Life Wellness for Busy People

„Life wellness for busy people. Role of the wellness coach.”

Erasmus + nr 2023-2-PL01-KA210-ADU-000174442

Co-funded by the European Union

MSK

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ABSENTIA EXPLORING THE ABSENCE

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A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE PROJECT

This publication is one of the key results of the project "Life wellness for busy people. Role of the wellness coach" co-financed by the European Union under the Erasmus + program in the adult education sector.

In the context of the outbreak of the COVID pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the economic crisis, and the mental health crisis, well-being becomes an important issue that allows us to survive and become resistant to changes taking place in the world. Well-being allows us to achieve a level of fulfillment and life satisfaction. Few people know how to take care of their well-being because no one teaches us. Our project wants to change that!

The main goal of the project is to promote the importance of well-being among adults, to convince them that taking care of well-being can be learned and to prepare systematic support for them in this area in the form of an educational and development advisor, and in the long term, to increase the number of people achieving well-being in their lives. Further information about the project, its activities and results on the website: https://www.lifewellnesserasmus.com/

PURPOSE OF THE BROCHURE

This brochure has been developed for the following purposes:

- to introduce educators and trainers of adults to the role of an educational and developmental advisor in the area of life well-being
- to encourage educators and trainers of adults to take on the role of an educational and developmental advisor in the area of life well-being
- to familiarize educators and trainers with the challenges they may encounter when taking on the role of an educational and developmental advisor.

The brochure is addressed to:

- educators, trainers, pedagogues, and instructors working with adults in non-formal education who would like to expand their knowledge of life well-being and possibly decide to offer such courses for adults
- trainers providing in-service trainings for others working with adults, who would like to conduct training on how to teach life well-being
- NGOs and adult education institutions that are interested in learning more about the area of life well-being and potentially implementing such courses into their educational offer.

Benefits of using this publication:

- a concise introduction to the concept of life well-being in adults
- insight into various methods and techniques for supporting adults in their pursuit of life well-being
- an overview of a new professional profile for adult educators – that of an educational and developmental advisor
- preparation for the process of implementing such an educational innovation, along with an overview of the potential challenges involved.

WHAT IS WELL-BEING IN A HOLISTIC APPROACH?

Well-being is most commonly associated with a balance between professional and private life, and when talking about well-being, the word happiness often comes up. However, this is an oversimplification—well-being is more than just home and work, or a fleeting moment of joy. It is a deep state of inner balance, coherence, and sense of meaning that encompasses all areas of life: physical, emotional, social, and spiritual.In a holistic approach, well-being is a state of full human harmony. In this context, well-being is a process rather than a static condition—it requires ongoing awareness and tuning in to oneself.

We aim to expand this definition—to include all dimensions of human functioning: physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual. It is a state in which we are in touch with ourselves, accept what is, and are able to seek harmony even in the midst of everyday chaos.

It is about balance, not perfection; about flexibility and the ability to respond to change; about living in accordance with one's own values and being authentic, rather than being happy all the time. It is also not about maintaining perfect balance, but about consciously returning to it when it is lost.

A holistic approach to well-being involves caring for the whole self – body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Emotions are an integral part of this process – they reveal what truly matters to us and what might need to change. Authenticity is also essential: the courage to be yourself, to live in alignment with your inner truth, to be honest with yourself, and to stay attuned to your own needs. All of this leads harmoniously to a true, deep sense of well-being.

We often think that a sense of peace, balance, and meaning is something we have to "earn" or "find time for after everything else." A holistic approach says the opposite: well-being is a foundation that enables us to learn, work, build relationships, and face challenges.

LIFE WELL-BEING FOR THE OVERWORKED

So what about life well-being for those who are constantly overworked? Is it even possible to talk about well-being when your calendar is bursting at the seams and the to-do list never ends? Yes—provided we stop viewing well-being as a luxury or a reward after work. It's a state that can be cultivated daily—through small steps, at the rhythm of one's own life.
Well-being for a busy person is not about escaping responsibilities, but about wisely weaving self-care into everyday life. It's micro-regeneration between meetings, a moment of silence with the morning coffee, one deep "no" to excess, and one honest "yes" to personal boundaries. It's also the ability to pause and ask: *Does what I'm doing make sense? Does it nourish me or burn me out?*

Life well-being for the overworked is mindfulness of one's own needs, the ability to recover a sense of self while on the go, and granting oneself permission to breathe, to be imperfect, and to change. And this is exactly where the role of habit begins. It's not about major revolutions or checking off yet another item on a list. Well-being doesn't require more action—it requires wiser action, grounded in simple, repeatable gestures. From these everyday micro-decisions, positive habits can emerge that support us. They are not extras in our lives—they are its quiet rhythm. When we consciously create them, they become anchors in daily chaos. They offer a sense of agency, order, and self-care.

Every habit starts with a simple mechanism: cue – routine – reward. This trio drives our everyday behaviors.

- Cue is a trigger—a specific time of day, emotion, place, or situation that activates an automatic behavior.
- Routine is the behavior—what we do in response to the cue.
- Reward is the outcome—something pleasant or satisfying that makes the brain want to repeat the experience.

An example of this loop for a busy person might look like this:

- Cue – fatigue after yet another meeting
- Routine – reaching for the phone and scrolling through social media
- Reward – a brief escape, a moment of tension release

An example of the same loop, consciously restructured:

- Cue – fatigue after a meeting
- New routine – three deep breaths and stepping over to the window for a minute
- New reward – real regeneration, refreshment, and a sense of "I'm here and now"

A micro-decision builds a micro-change, which over time becomes a new habit —a supportive, strengthening, quiet ally in the daily rush. A form of life well-being for the overworked.

