainee personalised feedback from an assessment and have the trainee interpret the meaning of this assessment. Feedback can help provide the trainee with important information. Sometimes this technique can highlight discrepancies that the trainee can consider.

Readiness ruler

- This technique elicits change talk as well as assesses a trainees' readiness to change. When completing this assessment practitioners ask the trainee to rate on a scale from 1-10 how confident he/she is that if he/she made the decision to change his/her behaviour that they could complete the change (1 represents no confidence and 10 represents extreme confidence). Typically it is best to follow-up this assessment with a follow-up question asking the trainee why did he/she rated themselves where they did. This is done by asking the trainee why he/she gave themselves their rating instead of a lower number. This follow-up question is asked in this way because it promotes change talk. If you ask the trainee why he/she didn't rate himself/herself higher it promotes sustain talk. It is also beneficial to ask what it would take to move from his/her current rating to a higher rating, which also promotes change talk. Miller and Rollnick (2013) state that it is acceptable to develop your own scale which can be visual or numeric in nature.

Examples of techniques to elliptic Change Talk

Evocative Questions – the questions ask the trainees directly for change talk

“In what ways does this concern you?” “If you decided to make a change, what makes you think you could do it?”
 “How would you like things to be different?” “How would things be better if you changed?” “So, given all this, what do you think you will do next?” “What’s your next step?”
 “What, if anything, will you do now?”

Elaboration – we ask clients trainees for examples of situations that illustrate change talk

Tell me about a recent time when you to share your ideas and opinions with others and you could not give yourself a hearing. ” “What does that look like when you get too angry with others? Describe a time when that occurred.”
 “You said things were better then. Tell me about a time when you managed to do it better. Specifically, what was happening?”

Using Extremes – has the client trainees talk about the worst possible outcome and the best possible outcome

“What concerns you the most?” “What is the worst thing that could happen?” “What do you hope for the most?”
 “What would a perfect outcome look like?”

Looking Back – helps the trainee look into the past and contrast it with the present

“Do you remember a time when things were going well? What has changed?” “What are the differences between the Greg who’s in 6th grade and the Greg who’s in 8th grade (or of today)?” “What did you want to be or do when you graduated from high school?” “What did you envision for your life when you were younger?”

Looking Forward – has the trainee look into the future if no change happens or if change does happen

“If nothing changes, what do you see happening in 5 years? If you decided to change, what will it be like?” “What are your hopes for the near future?” “How would you like things to turn out?” “How would you like things to be different?”

Exploring Goals – looking at how the change fits with the goals and values they find most important

“What things do you regard as most important?” “What sort of person (parent) do you want to be?” “What sorts of things would you like to accomplish in your life?”

Assessment Feedback – personalized feedback gives the trainees an opportunity to compare their situation more objectively

“The testing indicates that your brain is having difficulty processing information efficiently. It looks as though shifting easily between ways of thinking will be hard for you, and so things like multitasking may be very difficult. How does that fit with what you know about yourself?”

“You indicate that independence in decision making is important and that social connections are also important. Tell me about how those things fit together in your life.”

Readiness Rulers – using rating to assess for importance, confidence, and readiness

“On a scale of 1 – 10, how confident are you – if you made a decision to change – that you could change when 1 represents not at all confident and 10 equals extremely confident?” “What led you to choose a 6, versus a 3?”

“What would it take for you to move from a 6 to a 7 or an 8?”

Questions to Avoid when Eliciting Change Talk

When attempting to elicit change talk it is important to avoid questions that would result in generating sustain talk. For example: “Why can’t you give yourself a hearing?” or “Why can’t you just finish work before starting another?” will most likely result in the trainee responding to these questions with sustain talk. Also, counsellors want to avoid questioning with a disapproving tone. Taking this tone with trainees can damage the trainee-counsellor relationship, impeding progress.

Miller and Rollnick (2013) recommend that when formulating questions to ask the trainee that the counsellor ask him or herself: “if I ask this question or word this question this way is the trainees’ answer going to be sustained or change talk?”

Structure of the change talk

Another method is exploring the ambivalence with the help of the decision scale. This paper has already pointed to the helpful metaphor of the decision scale for the presentation of ambivalence, with the help of which the positive and negative aspects of present behaviour and change can be explored and contrasted. With the aid of the clear four-field matrix, the advantages and disadvantages of a change and the advantages and disadvantages of retaining the status quo can be explored and entered into the four fields. This presentation encourages the trainee to tell stories and to clarify both sides of the ambivalence and to develop or promote change motivation. The greater the discrepancies and the greater the awareness of these discrepancies, the greater the motivation for change.

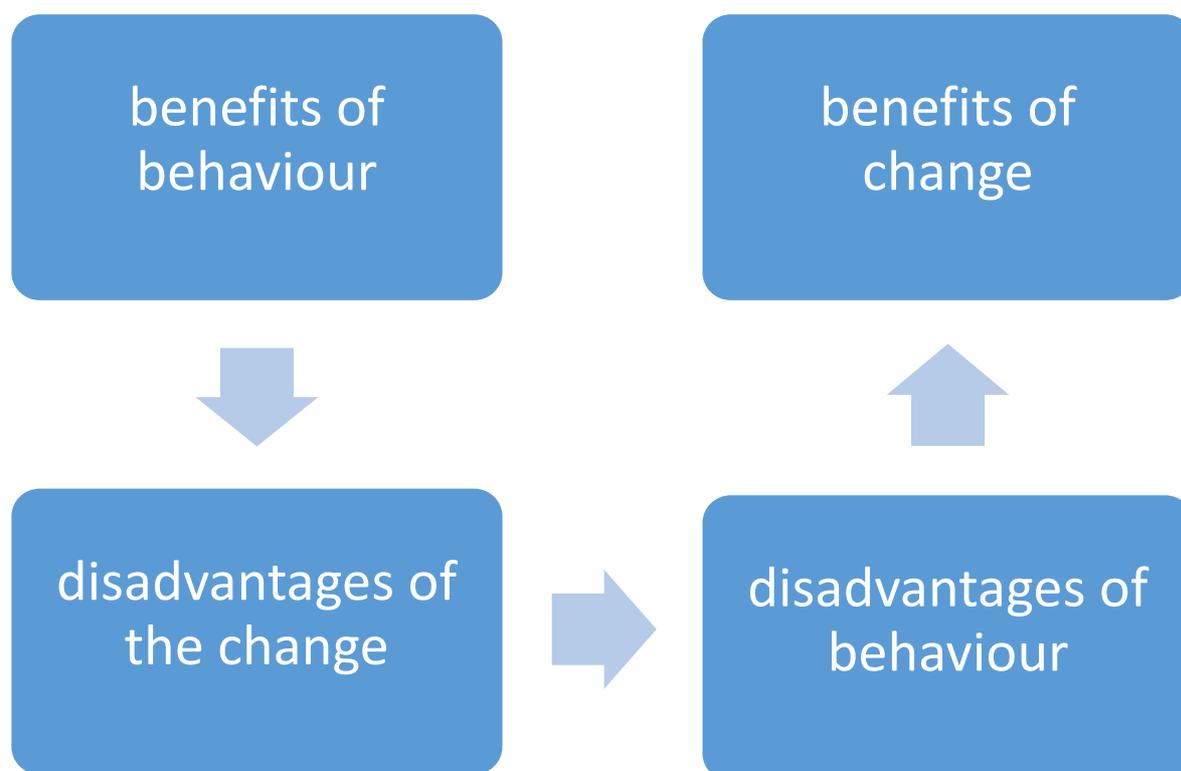


Illustration 21 - Presentation of the structure of the change talk

The Soft Skills Profile

The Main Goals

The main goals of the Soft Skills Profile are:

To provide facilitators or other professionals with a systematic approach when assisting individuals.

