



WomenUp

Guideline for educators



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Facilitator Guide: WomenUp Career Counselling Programme

- **Project Title:** *WomenUp – Supporting Vulnerable Women Through Career Counselling*
- **Guide Title:** *Facilitator Guide for Adult Educators*

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Introduction

The *WomenUp* Career Counselling Programme aims to empower disadvantaged women, particularly single mothers, refugees, and migrants, by providing them with essential life and employability competencies. This guide supports facilitators in delivering the programme effectively through structured methodologies, coaching techniques, and inclusive practices. The guide is designed to be practical, accessible, and adaptable across diverse learning environments. This guide aims to support facilitators—career counsellors, trainers, educators, and social workers—in delivering the programme effectively, with sensitivity to the unique backgrounds and needs of participants. It provides a comprehensive yet practical framework for conducting workshops and coaching sessions, combining structured methodologies, goal-setting strategies, inclusive practices, and participant-centered approaches.

Key elements include tools for assessing individual competencies and aspirations, methods for building confidence and motivation, and exercises that promote social integration, communication skills, and job readiness. The guide also introduces trauma-informed and intercultural facilitation principles to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment.

Adaptability is a central feature of the guide: it can be tailored to various institutional, cultural, and linguistic contexts, allowing facilitators across different regions and organisations to adjust activities and content as needed. Whether delivered through group sessions or one-on-one coaching, the programme promotes empowerment, resilience, and active citizenship, ultimately supporting women's paths toward economic independence and social inclusion.

Programme Objectives & Target Group

Objectives:

- Strengthen life skills based on the European LifeComp framework.
- Foster personal growth, self-confidence, and job readiness.
- Support integration into society and the labor market.

Target Group:

- Disadvantaged women including migrants, single mothers, and refugees.
- Adult learners with varied levels of education and learning needs.

Theoretical Foundations

LifeComp Framework

Divided into three areas: Personal (e.g. self-regulation), Social (e.g. empathy), and Learning to Learn (e.g. managing learning). The **LifeComp Framework** is a European framework developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission to promote **life competences for lifelong learning**. It is designed to support education and training systems across Europe by providing a shared reference for developing key personal, social, and learning-to-learn competences.

LifeComp is structured into three interconnected competence areas

1. Personal Area

Focuses on the ability to understand and manage oneself.

Key competences include:

- **Self-regulation:** Managing emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations.
- **Flexibility:** Adapting to change, handling uncertainty.
- **Wellbeing:** Maintaining a healthy balance of mental, physical, and emotional health.

2. Social Area

Emphasizes effective interaction with others.

Key competences include:

- **Empathy:** Understanding and sharing the feelings of others.
- **Communication:** Expressing oneself clearly and actively listening.
- **Collaboration:** Working effectively with others in a respectful and inclusive way.

3. Learning to Learn Area

Promotes autonomous and continuous learning.

Key competences include:

- **Growth mindset:** Believing that abilities can be developed through effort.
- **Critical thinking:** Evaluating information and arguments logically.
- **Managing learning:** Setting goals, monitoring progress, and reflecting on outcomes.

Purpose and Use:

The LifeComp Framework is meant to:

- Help educators design learning experiences that foster these competences.
- Guide curriculum development and lifelong learning strategies.
- Support individuals in becoming adaptable, socially responsible, and self-directed learners in a complex and changing world.
-

GROW Coaching Model:

- **Goal:** Set personal and professional objectives.
- **Reality:** Assess the current situation.
- **Options:** Explore possible paths and solutions.
- **Will:** Commit to actionable steps.

The GROW Coaching Model: A Structured Approach to Personal and Professional Development

In an era where self-development, adaptability, and lifelong learning are critical for both personal fulfillment and professional success, coaching models have become essential tools. Among the most widely used and effective is the **GROW Coaching Model**, a simple yet powerful framework that helps individuals and teams set clear goals, assess their current reality, explore potential strategies, and commit to concrete actions. Developed by Sir John Whitmore and colleagues in the 1980s, the GROW model has become a cornerstone of performance coaching across disciplines.

1. Goal – Clarifying the Objective

The first step in the GROW model is to define the **Goal**. This stage is critical, as it provides a clear sense of direction and purpose. Goals should be **specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART)** to ensure clarity and commitment. Whether the focus is on achieving a promotion, improving communication skills, or enhancing work-life balance, defining a goal provides a motivational anchor and a benchmark for progress.

For example, instead of stating “I want to be a better leader,” a GROW-informed goal might be, “I want to improve my team management skills to increase employee engagement by 20% over the next six months.” This type of goal allows for more focused coaching and measurable outcomes.