Not all of our habits support well-being and balance. Some are actually harmful – such as avoiding difficult emotions, overloading ourselves with responsibilities, or ignoring signs of exhaustion. That's why it's important to gradually replace them with positive habits – those that support health, relationships, and effectiveness.
Positive habits are a daily practice of well-being, actively supported and nurtured by a well-being advisor. It is the advisor who helps build a culture of well-being within us by shaping those small, consistent actions that contribute to maintaining balance. A positive habit becomes a tool for taking care of our well-being every day.

THE EDUCATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL ADVISOR AS A LEADER OF HABIT CHANGE

The common definition of an educational and developmental advisor describes this professional as someone who supports individuals in planning their educational, professional, and personal pathways, taking into account their abilities, needs, and developmental goals.

In today's world, where nearly 60% of adults experience work-related stress and burnout is recognized by the WHO as one of the major threats to mental health, where adults are often faced with the need to change jobs, acquire new skills, or simply rediscover themselves—both professionally and personally—where technology continues to advance and the job market presents ever-evolving demands, the educational and developmental advisor takes on a new, vital role: the life well-being advisor.

No longer merely a career specialist, the advisor becomes a companion through change, helping overworked individuals find balance between productivity and personal life. In a societal context marked by pressure, a fast pace of life, and constant professional transitions—and in an educational context where lifelong learning demands autonomy—the life well-being advisor helps busy adults pause, reflect, and identify what truly matters to them in their work, learning, and personal lives.

The key differences between an educational and developmental advisor—who supports skill development, education, and career planning—and a life well-being advisor—who focuses on mental health, emotional balance, and overall life harmony—can actually complement each other. This opens the door to supporting holistic development: combining educational and career path planning with care for emotions, motivation, and psychological well-being.
Current social, educational, and psychological challenges make the role of the advisor increasingly complex. While the educational and developmental advisor and the life well-being advisor can operate independently, today's world—with its stress, pressure to succeed, and information overload—demands an integration of both roles.

Today, educational-developmental and well-being advisors can unite two functions: educational and social. They support individuals in planning their educational and career paths while also caring for their holistic well-being.
An advisor's impact on well-being—through supporting relationships, developing self-awareness, or teaching stress management—can contribute to educational and professional success, even without the direct involvement of a traditional educational-developmental advisor. However, the question remains: who supports this process and how? Because well-being can be developed in several ways:

- independently, e.g., through self-reflection, physical activity, or mindfulness techniques,
- indirectly – for example, with the help of an educational-developmental advisor,
- consciously and comprehensively – through a well-being advisor.

A life well-being advisor supports development in a balanced way, aligned with an individual's potential and the pursuit of a fuller, healthier life. Their overarching goal is to enhance quality of life, which in turn contributes to better educational, professional, and social outcomes.

MAIN TASKS OF A Life WELL-BEING ADVISOR

Area of Activity	**Tasks of the Life Well-Being Advisor**
Emotional Support	- Creating a safe space for expressing emotions and having open conversations
Stress and Crisis Management	- Teaching relaxation techniques and emotional regulation
Personal Development and Self-Awareness	- Strengthening self-esteem and sense of agency
Social Skills	- Developing communication skills and supporting relationships
Community Collaboration	- Engaging in joint initiatives and cooperative efforts

Taking all of this into account, we can see that a life well-being advisor is a leader of change. This is someone who inspires others to live a harmonious life through their own attitude and example. They show that true strength lies in attentiveness to oneself and others, in empathy and authenticity. A life well-being advisor not only maintains their own balance, but also supports others with empathy and openness. They strengthen self- worth, shape communication, and influence relationships. They teach how to live in alignment with one's true self and emphasize the need for change. A life well-being advisor supports change by cultivating positive habits. Through consistency and perseverance, these habits become a natural part of daily life, reinforcing well-being. The process of building positive habits begins with small steps. It requires patience and regularity, as habits develop gradually. However, with the support and conscious guidance of a life well-being advisor, these small, positive actions become a natural part of life, strengthening balance and the quality of everyday functioning. The advisor initiates and accompanies the process of change. Initiating positive change begins with helping individuals recognize what exhausts or hinders them in daily life. The advisor encourages simple actions that can be implemented immediately—such as taking a brief pause or a deep breath. Sometimes, asking just one simple question, like *“What did I do well today?”*, can trigger reflection and inner change. .

Change doesn't happen in isolation. The presence of someone who doesn't judge but accompanies—who listens, asks questions, and gives time—is crucial. It's important to recognize that every person has a different pace, different needs, and a unique readiness for change. A life well-being advisor doesn't offer one-size-fits-all solutions, but tailors their approach to the individual. What may be a positive habit for one person could be a burden for another. That's why a flexible, respectful approach is essential.

Still, well-being is not solely a personal matter. When a well-being advisor helps someone develop positive habits, it also influences their surroundings—family, classmates, coworkers. Personal change can lead to social change.

A life well-being advisor doesn't focus only on problems, but on what already works. They help uncover and strengthen one's existing strengths, even if they're not yet clearly visible. This positive approach brings energy and motivation for further action. But without noticing what's going on inside—within the body, thoughts, and emotions—conscious change isn't possible. A life well-being advisor teaches how to pause and begin to *be*, not just *do*.