To assist individuals by offering them the opportunity of participating in a systematic approach that will help them make decisions about their own lives and enhance their soft skills.

Structure

The systematic approach, Soft Skills Profile, is an interview scheme for counsellors and other professionals to use while guiding trainees who need to enhance their soft skills in order to maximise their opportunities in life. The Soft Skills Profile is explained in detail in this document in the sections above. This is done to simplify implementation and preparation for the professionals.

It is highly recommended that interview strategies are carefully followed the first time the Soft Skills Profile is used. Later, professionals can adapt the interview strategies to the circumstances and culture of their environment and use their personal style and experience.

The Clusters - Overview

In the Soft Skills Profile, the dialogue between the counsellor/facilitator and the trainee is based on thirteen clusters. These clusters are presented on three different diagrams allocated to the main topics of our soft skills model:



Illustration 22 - Identification of the three topics in which soft skills can be integrated

The diagrams include clusters that are essential to discuss when working on assisting a trainee in developing his/her soft skills. It is not necessary or possible to discuss all the clusters because each of the clusters includes many factors and it can take quite a long time to go through one cluster. Therefore, it is important to select the clusters that are most essential for the individual.

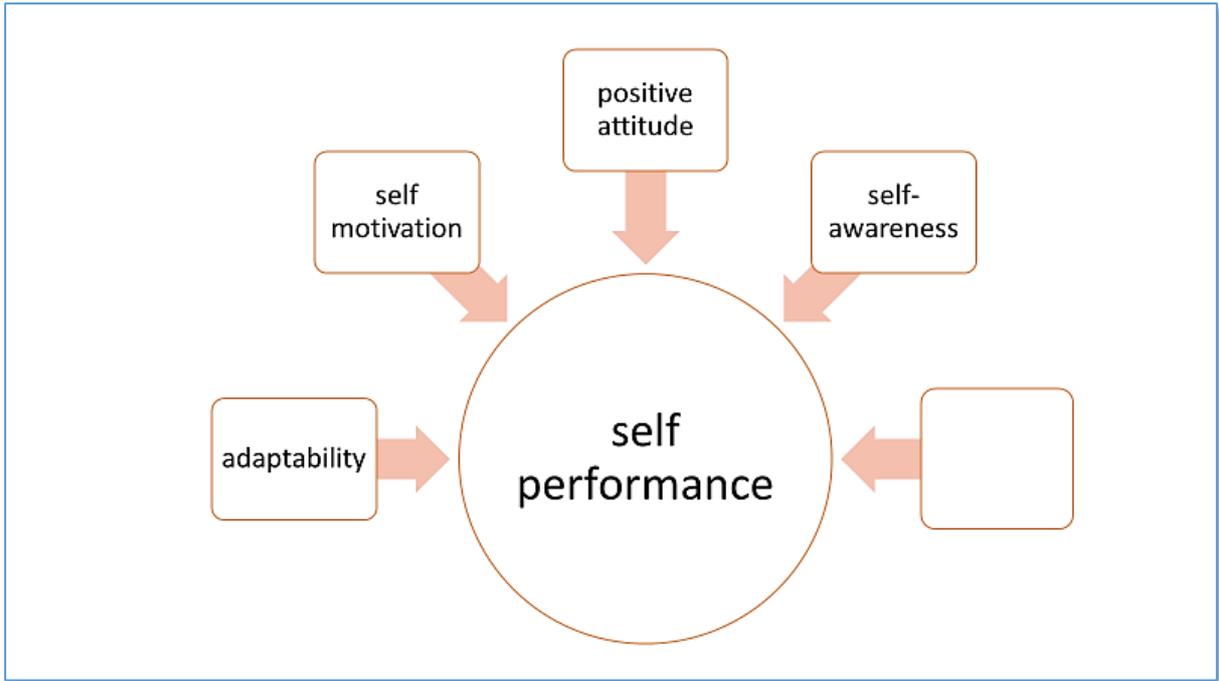


Illustration 23 - Identification of the cluster related to the topic „self-performance“

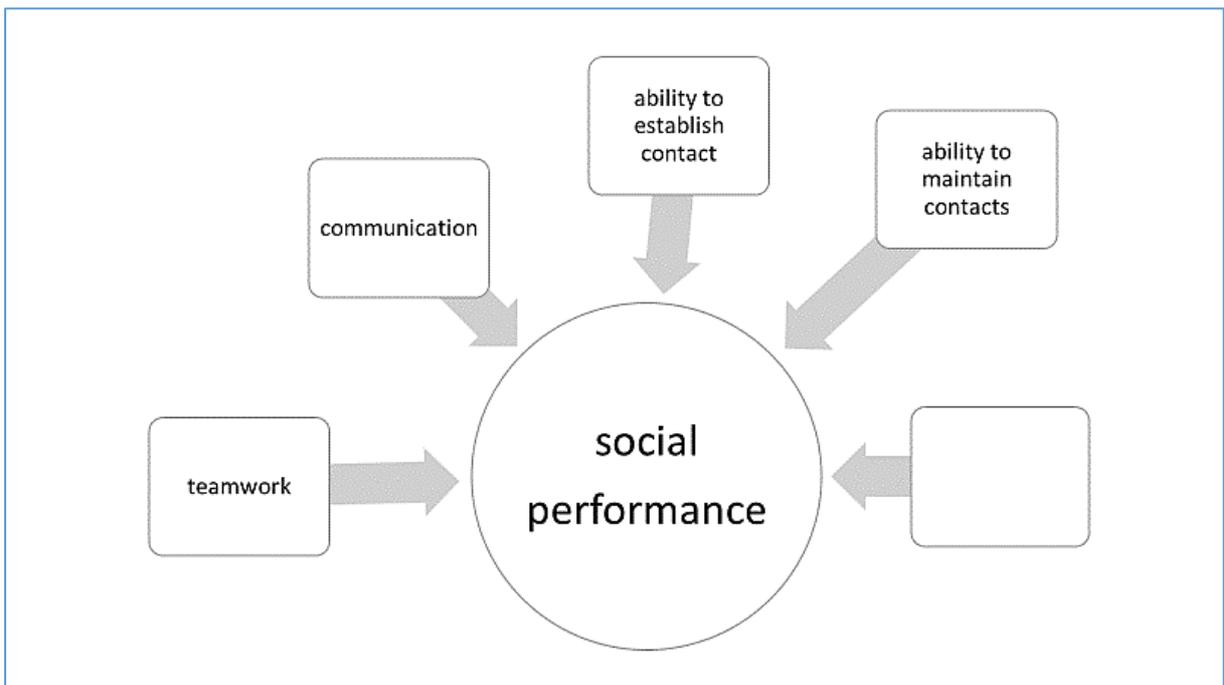


Illustration 24 - Identification of the cluster related to the topic „social performance“.