2. Reality – Understanding the Current Situation

Once the goal is established, the next step is to explore the **Reality** of the current situation. This involves an honest assessment of where the individual stands in relation to the goal. It may include identifying internal and external challenges,

reviewing past attempts, and acknowledging available resources or skills. The coach facilitates reflection by asking open-ended questions such as: *What is happening now? What efforts have you made so far? What obstacles are you facing?*

This step is essential because it brings clarity to the gap between the desired outcome and the present condition. It helps eliminate assumptions and provides a factual foundation for the next stages. By understanding reality, the coachee can better determine what needs to change and what is already working.

3. Options – Exploring Possibilities

With a goal in mind and a clear picture of the current reality, the third step involves generating **Options**. This phase is about creative thinking and brainstorming multiple strategies to move forward. The coach encourages the coachee to consider various pathways, weigh the pros and cons, and think outside the box. The focus is not on finding the perfect solution immediately, but rather on exploring possibilities without judgment.

Typical coaching questions include: *What could you do to move closer to your goal? What else might work? Who can support you? What resources could you use?* This step empowers the individual to consider new perspectives and take ownership of their development by actively participating in the decision-making process.

4. Will – Committing to Action

The final stage, **Will**, translates insight into action. It is where commitment is made, specific steps are planned, and timelines are set. The coachee decides what they *will* do, when, and how they will measure success. This stage fosters accountability and builds momentum by breaking down larger goals into manageable, actionable tasks.

The coach may ask: *What steps will you take? When will you take them? How will you stay motivated? What support will you need?* By the end of this phase, the individual should have a clear action plan and a renewed sense of responsibility.

Benefits and Applications of the GROW Model

The GROW model's simplicity is its greatest strength. It can be used in a variety of contexts – from executive coaching and education to team leadership and personal development. It encourages structured thinking, increases self-awareness, and promotes autonomy. Moreover, it builds coaching skills in leaders, enabling them to support their teams through empowerment rather than directive approaches.

In educational settings, the model can help students set academic and career goals. In the workplace, it supports performance management, conflict

resolution, and leadership development. It is also useful in life coaching and counseling, where clients seek clarity and direction.

Conclusion

The GROW Coaching Model provides a clear and practical roadmap for goal achievement and personal growth. By guiding individuals through the four stages – Goal, Reality, Options, and Will – it fosters clarity, self-reflection, problem-solving, and commitment. Its effectiveness lies in its adaptability and the way it encourages individuals to take ownership of their development. As such, it remains a vital tool for coaches, leaders, educators, and anyone invested in helping others unlock their potential.

Programme Structure

The programme consists of 9 activities, each focusing on a different life skill:

1. Self-Regulation
2. Flexibility
3. Wellbeing
4. Empathy
5. Communication
6. Collaboration
7. Growth Mindset
8. Critical Thinking
9. Managing Learning

Each activity is designed for 30–40 minutes and is adaptable to online, offline, and blended formats.

Facilitation Guidelines

- Prepare by reviewing the activity template and required materials.
- Establish ground rules for respectful communication.
- Be a supportive and active listener.
- Encourage sharing, but respect participants' privacy.
- Provide feedback and reinforcement.

Facilitation is more than leading a group activity; it is a thoughtful and intentional process aimed at empowering participants, encouraging dialogue, and creating a safe space for learning and growth. Whether in a classroom, workshop, community group, or professional training session, effective facilitation relies on preparation, communication skills, and sensitivity to group

dynamics. This essay outlines essential facilitation guidelines, including preparation, respectful communication, active listening, encouragement of participation, and the importance of feedback, all of which contribute to a successful and meaningful experience for participants.

1. Preparation: Laying the Foundation

The first step in successful facilitation is thorough **preparation**. This involves reviewing the **activity template**, understanding the **learning objectives**, and ensuring that all **required materials** are available and organized. A well-prepared facilitator can guide the group more confidently and adapt when challenges arise. Preparation also includes becoming familiar with the participants' background, needs, and expectations to tailor the session appropriately.

Moreover, planning should anticipate possible questions, group dynamics, or emotional responses to sensitive content. A prepared facilitator creates a structure that supports spontaneity while maintaining focus, clarity, and continuity throughout the session.

2. Establishing Ground Rules: Respectful Communication

A respectful and inclusive environment begins with clearly **established ground rules**. These rules, ideally co-created with participants, promote **mutual respect**, **active listening**, and **non-judgmental participation**. Common guidelines include allowing one person to speak at a time, listening without interrupting, maintaining confidentiality, and using "I" statements to express personal experiences rather than generalizations.