Just because change has started doesn't mean it will last. A life well-being advisor helps not only to initiate the process, but also to sustain it. They teach how to cope with moments of weakness, how to return to positive habits when something doesn't go as planned—without guilt, but with self-compassion. This approach strengthens perseverance and provides practical tools for maintaining well-being in the long term.

Examples of tools used by a life well-being advisor:

- **Emotion and reflection journal** – helps recognize patterns and needs
- **Well-being scale** – for self-assessment and conversations about change
- **Breathing and mindfulness techniques** – for quick calming and grounding
- **Exercises to boost a sense of agency** – e.g., *"small success of the day"*
- **Gratitude rituals and regenerative pauses** – to establish positive habits

Well-being is not just a concept—it's primarily about practical actions that can be implemented in everyday life. A well-being advisor knows these methods, practices them personally, and helps others integrate them step by step.

A life well-being advisor works holistically, supporting both professional and personal development, which makes this role exceptionally meaningful and valuable. And it doesn't require major life overhauls—just consistent support in developing habits that promote well-being, being present for daily choices, and recognizing visible, positive changes. It's about offering support in everyday life.

Moreover, this is a profession with growing demand, offering opportunities for continuous development and various forms of collaboration.

It's a career path for those who want to listen, support, and build—not just by solving problems, but by creating something lasting: everyday goodness that stays with people over time. Being a life well-being advisor also means taking care of yourself. By helping others maintain balance, the advisor learns to care for their own well-being as well.

This role teaches mindfulness, presence, and the ability to set boundaries—not only with others but also with oneself. Becoming a well-being advisor is worth it, because it is one of the few roles where helping others doesn't drain you—it strengthens you.

COMPETENCIES OF AN EDUCATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL ADVISOR

To support adults in their growth, transitions, and well-being, the educational and developmental advisor needs to embody a unique blend of personal maturity, professional knowledge, and practical skills. These competencies fall into three interrelated domains: interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies, educational and developmental competencies and specific well-being-related competencies.

Interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies

At the core of an educational and developmental advisor's role is the ability to build real, trusting relationships. The advisor needs to be present, open, and grounded—able to create a space where others feel truly seen and heard. This goes beyond technical skills; it requires emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and a genuine willingness to connect with others—and with oneself.

Empathy, active listening, and relationship building: The foundation of any effective advisory practice begins with empathy: the ability to step into another's experience without judgment. True empathy means more than understanding someone's words; it is the capacity to feel the emotional texture behind them and to reflect that understanding in a way that invites openness and trust. This approach is rooted in the work of Carl Rogers, whose person-centered theory emphasized three essential conditions for human growth: unconditional positive regard, congruence (or authenticity), and empathic understanding. Similarly, Stephen Covey articulated the essence of empathic listening as the act of "listening with the intent to understand, not to reply." This form of presence—attentive, patient, and attuned—is the cornerstone of relationship-based advising. In practice, this means creating conversations that go beyond transactional information exchange. Asking open-ended questions like "What's most important to you in this situation?" or "How did that make you feel?" invites deeper self-reflection in the other person. It involves listening not only to what is said, but to what is left unsaid—the silences, hesitations, and emotional undertones. At times, simply pausing and allowing silence to stretch can offer the speaker space to access insights they may not have reached otherwise.

Advisors also need to be aware of non-verbal communication. Eye contact, body language, and tone all show presence and interest. Small gestures like nodding or leaning in signal that the advisor is truly listening. These quiet cues help people feel valued and safe to open up. This kind of listening isn't about fixing problems—it's about truly understanding. As one writer says, "You don't have to fix it—just hear it." Often, feeling deeply heard is what allows real change to begin.

Resources such as *Nonviolent Communication* by Marshall Rosenberg and practices like the "Empathy Circle" can offer structured pathways to cultivate these listening skills in both one-on-one and group settings.

Self-awareness and emotional regulation: Just as important as understanding others is the advisor's relationship with themselves. Self-awareness and emotional regulation aren't optional—they're essential skills. Without them, advisors risk reacting impulsively or projecting their own issues onto others.

Emotional intelligence expert Daniel Goleman highlights self-awareness and self-control as key to working well with people. Tools like the Johari Window help explore how we see ourselves and how others see us, encouraging honest reflection.

In practice, this means developing simple habits like journaling at the end of the day or pausing to name emotions. Saying “I’m feeling tense” or “I notice some frustration” helps reduce emotional intensity and brings clarity. Far from being a weakness, this kind of awareness strengthens the advisor’s presence and professionalism.

Before entering any session or conversation, it is helpful to pause and check in: *Am I calm? Am I present? What am I bringing into this space emotionally?* If we notice that we are feeling agitated or overwhelmed, practices such as mindful breathing, grounding through bodily awareness, or even a short walk can recalibrate our nervous system. It is this internal equilibrium that allows us to stay centered when others express strong emotions or when a conversation becomes emotionally charged. Being a self-aware advisor also involves recognizing what Goleman calls “psychological noise”—internal distractions like assumptions, stress, or unresolved emotional reactions that can cloud our ability to truly listen. If we are preoccupied, it’s often wise to acknowledge it internally and, if needed, set boundaries to return to our own clarity before engaging deeply with others.

Equally important is the practice of boundaries. Advisors who overextend themselves, constantly giving without replenishing, risk burnout and resentment. Respect for others begins with self-respect—knowing when to say yes, when to say no, and how to sustain one's own emotional energy. As one reflection from the field wisely puts it, “Listening to others begins with listening to yourself.”