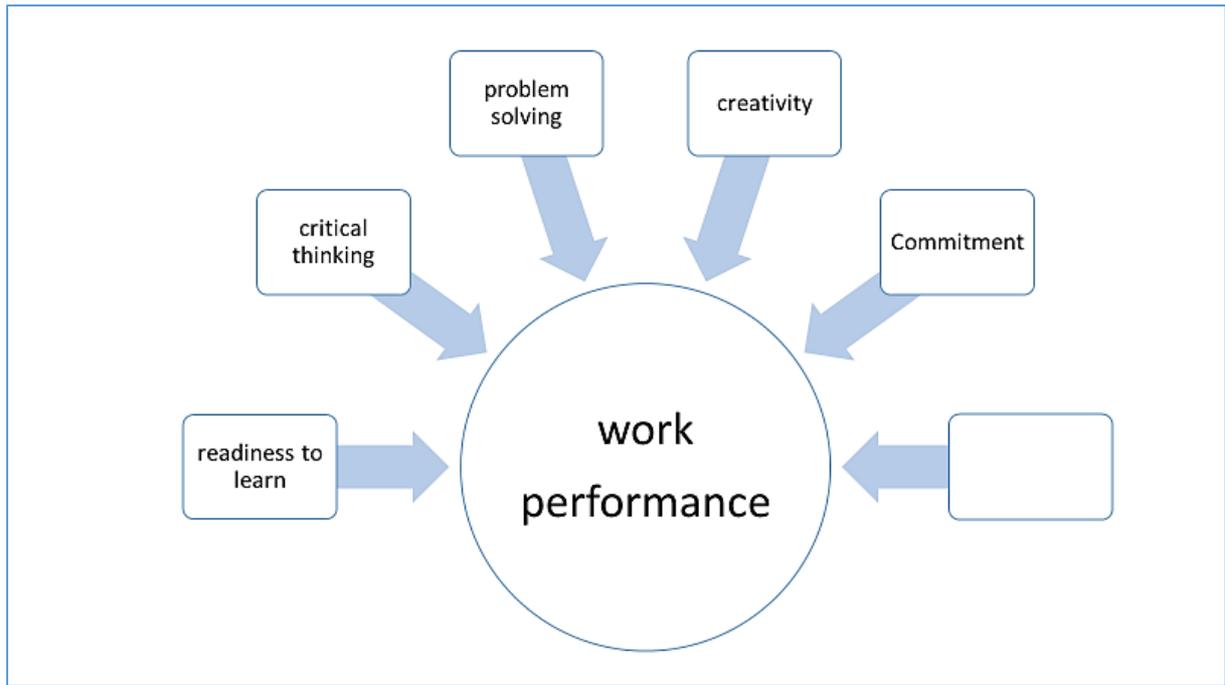


Illustration 25 - - Identification of the cluster related to the topic „work performance“

The counsellor makes an agreement with the trainee whereby the trainee chooses the first cluster for discussion, the counsellor the second cluster, the trainee the third and so on. After this agreement, the trainee selects the first cluster to talk about.

Empty Cluster

The counsellor asks the trainee if there are any other issues, he/she would like to talk about that could fit into the empty cluster of each slide. The counsellor follows the steps and questions based on Thun's square of value and Miller's and Rollnick's Motivational Interviewing as in other clusters. It would perhaps be possible to use questions such as: Do you think there is something missing? Or for you to have a more meaningful life? The counsellor keeps in mind that in some cases these issues could be very sensitive. Issues for discussion could be role models, values, etc.

Establishing concrete development goals on the basis of the squares of values

The counsellor focuses on encouraging the trainee to develop his/her soft skills by using Friedemann Schulz von Thun's square of values:

The counsellor helps the trainee to develop its full constructive effect of a chosen soft skill by assisting him/her to find positive counterparts ("sisterly virtues"). Therefore, the counsellor introduces the following steps to the trainee:

On the basis of the two forms

Square of values - theory

Square of values - example

the counsellor explains the square of values to the trainee.

Now the counsellor picks up the form

Square of values - worksheet

and, together with the trainee, develops a suitable square of values for the first soft skill that the trainee has chosen. If necessary, the counsellor develops multiple squares of values with the trainee to the same soft skill. In doing so, the counsellor always points out that every soft skill easily becomes a devaluing exaggeration of itself, if it is not possible to create and maintain a positive tension to its sister's virtue.

The counsellor now discusses the two development arrows, which start from the exaggerations of the two soft skills and point to the opposite soft skills (sister virtues).

Once all the squares of squares have been discussed for a soft skill, the counsellor begins Motivational Interviewing (MI) and develops concrete plans with the trainee to stabilize both sister virtues.

Illustration 26 - Exemplification of the establishment of concrete development goals on the basis of the squares of values

Counselling Sessions

The Soft Skills Profile requires the counsellor to meet the trainee at least twice. In the first session, the counsellor collects information by using the cluster structure and if necessary, plans another session in order to gather further information. If the counsellor assumes that one session is enough for collecting information, he/she schedules the final session with the trainee. In the final session, they plan together with some future steps in order to better meet the needs of the trainee. If there is a need for extra sessions, the counsellor and the trainee plan the session(s) together.

The First Counselling Session – Collecting Information

1. Introduction.

- It is essential that the trainee feels welcome and experiences a positive atmosphere. The counsellor focuses on building trust and tries to create a warm and safe environment.

2. The purpose of the session.

- The main goal is to invite the trainee to discuss his/her matters in confidence with a counsellor. The counsellor assists the Trainee in finding his/her strengths to make rational decisions about the future, the peer group etc. It is more likely that trainees can enhance their resilience by recognising their strengths.

3. Discussion and mapping.

- The counsellor introduces the seven clusters. The counsellor makes the following agreement with the trainee: The trainee selects the first cluster to talk about, the counsellor selects the second one and so on. Paper and pencils are offered. It is not necessary to discuss all the clusters because it might take too much time. The counsellor decides together with the individual whether one interview is sufficient in order to collect enough information. It is essential for the counsellor to focus on empathy, integrity and listening skills.

4. The next session.

- The counsellor schedules the final session with the trainee (and an extra session if needed).

Illustration 27 - Guidelines for the preparation and implementation of the first counselling session

Scheduling Preventive Steps

The counsellor collects the information systematically from the previous session(s). It is important to analyse the information and look for patterns in the trainees' behaviour and gestures.

Furthermore, the counsellor searches for prevention and support actions that could possibly be suitable for the trainee.

The Last Session – Making My Steps for the Future

1. The counsellor welcomes the trainee and proposes that they work together in finding positive steps and solutions to deal with the present. The counsellor revises the first session(s) and the clusters discussed with the trainee. The counsellor uses questions such as: What information do we have now? What have we been discussing so far? Are there any conclusions? The counsellor mentions positive facts and strengths about the trainee that he experienced through their dialogue in the previous session(s). It is important for the counsellor to have in mind that the trainee might experience interpersonal learning such as discovering something important about himself/herself. This might even be the first time he/she learns how other people see him/her. The counsellor avoids suggesting the “right” or best solution or action steps. The “perfect situation” would be for the trainee and the counsellor to find solutions together.

2. According to Amundson (1998), it can help trainees in difficult situations to set concrete and attainable goals in order to deal with their current situation in life. Together, the counsellor and the trainee set goals for the future and make plans for the next steps. Together they write down the goals and future plans on the assignment sheet, My Steps for the Future. The assignment sheet serves as an action plan. It is also important to help the trainee to take the first steps (such as making phone calls, register, etc.).