By setting these expectations at the start, facilitators foster trust and psychological safety—two critical ingredients for open discussion, especially in diverse or vulnerable groups. Ground rules remind participants that every voice matters and that dialogue must be both honest and respectful.

3. Active Listening: Building Trust and Connection

A good facilitator is not only a speaker but also an **active and empathetic listener**. Active listening involves giving full attention to the speaker, using verbal and non-verbal cues to show engagement, and reflecting back what has been heard to confirm understanding. This practice builds trust and shows participants that their contributions are valued.

Active listening helps facilitators read between the lines, detect underlying emotions, and respond to the group's needs in real time. It also models the kind of attentive behavior expected from all participants, reinforcing a culture of mutual respect.

4. Encouraging Participation: Balancing Safety and Inclusion

Facilitators must **encourage sharing**, while also **respecting privacy and boundaries**. Not every participant will be ready to speak openly, particularly in groups discussing personal or sensitive topics. Creating opportunities for both verbal and non-verbal engagement—such as small group discussions, written reflections, or anonymous inputs—can make participation more accessible.

Encouraging participation means acknowledging each person’s contribution and avoiding pressure or coercion. A skilled facilitator balances encouragement with sensitivity, fostering a sense of belonging while upholding individual agency.

5. Providing Feedback and Reinforcement: Supporting Growth

Effective facilitation includes offering **constructive feedback** and **positive reinforcement**. Feedback should be timely, specific, and framed in a way that supports growth rather than judgment. When participants express ideas, take risks, or demonstrate progress, facilitators should acknowledge these efforts with encouragement and appreciation.

Feedback is also a two-way street. Facilitators should invite feedback on their own performance and remain open to adjusting their approach. Reinforcement—whether through affirming comments, summarizing insights, or celebrating progress—helps motivate participants and reinforces key takeaways.

Activity Instructions (Overview)

Each activity follows a standard format:

- **Title & Objective**
- **What Participants Will Learn**
- **Materials Needed**
- **Step-by-step Instructions**
- **Implementation Guidelines (Online, Offline, Blended)**
- **Expected Outcomes**
- **Evaluation & Reflection**
- **Additional Resources**

Facilitators should review all steps in advance and adapt materials for local use.

Implementation Formats

Online:

- Use of tools like Zoom, Google Docs, Jamboard.
- Ensure accessibility (mobile-friendly, subtitles).

Offline:

- Print materials, use role play, and create group tasks.

Blended:

- Combine live sessions with self-guided tasks.
- Use a platform or printed agenda to track progress.

Engagement & Motivation Strategies

- Use icebreakers and energizers.
- Share personal stories and real-world examples.
- Celebrate small achievements.
- Offer praise and encouragement.
- Use visual aids and interactive methods.

Motivating participants and maintaining engagement are critical aspects of effective facilitation and teaching. Whether in a classroom, workshop, or group session, facilitators must create an environment where individuals feel inspired, involved, and invested in the learning process. Engaging learners emotionally, cognitively, and socially helps sustain attention, deepens understanding, and promotes long-term commitment to growth. This essay explores practical strategies that facilitators can use to enhance engagement and motivation, including the use of icebreakers, storytelling, recognition, praise, and interactive tools.

1. Icebreakers and Energizers: Creating Connection and Comfort

Starting with **icebreakers** is an effective way to reduce anxiety, introduce participants to one another, and build a sense of community. These activities help create a safe and open environment where people feel comfortable contributing. Depending on the context, icebreakers can be fun and light-hearted, or reflective and meaningful. Examples include name games, “two truths and a lie,” or simple movement-based energizers.

Energizers are also useful for reactivating attention during long sessions or after breaks. Short physical or mental activities—such as stretching, quick quizzes, or

group challenges—can reawaken focus and enthusiasm, ensuring that participants remain alert and ready to engage.

2. Sharing Personal Stories and Real-World Examples: Making Content Relatable

Storytelling is a powerful tool for connection and learning. When facilitators share personal experiences or real-world examples, they humanize the content and create emotional resonance. Participants are more likely to remember and relate to lessons that are grounded in real-life situations.

Stories can illustrate complex ideas, make abstract topics more concrete, and show that facilitators are approachable and authentic. Encouraging participants to share their own stories further builds trust and reinforces the idea that everyone's experiences are valuable contributions to the learning environment.

3. Celebrating Small Achievements: Building Confidence and Momentum

Acknowledging and **celebrating small achievements** is essential for sustaining motivation, especially in long-term programs or when tackling difficult topics. Progress doesn't always have to be monumental—completing a task, sharing a new insight, or taking a risk by speaking up all deserve recognition.