To cultivate emotional resilience and avoid isolation, advisors should engage in regular supervision or peer reflection groups. These safe, structured spaces provide opportunities to explore emotional responses, receive feedback, and prevent compassion fatigue—a very real risk in emotionally demanding roles. Tools such as Robert Plutchik’s Emotion Wheel, mindfulness platforms like Insight Timer or Headspace, and classic texts like *Emotional Intelligence* by Goleman can support advisors in building the skills to stay emotionally present, even amidst challenge.

Developing these competencies is not a one-time achievement but a lifelong journey of reflection, humility, and learning. In the fast-paced and emotionally complex world that many adults inhabit, these so-called “soft skills” are anything but soft—they are the backbone of meaningful developmental relationships. They are the quiet, steady strengths that make transformative advising possible.

Educational and Developmental Competencies

An educational and developmental advisor is not simply a guide. They are a facilitator of growth, a companion in self-discovery, and a catalyst for meaningful learning. While interpersonal connection forms the foundation of their work, the advisor's effectiveness also depends on a solid grasp of adult learning principles, group dynamics, and developmental strategies that honor the autonomy and lived experience of every individual.

Adult learning does not unfold in the same way as traditional schooling. It is more often a dynamic, self-directed, and life-integrated process. Adults arrive with rich personal histories, established identities, and real-world concerns that shape how they engage with new information. Effective advisors understand this and embrace a non-formal educational approach that breaks away from rigid instruction. Rather than deliver content from the top down, the advisor creates learning experiences that are participatory, experiential, and reflective. This might involve interactive workshops, learning circles, peer exchanges, or creative methods such as storytelling and visual facilitation. These techniques invite adults to bring their own insights into the process and construct meaning collaboratively.

The advisor uses methods that are:

- Experiential: Involving learning through doing, reflecting, and adapting (e.g., role plays, real-life scenarios, simulations).
- Collaborative: Encouraging peer learning through group dialogue, co-creation, and shared problem-solving.
- Reflective: Using tools like journaling, discussion prompts, and metaphor work to help learners internalize their growth.

Crucially, non-formal education respects the learner's autonomy. It supports adults in exploring new ideas at their own pace, in their own way, and on their own terms. The advisor, in this context, becomes less of a teacher and more of a learning partner—offering guidance, inspiration, and structure, while leaving space for self-direction and initiative. This approach is aligned with the principles of andragogy, as described by Malcolm Knowles, which emphasize internal motivation, readiness to learn, and the application of learning to real-life tasks. It also integrates ideas from experiential learning theorists like David Kolb, who highlighted the cyclical nature of learning through action, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation.

Developmental coaching and guidance: Alongside facilitating learning, advisors play a key role in developmental coaching—supporting individuals in identifying goals, navigating change, and realizing their potential across personal, educational, and professional domains. This kind of coaching is not directive but empowering. The advisor does not tell clients what to do; they help them uncover what they *want* to do—and what stands in the way.

Drawing on coaching methodologies, the advisor helps individuals clarify values, identify obstacles, and design actionable steps toward meaningful goals. Whether someone is facing a career transition, returning to education after many years, or seeking a more fulfilling life path, the advisor offers structure and encouragement without imposing direction.

Central to this process is the belief in the client's capacity for self-determination. The advisor uses powerful questions, active listening, and tools such as goal-setting frameworks or strength assessments to evoke insight and motivation. Models such as GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, Way Forward) or narrative coaching may inform their approach, depending on the needs of the adult learner.

Facilitation of group processes: Learning doesn't happen alone. Advisors often lead groups—whether in workshops, peer circles, or learning communities. Group work offers rich opportunities for shared insight and support, but it also requires specific skills to create a space that feels safe, inclusive, and engaging.

Skilled facilitators understand how group dynamics work—who speaks, who holds back, and how unspoken rules shape behavior. They set clear agreements, making sure everyone's voice is respected. As facilitators, advisors guide the process with care—encouraging dialogue, reflection, and collaboration. They know when to step in and when to let the group lead. This flexibility helps groups move beyond surface conversation to real, meaningful learning.

Whether working in-person or online, the advisor creates a space that feels safe, relevant, and engaging—a space where adults can learn from the content AND from each other.

Well-being-related competencies

Modern advisors understand that adult growth and well-being are deeply connected. Supporting someone's development means also helping them manage stress, prevent burnout, and find balance in their lives. A strong advisor is not just a guide but a steady presence—combining care, structure, and emotional awareness. In today's fast-moving world, advisors help learners stay grounded and resilient. Growth isn't only about goals or knowledge—it's also about having the inner strength to keep going. That's why well-being isn't an extra—it's essential. Advisors offer practical tools like mindfulness, reflection, or time management techniques to help people stay centered and focused. But to support others well, they must also live these values themselves—modeling balance and care in their own lives.

Familiarity with methods that support well-being

Supporting well-being begins with knowledge of holistic methods that connect mind and body, thought and feeling, action and reflection. These practices may not be complex, but they are deeply powerful when integrated thoughtfully into learning or advisory settings.

Advisors should be familiar with simple, evidence-based tools such as breathing exercises, grounding techniques, progressive muscle relaxation, or mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). Even brief practices—five minutes of mindful presence, gentle stretching between sessions, or a moment of silence—can have a significant impact on the nervous system and emotional state of learners.

In addition to supporting stress regulation, such practices help adults become more attuned to their own internal states—an important foundation for self-directed development. Methods such as body scanning, mindful walking, journaling, or guided visualization allow learners to reconnect with their needs, values, and intentions.