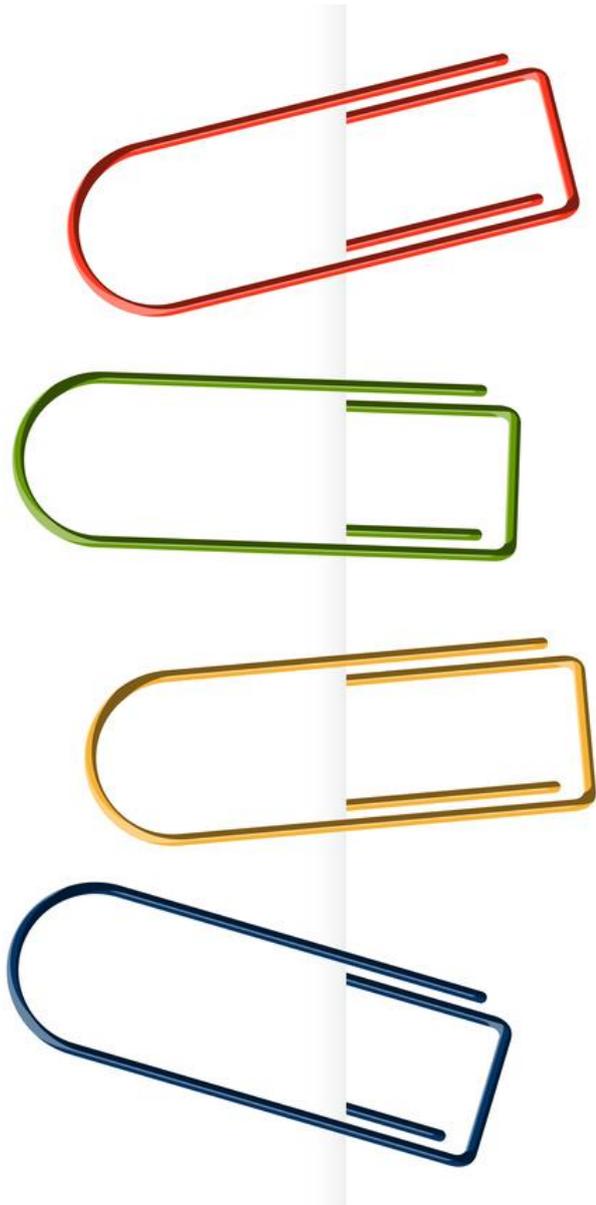
3. When coming to the end of the interview, the counsellor provides support and shows empathy and encourages the trainee to share his/her thoughts and experience. At the end of the session the counsellor thanks the trainee for his/her cooperation and invites the trainee to come and talk to him/her when or if he/she needs to.

4. The counsellor can use the evaluation sheet in Annex 4 to evaluate the progress of the trainee. The counsellor can revise and adopt new tactics as he/she becomes more familiar with the Soft Skills Profile.

Illustration 28 - Guidelines for the preparation and implementation of the second counselling session



Annexes



Annex 1 - My Steps for the Future

In Annex 1, the assignment sheet My Steps for the Future is provided. It is used in the sessions and it is possible to fill out more than one sheet. If the counsellor chooses it is possible to fill out one for each cluster. The counsellor and the trainee set goals for the trainees' future and make plans. Together they write down the goals and an action plan on the assignment sheet. It is necessary to write down the goals and actions in order to clarify for the trainee how he/she can make a positive change.





My personal strengths and goals

Write down your strengths that you could rely on in order to enhance your chosen soft skill!

Write down three steps you could work on in the near future to enhance your chosen soft skill – making your personal soft skills plan.

Goals

Setting goals allow you to choose how you want to move through life. Some achievements can take a lifetime to attain, while others can be completed in the course of a day. Setting and meeting goals lead to feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment. Write down 2-3 statements about what you want and need in the future. These statements can be general or specific as “I want to be happy,” or “I want to help people,” or “I want to be fit.”

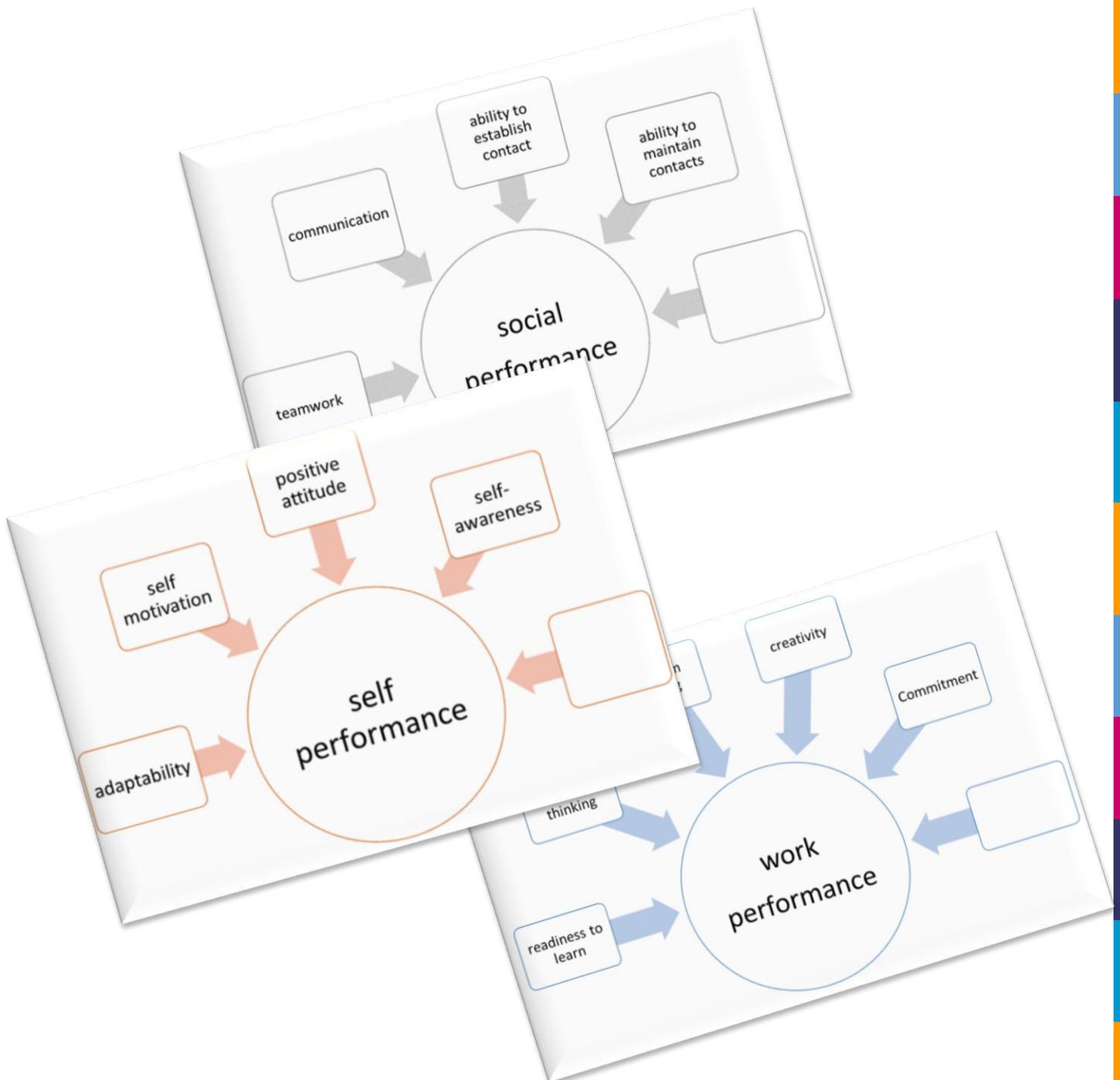
Use the statements to set goals for the near future. Try to have the goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-related).