Advisors may also integrate elements of somatic awareness—noticing posture, energy levels, breathing patterns—as a way to gently encourage embodied learning. The goal is not to offer therapy, but to introduce practical tools for everyday self-care and presence that learners can take with them into their lives.

Familiarity with these approaches allows the advisor to create spaces where well-being is not treated as a reward after the "real work" is done, but as a central part of the learning process itself. These practices do not require special equipment or extended time. Even a few minutes of conscious breathing or body awareness can reset a learning space, especially in high-stress or emotionally charged contexts.

Supporting Work-Life Balance

For many adults, the line between work, family, learning, and rest has become blurred. Advisors help learners reflect on how they use their time and energy, and what routines actually support their well-being and growth. Balance isn't about perfection—it's about noticing when we're off-center and knowing how to come back. Advisors guide people to ask: What drains me? What restores me? Where am I saying yes when I need to say no?

These aren't just practical questions—they're deeply human ones. Many adults carry guilt or unrealistic expectations about being productive. Advisors can gently challenge these patterns and offer healthier, more compassionate ways of thinking —rooted in values, sustainability, and self-respect.

Tools like time management strategies, digital breaks, or daily routines can help adults find more balance. But more importantly, the advisor gives permission—to pause, to set limits, and to make space for what truly matters. Through reflective questions, small habit shifts, and honest conversations, advisors help people move beyond just planning better—they help them live with more clarity, purpose, and well-being. One of the advisor's most valuable roles is guiding adults to look at how they spend their time and energy—and whether those choices support their values and health. Balance isn't about perfection; it's about living with intention.

Advisors can guide learners to explore questions such as:

- *What activities leave you feeling restored? Which ones deplete you?*
- *Where in your week do you have moments of stillness or pause?*
- *What boundaries would help you protect your energy and focus?*

A Culture of Well-being

An advisor's commitment to well-being goes beyond personal practice—it shapes the learning spaces they create. They help build environments where self-care, emotional awareness, and mental health are part of the process, not side notes. By modeling boundaries, rest, and openness, they help normalize vulnerability and promote a healthier view of effort and failure. These skills do more than support individuals—they reflect a broader shift in how we view growth. In this new perspective, thriving isn't a bonus—it's the foundation for real learning and transformation. By bringing body, mind, and emotion into their work, advisors do more than guide development—they restore humanity to the learning process. They remind us that caring for ourselves is not indulgent, but necessary, wise, and deeply human.

Drawing on facilitation principles from Roger Schwarz's *The Skilled Facilitator*, advisors can:

- Set group agreements that include rest, respect, and emotional awareness
- Normalize emotional check-ins or embodied pauses
- Acknowledge tension or exhaustion in the room and adapt accordingly
- Promote inclusion and voice equity, ensuring all participants feel valued and seen
- At the start of any group session, ask: *"What do you need today in order to be fully present?"* This simple question invites participants to connect inward and helps the advisor respond with sensitivity.

This work requires humility, presence, and a willingness to model the very behaviors we hope to cultivate in others: slowness, care, and authenticity.

THE ADVISOR AS A DEVELOPMENT PARTNER. STRATEGIES FOR TALKING ABOUT LIFE WELL-BEING WITH ADULTS

Strategies for Talking About Well-being with Adults

What strategies can be applied to discuss Well-being with adults? How should it be implemented? The role of an educational and developmental advisor for adults goes beyond the mere provision of information or guidance. Indeed, in many adult learning contexts, the advisor must position themselves as a development partner, as a professional who support the learners through possible complex transitions, both personal and professional reorientations, for instance. What matters is that the partnership is based on mutual trust, respect for adult autonomy and a deep understanding of the multifaceted concept that is well-being, as it relates to learning, self-awareness and realisation and an overall life experience based on satisfaction. As identified in the LifeComp framework (European Commission, 2020), personal, social, and learning-to-learn competences are central to adult empowerment. Within this frame, well-being is both a precondition and an outcome of successful guidance processes.

Diagnosing educational and developmental needs as a foundation for initiating change

Diagnosing adult learners' needs is not about administering standardised tests or assigning fixed profiles but requires more a relational, dialogic, and holistic approach. Adults rarely present isolated needs, more often their educational goals are linked with work transitions, family responsibilities, emotional fatigue, financial issues or sometimes a search for personal meaning. The diagnostic is iterative and evolving. It should be regularly revisited as the adult's self-perception, motivations, and life context shift. The aim is not to classify but to co-discover potential and identify conditions for growth.

An effective diagnostic phase begins with a non-directive conversation, encouraging adults to reflect more on their life trajectories, important moments, and key turning points. Specific techniques such has time mapping, timeline creation or journal do bring structure to this process. A learner who is uncomfortable describing "competences" may readily describe "what I've learned from taking care of others" or "how I figured out how to survive when things fell apart."

An effective diagnosis is never definitive. It is a fluid, dialogical process that is revisited regularly as the relationship between advisor and learner deepens and trust is built. The advisor's role is not to diagnose "problems" to solve, but to help the adult clarify what is possible in their current circumstances and support them in becoming more aware of their own patterns, resources, and needs. In the process, emotional, cognitive and social indicators should be integrated such as self-efficacy, resilience, digital confidence, sense of belonging, and perceived barriers. Eventually this process ought to be grounded in reciprocal trust, as many adults have experienced failure, institutional abandonment, or precariousness, the advisors must foster a space where vulnerability is not penalised.

How to talk about well-being with adults? How to encourage them? What to pay attention to?

Talking about well-being can be challenging in adult education and guidance. It may touch on topics of mental health, fatigue, burnout, shame, loneliness, or insecurity. Advisors must develop the relational literacy and emotional presence to discuss well-being without judgment, pathologisation, or standardisation. Talking about well-being should feel empowering. This means replacing the language of "should" or "must" with that of "can," "want to," or "might help."
The advisor's role is to open a space where well-being can be named without stigma, explored without judgment, and supported without overreach. This requires developing emotional intelligence, atonement, and the ability to hold space for ambiguity. The advisor is not a therapist, but they are often one of the few professionals in an adult's life who listens deeply without imposing an agenda.

Effective communication about well-being could include:

- An inclusive and compassionate language, avoiding “fix-it” logic and instead asking, “What helps you feel more balanced these days?” or “Where do you feel most at ease in your life?”
- Rather than focusing on deficits, help the adult identify capacities they’ve used to get through challenges, adopting a strength-based approach.
- Pushing towards or goal setting too early can cause disengagement or push back, silence, pause and hesitations need to be respected.
- Well-being is often constrained by systemic barriers such as lack of access to services, poverty, care duties, racism, or gendered burdens. Advisors must help adults name these realities while also identifying small, actionable sources of agency.
- Carefully listening without agenda, can offer relied on to people. Advisors who have awareness and skills in motivational interviewing or co-active coaching know that this change can begin with first being seen and heard.

Advisors can also introduce tools for self-reflection and mood awareness, such as check-in cards, energy tracking, or guided journaling. These tools must be optional, non-intrusive, and culturally sensitive. The key is not to measure well-being, but to make it discussable.

Creating individualized development paths (educational, professional, personal)

In adult education, standardized trajectories often fail to reflect the diversity of lived experiences, aspirations, and needs of adult learners. Many return to learning later in life, often after years of professional or familial responsibilities, with fluctuating levels of confidence, energy, and availability. Others seek personal development rather than formal qualifications. In this context, the advisor must shift from acting as a gatekeeper of pre-set routes to becoming a facilitator of meaningful, flexible, and learner-owned pathways. Creating an individualized development path begins by recognizing that learning in adulthood is rarely linear. It takes place across multiple spheres (personal, professional, civic) and is shaped by unpredictable life events. EU policy frameworks, including the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways (2016) and the 2023 European Year of Skills, have emphasized the importance of personalization and flexibility in adult learning offers.

The advisor’s role is to support the adult in defining what meaningful progression looks like in their context. This process must be dialogical and non-prescriptive, anchored in respect for the learner’s own values and life situation. An adult learner seeking to develop basic digital skills to help their children with schoolwork should be met with the same attention and legitimacy as someone pursuing a master’s degree or planning a professional reconversion. The aim is not to funnel all learners towards the same outcome, but to offer structured, visible, and supported frameworks within which each person can grow at their own pace.

Developing an individual path involves helping the learner to explore and articulate goals that span different domains of their life. Educational goals might include formal certifications, participation in workshops, or informal community-based learning. Professional goals may relate to employability, entrepreneurship, or volunteering to build a portfolio. Personal goals often revolve around increasing autonomy, improving well-being, or regaining a sense of purpose. These different dimensions often overlap learning to speak a new language might support both personal confidence and professional mobility, while joining a community gardening project could enhance digital skills, civic engagement, and mental health. The path should be co-constructed, revisited regularly, and visualized through tools that give the learner ownership, connected to broader competence frameworks such as the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2018) and the LifeComp framework, which foregrounds self-regulation, resilience, and agency as essential components of development.

For many adults, especially those with insecure employment, caregiving responsibilities, or limited educational capital, long-term commitments may feel overwhelming or unrealistic. In such cases, the advisor can propose low-pressure exploratory steps, sometimes called “micro-experiences”, that allow learners to test new roles or environments before making binding decisions. Attending an open day, sitting in on a local class, joining a community initiative, or engaging in EU-funded exchanges can offer insights and gradually broaden the learner’s horizon. These short engagements often lead to long-term change, particularly when accompanied by space for reflection and dialogue.

Indeed, the advisor must guard against reproducing hierarchies of value between different types of learning. In a competence-based model of development, what matters is not the format or prestige of an experience, but how it contributes to the learner’s sense of meaning, capacity, and connection. Whether an adult chooses to pursue academic learning, artisanal skills, digital autonomy, or community leadership, the role of the advisor is to support their direction, not redirect them toward institutional benchmarks. This requires a shift from output-focused metrics to a developmental logic that values incremental progress, situated goals, and learner-defined success.

The advisor acts as a cartographer of potential, not someone who draws the route, but someone who helps the adult learn to read the terrain, chart possible destinations, and adjust courses when needed. This work requires time, presence, and a belief in the transformative power of education when it is aligned with dignity, autonomy, and lived reality.

Supporting the planning and conscious use of free time

Time is one of the most underestimated dimensions of adult learning and personal development. It shapes how individuals organize their lives, perceive their choices, and engage with growth processes. And yet, time, but particularly free time, is seldom addressed explicitly in adult guidance. This omission is striking, considering that a learner’s ability to take up opportunities, reflect, recharge, or even imagine a new future depends profoundly on how they experience and use time.