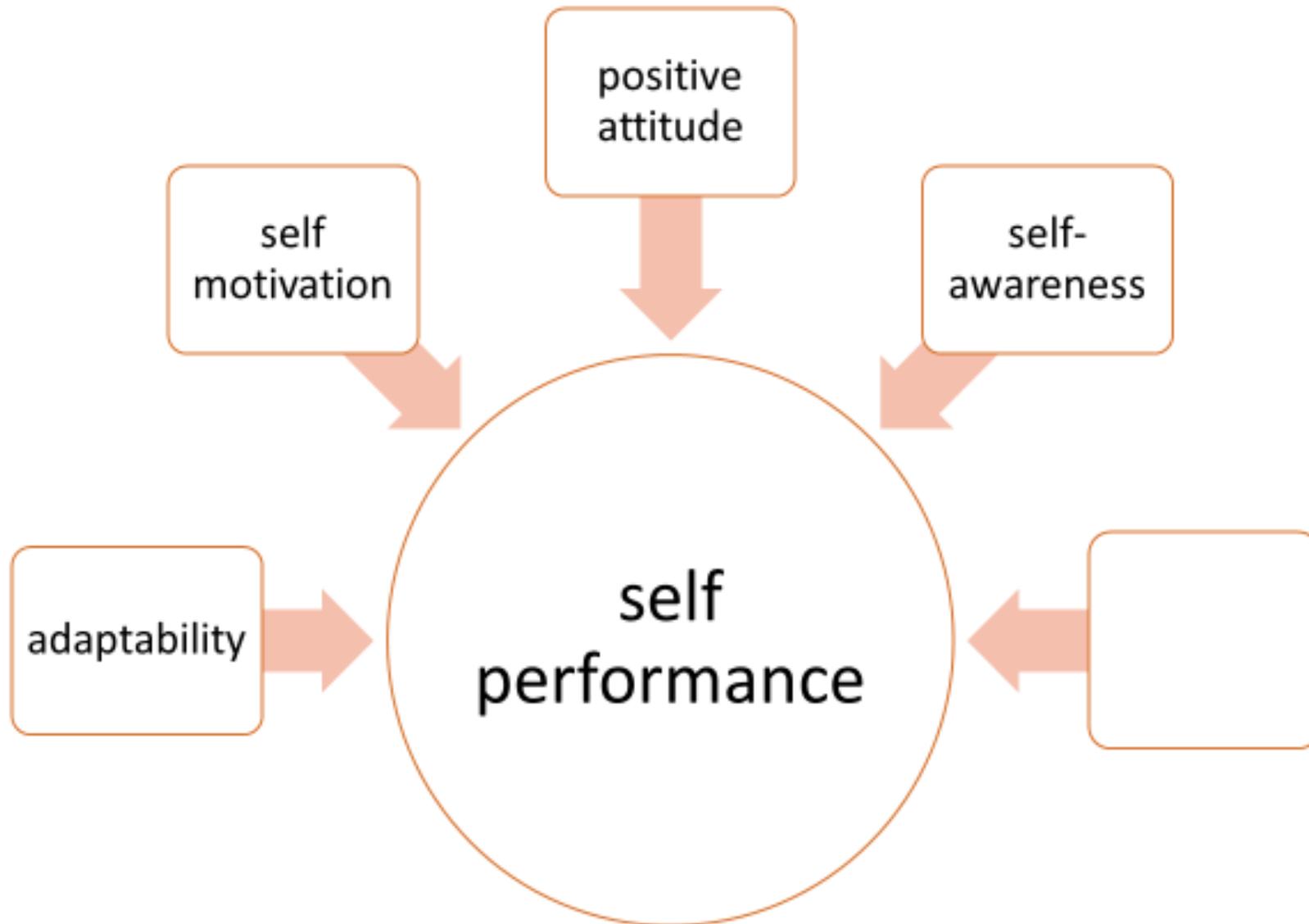
Your goals

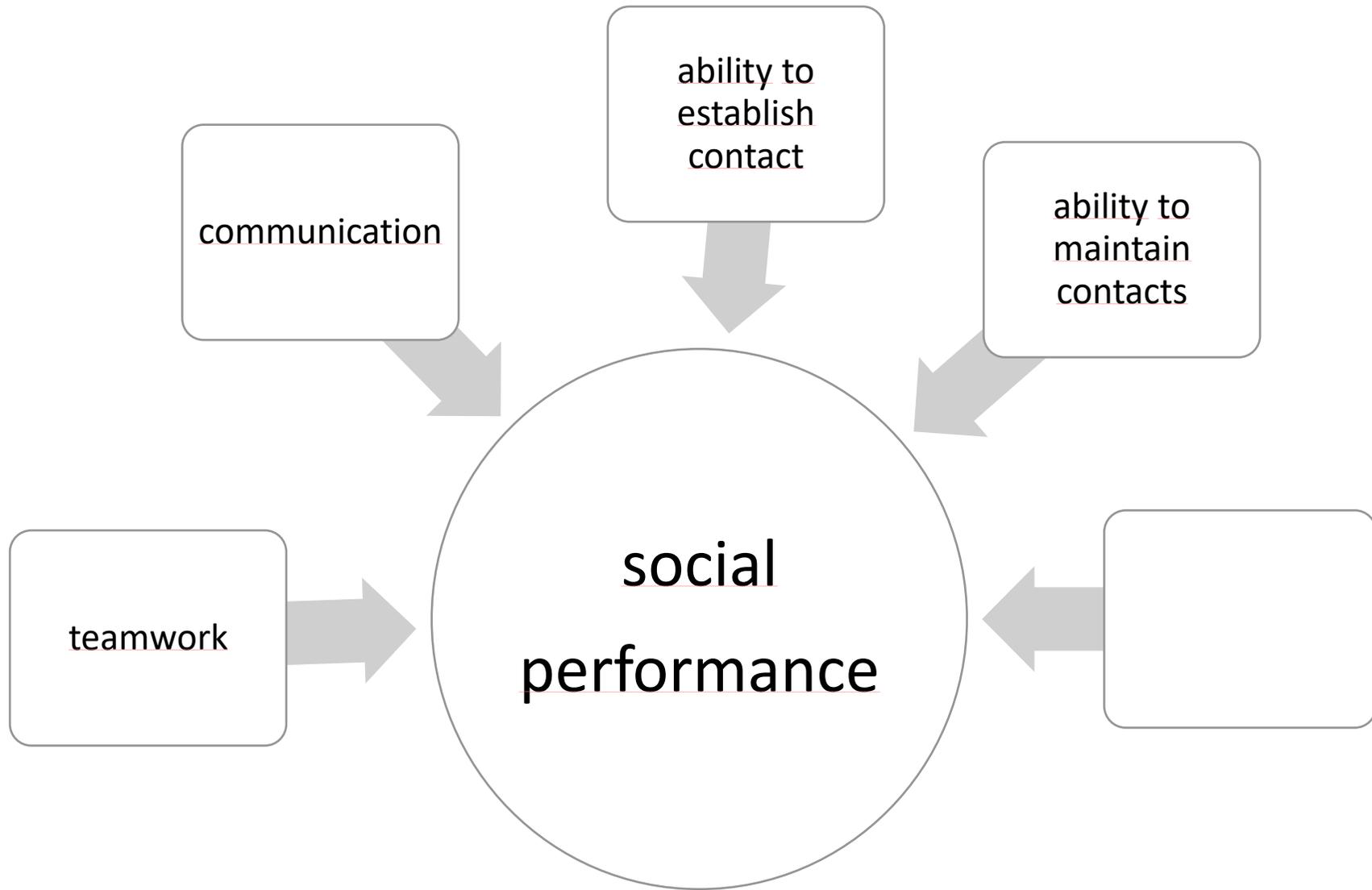
Annex 2 - Clusters - Diagrams

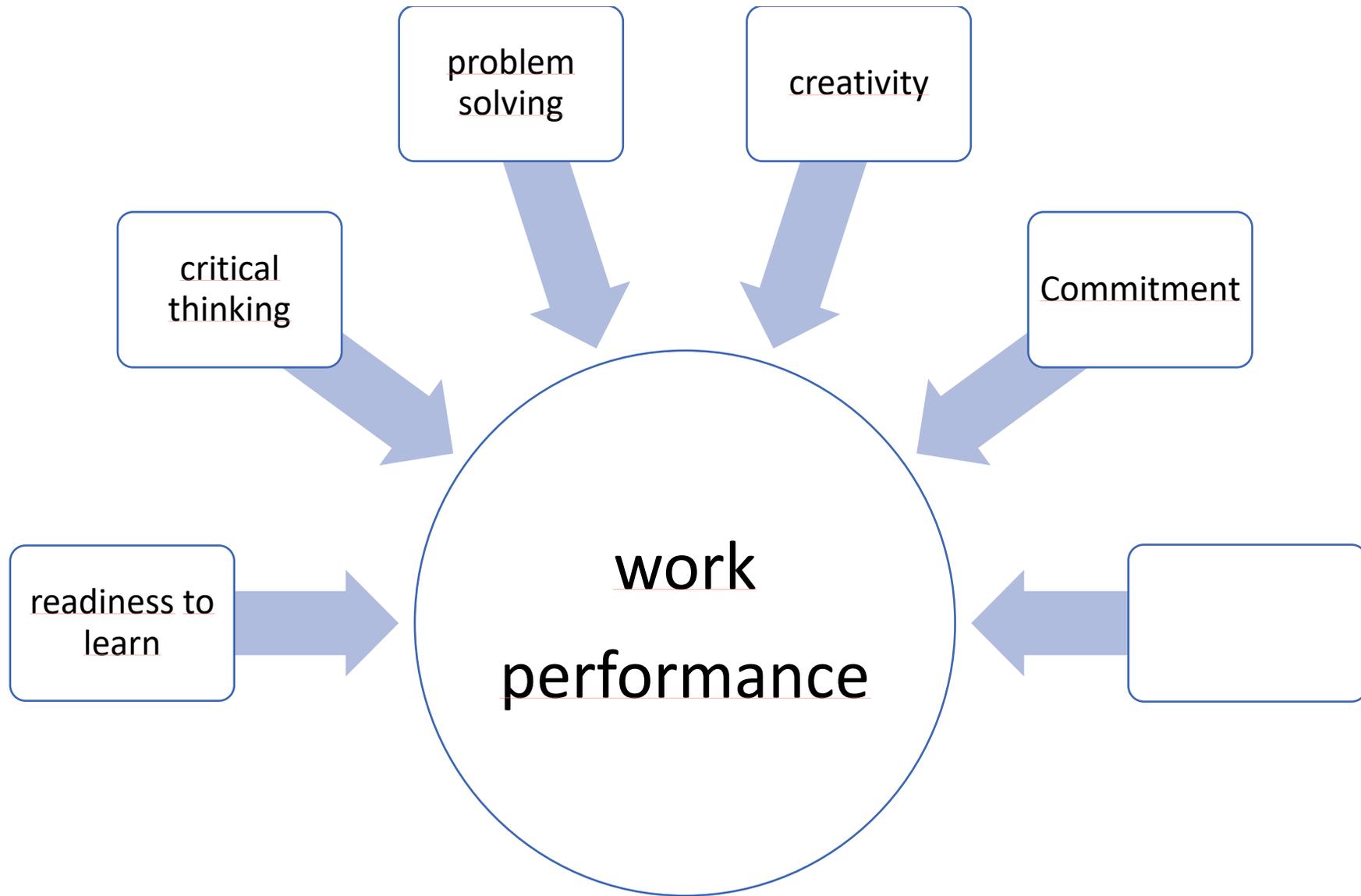
Three diagrams are provided in this annex. These diagrams are for the counsellor to use with the trainees to explain the clusters. The diagrams include all the clusters and the counsellor can use it to explain the clusters at the beginning of the interview when explaining that there are many factors that can influence a trainees' life. The trainee is invited to select the first cluster to talk about. The counsellor selects the next one and then the trainee again, and so on.

The last two diagrams are for the counsellor when preparing for the interview. In these diagrams, some facts are placed within each cluster that the counsellor can focus on. The counsellor can add more facts based on his/her experience.



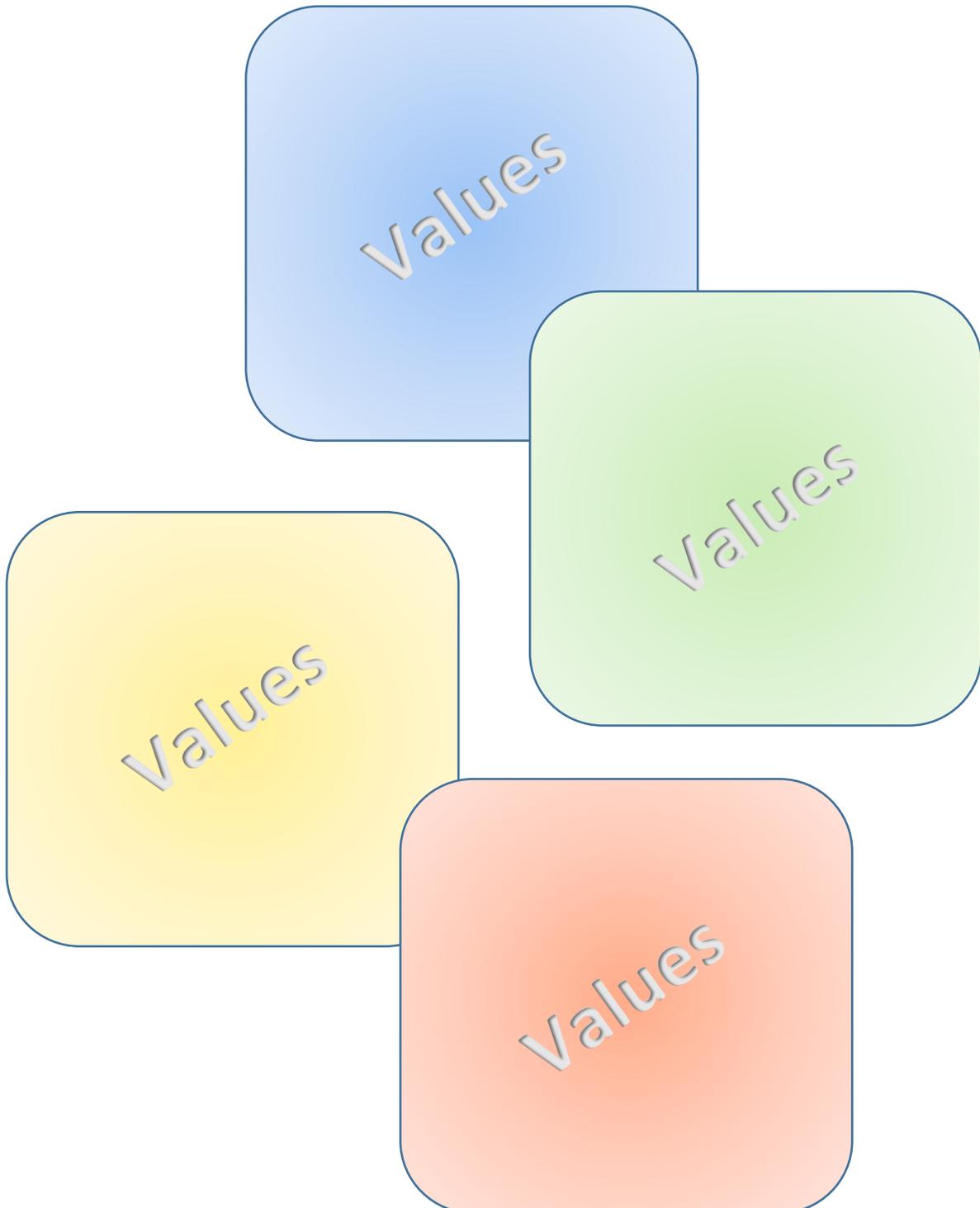




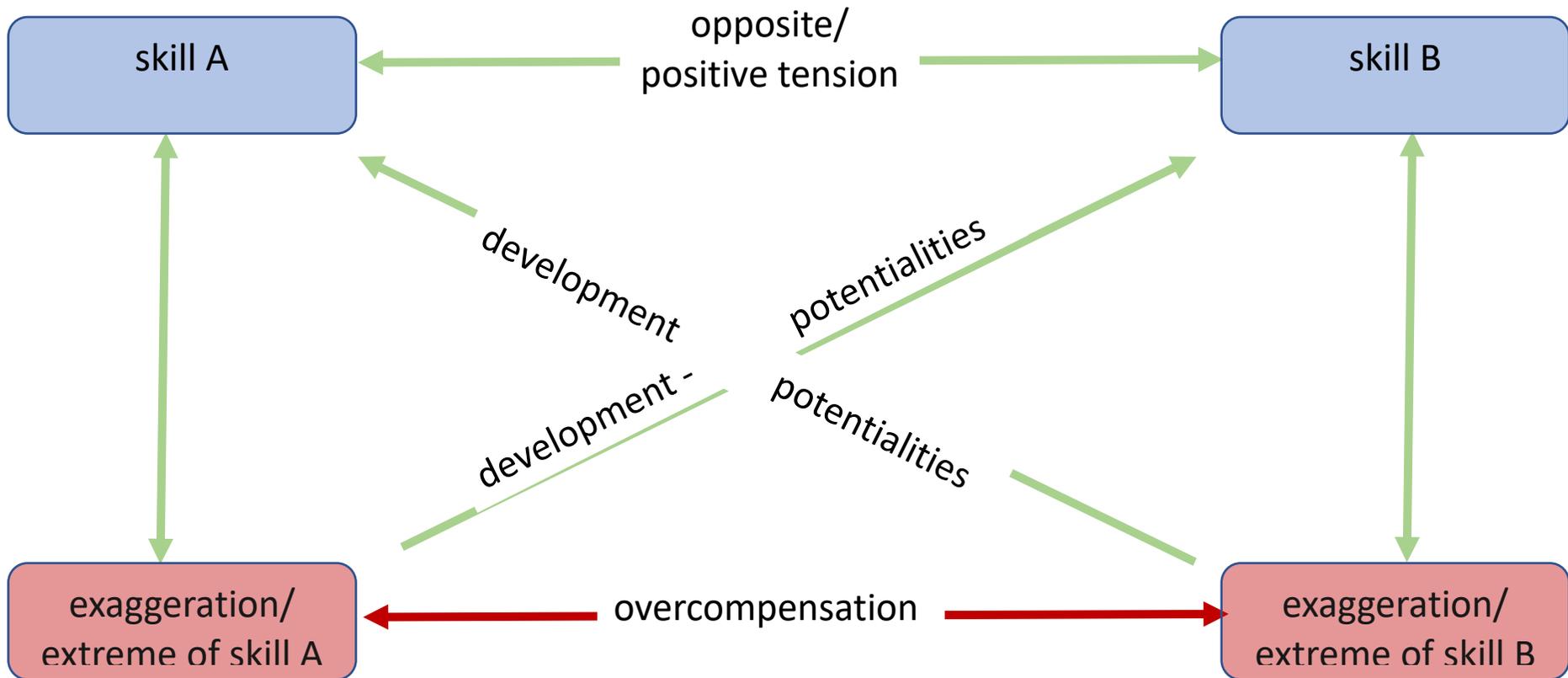


Annex 3– Square of Values

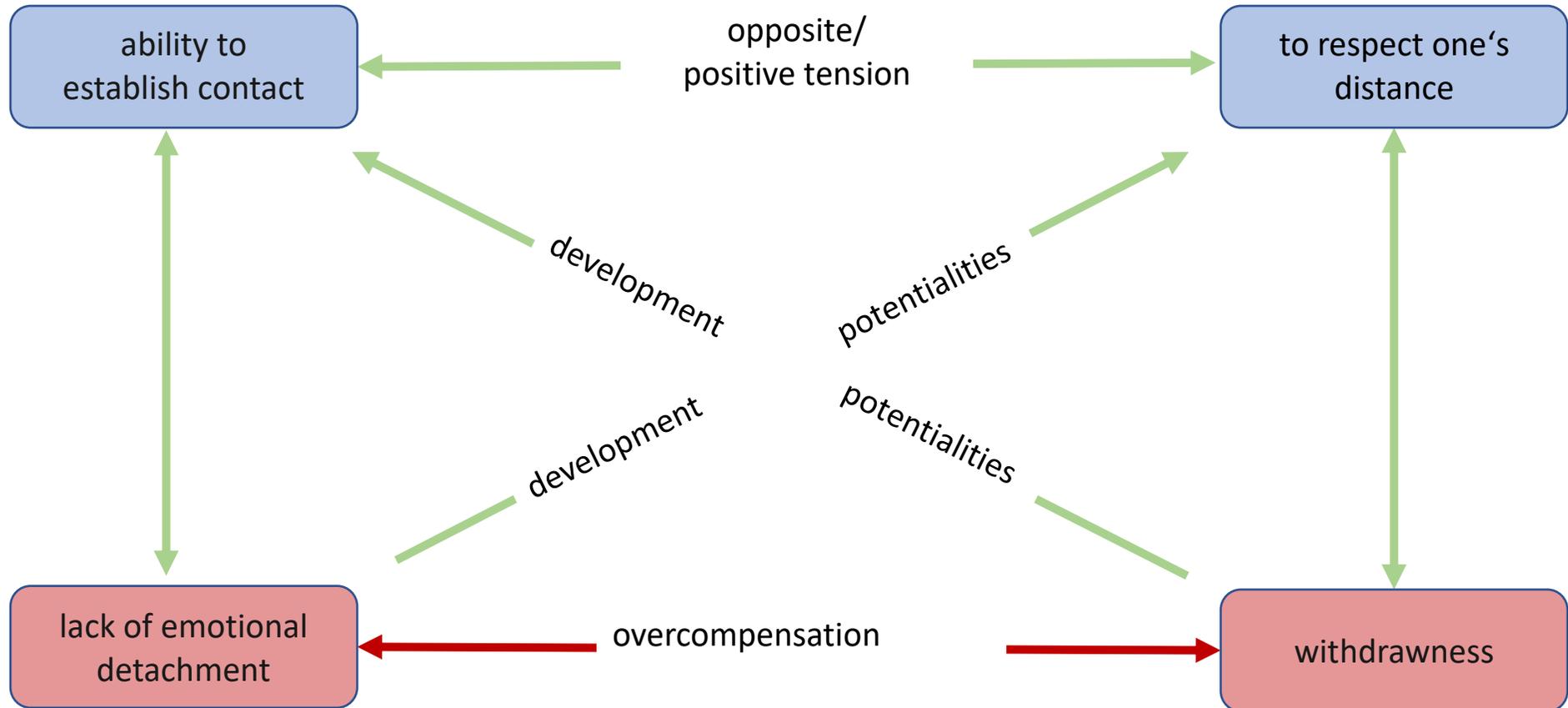
Three diagrams are provided in this annex. The first two diagrams are for the counsellor to use with the trainees to explain the structure of the square of values. This is to be done after the counsellor has introduced the diagrams related to the different soft skills. The third diagram is for the counsellor work to elaborate on different kinds of squares of values together with the trainee. The counsellor should prepare squarer of values – worksheets to be able to work on more than one soft skills during one session.



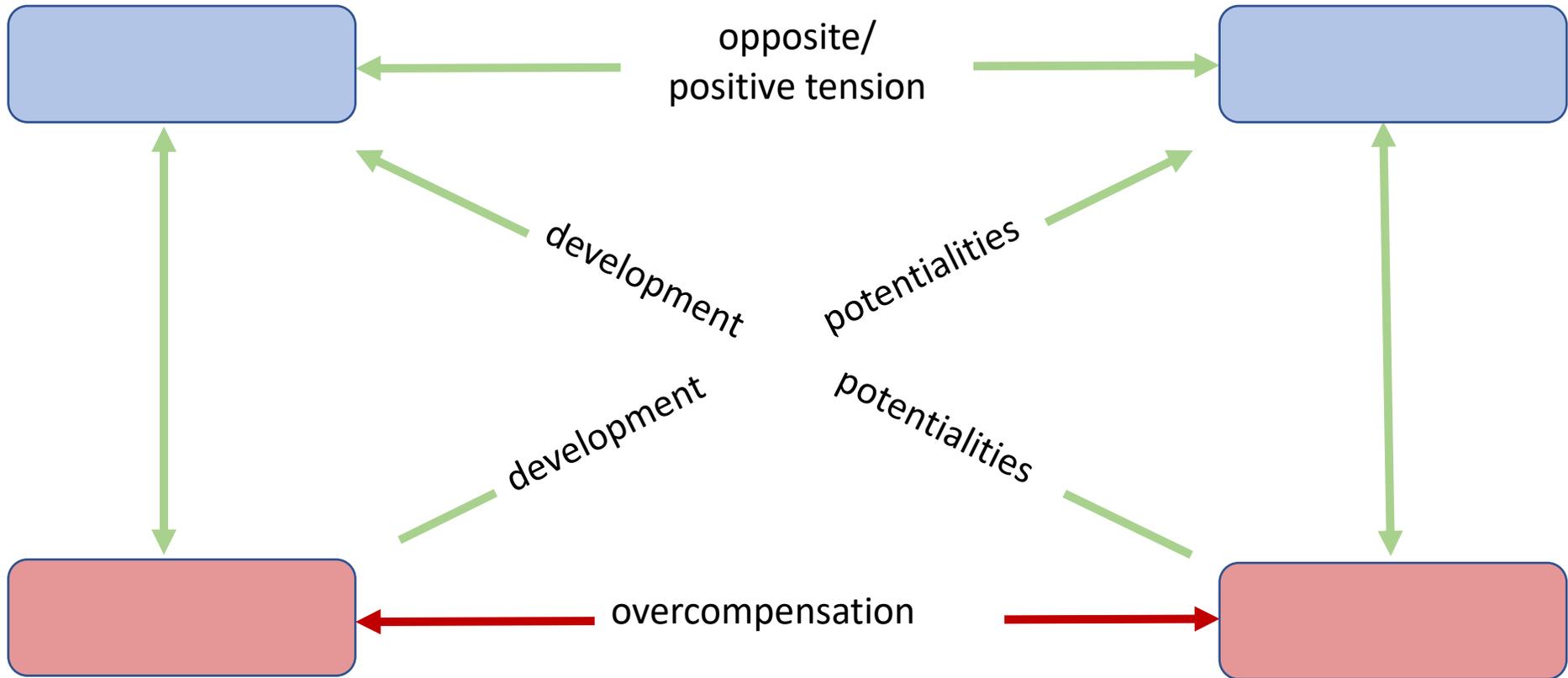
Square of values - theory



Square of values - example



Square of values - worksheet





Annex 4 – Evaluation

Evaluation serves to sharpen the focus of planned strategies, shows progress toward established goals and can enable revision and adaptation of tactics. The counsellor adapts the interview strategies to the circumstances and culture of his/her environment and uses his/her personal style and experience. The following evaluation sheet can be used for keeping records and reviewing as professionals develop their methods of using the Soft Skills Profile. The following evaluation sheet can be used while evaluating the progress of each trainee.

Evaluation





Evaluation Sheet

Name of the trainee: _____

1. Background information regarding the trainee (fill in the information available):

VET centre/school: _____

Career Development: _____

Family: _____

Peers: _____

Lifestyle: _____

Strengths: _____

Hobbies: _____

2. How many interviews were needed with the trainee? _____

3. How long was each interview? _____

4. Which cluster was selected first by the trainee? _____

5. Which cluster was selected first by the counsellor? _____

6. How did the trainee react during the interview?

For each pair of opposites, make a cross at the point of the line that is most appropriate.

secure	insecure
interested	not interested
glad	sad
talkative	influential
quiet	loud
unhappy	happy
bored	stressed
negative	positive
calm	restless
sociable	ignorant
cautious	careless
ambitious	not ambitious



7. What were the main results in the assignment *My Steps for the Future* regarding the following tasks:

Goals

Action Plan

Other comments



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