For many adults, especially those excluded from the labor market or heavily burdened by caregiving or precarious work, time does not feel like a resource. It often feels fragmented, dictated by external demands, or, conversely, painfully empty. Others live in a state of overextension, where productivity and efficiency have crowded out space for rest, creativity, or learning. In both cases, time becomes either too scarce or too shapeless to support intentional development. This is where the advisor can make a meaningful contribution by helping them develop a more conscious, compassionate, and purposeful relationship to time.

Promoting conscious time use does not mean teaching adults how to be "more efficient." Instead, it involves shifting narratives around what time is for and revaluing how time is used beyond economic outputs. This work requires sensitivity to structural inequalities: an adult who works two jobs cannot be approached in the same way as one transitioning into retirement. The goal is not to impose routines, but to make time visible again.

One important pedagogical insight is that free time can serve as a space of restoration. After years of overwork, stress, or disconnection from learning, many adults first need to rest. This rest is not idleness; it is a necessary phase of recovery that allows attention, curiosity, and confidence to re-emerge. When advisors validate this need, they create conditions for sustainable re-engagement. This is especially important for adults returning to education after burning out or life crises.

Beyond rest, free time can also become a space for experimentation. Many adults have lost contact with their interests, talents, or playful impulses. Free time allows them to test new roles or revive dormant passions in a low-pressure setting. An adult might join a community choir, try a coding workshop, or simply start keeping a journal again. These actions may not have immediate professional value, but they build confidence, awaken curiosity, and reopen the capacity to try. Within Erasmus+ adult education mobility or blended learning projects, participants often report that what impacted them most was not a single module or lesson, but the time to reflect, explore, and share ideas beyond the structured agenda. This kind of peripheral learning is only possible when time is not over scripted.

Free time also has a powerful role as a site of informal and non-formal learning. Podcasts, online tutorials, intergenerational conversations, and community activities all contribute to the lifelong learning process, even if they are not always recognized. Advisors can help learners acknowledge and value what they learn "outside" the classroom. When adults realize that time spent repairing a bike, cooking from a new recipe, or helping with local events can support learning, they begin to see themselves differently as active learners in everyday life.

Equally important is the role of free time in reconnection. For adults who have experienced social isolation, trauma, or marginalization, building or rebuilding human connections takes time. Advisors should be aware that time invested in relationships is often the foundation for renewed engagement. Participating in Erasmus+ projects or local adult education courses often helps individuals re-enter collective spaces where their contributions are valued and their presence matters. Free time in these contexts is not wasted time; it is where belonging and trust are cultivated.

In supporting conscious use of time, advisors contribute to more than productivity. They help adults re-enter their lives with intention, dignity, and hope. In doing so, they uphold the values at the heart of European adult education with inclusion, empowerment, and the recognition that growth happens not only through reflection, and the reclaiming of one's own time.

What methods are effective when working on well-being with adults?

Working on well-being in adult education is not a peripheral concern but a central to learning success, engagement, and inclusion. Methods that support well-being must be adaptable, relational, and context-sensitive, recognizing that adults bring complex life experiences, varying degrees of vulnerability, and diverse cultural perspectives into the learning process. There is not a universally best method. The advisor's task is not to choose a technique and apply it mechanically, but to read the situation, observe the learner's readiness, and build a working alliance that makes meaningful use of method as a process of co-creation.

Across Europe, many Erasmus+ and national adult education projects have integrated innovative and person-centered approaches into guidance settings, often combining established psychological frameworks with creative, peer-based, or digital practices. What these methods share is an emphasis on trust-building, learner agency, and emotional safety, all essential for sustainable development and lifelong engagement.

One of the most widely applied approaches in adult learning settings is Motivational Interviewing (MI). Originally developed in the field of addiction counselling, MI has since been adopted across health, education, and employment contexts, and is increasingly included in adult guidance training curricula. Its power lies in its simplicity with the advisor listens with empathy, asks reflective and open-ended questions, and supports the learner in resolving ambivalence about change. e fostered trust and led to stronger learner commitment than standard intake procedures.

Another effective approach is Narrative Coaching, which supports adults in reinterpreting their life stories and recognizing moments of strength, learning, or transformation that may have been previously overlooked. This can be particularly powerful for learners who feel "stuck" in a deficit-based narrative, for instance "I've failed too often," "I'm not academic," or "people like me don't succeed." Advisors using this method help adults deconstruct limiting beliefs, identify alternative storylines, and re-author their trajectory through metaphor, journaling, or dialogue.
Closely related is the use of Solution-Focused Dialogue, which emphasizes what already works rather than what is missing. Instead of analyzing problems, advisors help learners notice strengths, recognize past successes, and identify what small steps could bring about improvement. This is especially effective when working with adults overwhelmed by complex or chronic difficulties. For instance, "scaling questions" such as: "On a scale from 1 to 10, how hopeful do you feel about this issue today? What would make it a 4 instead of a 3?" These micro-shifts help learners regain a sense of influence and gradually rebuild confidence in their capacity to change.

IIncreasingly, digital support tools also playing a role in supporting adult well-being, especially when learners are geographically dispersed, balancing many roles, or more comfortable with asynchronous reflection. Apps like Reflectly, Moodpath, or guided journaling platforms can help learners track emotional states, build habits, or stay connected to their personal goals between in-person meetings. Advisors might also co-create shared online boards (Padlet, Trello, Miro) where learners can post weekly reflections, intentions, or inspirations. These digital practices complement human relationships, keeping motivation alive across time and space.
All methods must be situated within a trauma-informed and anti-oppressive framework. Many adult learners carry visible or invisible scars from violence, displacement, discrimination, or chronic stress. Advisors must be alert to signs of distress, aware of the power dynamics in the learning relationship, and equipped to create a space where learners feel safe, respected, and never pathologized. This includes careful use of language, control over pace and content, and attention to cultural, gender, and neurodiversity-related differences. National guidance agencies and Erasmus+ resource platforms (such as EPALE) increasingly provide toolkits and professional development on these themes, including online communities of practice where advisors can exchange strategies and receive peer support.

RECOMMENDATIONS RESULTING FROM THE TRAINING CONDUCTED IN THE PROJECT

What We Learned: Real-Life Impact of the Well-Being Trainings

Throughout autumn and winter 2024/25, partner organisations in Croatia, Bulgaria, Italy, and Poland delivered local pilot workshops on life well-being. While each workshop reflected the local context and facilitation style, all three confirmed the same thing: adults are ready—and eager—to learn how to take care of their emotional and mental health, when given the space and tools to do so.

Participants consistently praised the mix of personal reflection and practical tools. Exercises like *The River of Life, Johari Window*, or *The Wheel of Emotions* encouraged open dialogue and self-reflection and helped people take a step back to look at where they are in life. “It was great to share our stories in pairs,” one Croatian participant said, “without having to open up in front of the whole group.” This emphasis on creating a safe, respectful space turned out to be just as important as the content itself.

Many participants also appreciated learning about scientific research and theories, from Martin Seligman’s work on positive psychology to the Harvard study on happiness and the role of dopamine in behaviour. While some preferred more hands-on exercises, most saw value in understanding why certain tools work. “Comprehensive yet understandable literature review,” said one Bulgarian participant. “The examples were chosen to tell a strong story.”

The workshops also made a strong impression simply because they offered time to pause and reflect, without pressure or judgment. In Poland, one participant said, “I was reminded what working on myself really means. I had to step outside my comfort zone—but that was exactly what I needed.”

There were also practical lessons. Across all three countries, both participants and trainers suggested keeping group sizes smaller—ideally, no more than 10–12 people. This would give everyone more time to speak and process emotional topics. Others wished for more time overall or follow-up sessions focused on a single method or theme.

What stood out most, though, was the desire for continuity. Several people asked for more workshops like these. Some suggested opening them up to even younger audiences—vocational students, university learners, or community groups. Almost everyone said they would recommend the training to others. As one participant summed it up: “It helped me see myself from a new perspective—and gave me tools I’ll actually use.”

Challenges Advisors Might Face During Such Training Sessions

Facilitating well-being sessions for adult learners is both meaningful and challenging. Success depends not only on having effective resources and plans but also on the ability to respond to the emotional depth and needs of participants.

Educators need to be prepared for the emotional depth of the content. Topics such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, personal growth, and life satisfaction often touch on past experiences, stressors, or areas of vulnerability. Even when exercises are well-designed, their impact can be unpredictable. Facilitators must know how to support emotional expression without crossing into therapy, how to de-escalate discomfort if it arises, and how to maintain a sense of safety and trust throughout the session.

Another challenge is maintaining a balance between structure and flexibility. Well-being programmes often blend theoretical input with experiential methods—breathing techniques, journaling prompts, or reflective dialogue. Educators must be comfortable shifting between different modes of delivery and adjusting the timing, tone, or content flow based on the atmosphere in the room. Rigid facilitation may block engagement, but excessive openness can cause confusion or fatigue. Holding this balance is a skill that needs ongoing practice.

In terms of content, it is important that educators avoid oversimplifying well-being concepts or presenting them as one-size-fits-all solutions. Participants bring diverse backgrounds, motivations, and levels of readiness. A solid grasp of relevant psychological frameworks is essential—not just to explain the theory, but to respond meaningfully when questions arise. Additionally, integrating topics such as growth mindset, habit formation, or emotional resilience can enrich the core programme and help connect abstract ideas to real-life application.

Time management also presents a challenge. Some well-being activities require extended reflection time, especially those involving self-assessment or personal goal setting. Educators should plan for moments of quiet integration, not just active participation. Rushing through these can undermine the depth and impact of the session.

Facilitators also need to be aware of how their own presence and communication style affect the group. Facilitators who remain composed and sincere help foster an environment where participants feel safe to engage. Knowing when to guide the discussion and when to let silence support reflection is a subtle yet powerful part of the process. Advisors must also remain aware of their own emotional responses, especially when leading discussions on sensitive themes.
Finally, one of the most overlooked challenges is providing continuity beyond the session. Educators may not always have the capacity to offer follow-up support, but they should be prepared to suggest resources, encourage next steps, or recommend additional opportunities for learning. Offering closure is not just about ending the session - it's about helping participants integrate what they've started and carry it forward meaningfully.

In essence, delivering well-being training is as much about holding space as it is about delivering content. Educators stepping into this role should be equipped not only with knowledge and tools but with the mindset and emotional readiness to guide others through a process of reflection and self-discovery. It is not always easy, but when done well, it is deeply impactful.

These pilot workshops confirmed that well-being education, when delivered with sensitivity, structure, and room for personal exploration, can have a profound impact. They also reminded us that educators need more than just content - they need preparation, emotional awareness, and the ability to adapt in real time to a group's needs. The experience across all partner countries showed us not only that adults are open to reflecting on their well-being, but that they are looking for meaningful, guided spaces to do so. This pilot phase was just the beginning. What comes next should build on this strong foundation with deeper content, ongoing support, and more opportunities for adults to reconnect with themselves and each other through lifelong learning.

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Co-funded by the European Union

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