Celebration can take many forms: verbal praise, symbolic rewards, applause, or simply naming the accomplishment. This creates a positive feedback loop that reinforces effort, boosts morale, and fosters a growth mindset.

4. Praise and Encouragement: Fostering a Supportive Climate

Consistent **praise and encouragement** help build self-confidence and reduce fear of failure. It's important for facilitators to notice and affirm participants' efforts, not just outcomes. Sincere encouragement shows that trying, contributing, and learning are valued behaviors.

Effective praise is specific rather than general—for example, saying “I really appreciated how you connected your point to our previous discussion” is more impactful than just “Good job.” Encouragement should also be inclusive and equitable, ensuring that all participants feel seen and supported.

5. Visual Aids and Interactive Methods: Enhancing Understanding and Involvement

Visual aids such as slides, charts, images, and videos help clarify complex information and cater to visual learners. They break up verbal instruction and add variety to the session, which keeps attention high.

Beyond visuals, **interactive methods**—like group work, role-playing, discussions, or digital tools (polls, quizzes, collaborative boards)—actively

involve participants in the learning process. Interaction transforms passive listeners into active learners, encourages collaboration, and accommodates different learning styles.

Evaluation & Feedback

- Use self-assessment tools and reflection logs.
- Collect participant feedback (verbal or written).
- Include formative checks: quizzes, reflections.
- Adjust activities based on participant responses.

Evaluation and feedback are essential components of any effective educational or training program. They not only measure progress and learning outcomes but also support continuous improvement for both participants and facilitators. Through tools such as self-assessment, participant feedback, and formative evaluations, facilitators can create a responsive learning environment that evolves based on the needs and experiences of those involved. This essay outlines key strategies for implementing evaluation and feedback, with a focus on self-reflection, participant input, formative assessment, and adaptive facilitation.

1. Self-Assessment Tools and Reflection Logs: Promoting Ownership of Learning

Encouraging participants to engage in **self-assessment** helps them take ownership of their learning journey. **Reflection logs**, journals, or checklists allow individuals to identify their strengths, recognize challenges, and track progress over time. These tools foster **metacognitive skills**, which are crucial for lifelong learning—participants learn how to evaluate their own understanding, behavior, and development.

Facilitators can guide self-reflection with prompts such as:

- *What did I learn today?*
- *What was challenging and how did I handle it?*
- *What would I do differently next time?*

These reflective practices deepen learning by connecting experiences to insights, encouraging growth beyond surface-level engagement.

2. Participant Feedback: Listening to the Learner's Voice

Collecting **participant feedback**, both **verbal and written**, provides invaluable insight into the effectiveness of a session or program. Facilitators can use short surveys, anonymous comment cards, group discussions, or one-on-one check-ins to gather honest input.

Questions may include:

- *What was most helpful today?*
- *What could be improved?*
- *Did you feel included and heard?*

Verbal feedback during sessions, especially when encouraged in an open and respectful atmosphere, allows facilitators to adapt in real-time. Feedback empowers participants by giving them a voice in shaping the learning experience and ensures that their needs are being met.

3. Formative Checks: Monitoring Progress Along the Way

Rather than waiting for a final evaluation, **formative assessments** allow facilitators to check understanding throughout the learning process. These can include **quizzes**, group reflections, quick polls, or informal knowledge checks. The purpose is not to grade performance, but to identify what is being understood and where clarification is needed.

Formative assessments help facilitators stay in tune with participant learning. For example, a short quiz after a concept is introduced can highlight gaps, while a group reflection can surface questions or concerns. These ongoing checks make learning visible and ensure that no one is left behind.

4. Adapting Activities Based on Feedback: Being Responsive and Flexible

Effective facilitation is **adaptive**. By actively listening to feedback and observing participants' responses, facilitators can **adjust their activities, timing, or methods** to better meet the group's needs. This might mean simplifying instructions, offering more time for discussion, changing the pace, or introducing a new activity to re-engage participants.

Responsiveness demonstrates respect for the group's learning process and reinforces the idea that learning is a collaborative endeavor. A flexible facilitator builds trust and models the kind of openness that encourages meaningful dialogue and continuous improvement.

Case Studies & Good Practices

Case Study 1: A migrant woman improved her communication skills and secured part-time employment after completing the programme.

Case Study 2: A single mother applied SMART goals from the Growth Mindset activity to restart her education.

Facilitators noted that combining online and in-person sessions improved retention.

Case studies and examples of good practices offer valuable insight into how educational and empowerment programs translate into real-world outcomes. They demonstrate the tangible benefits of well-designed interventions, illuminate effective methods, and

inspire continued improvement. Within the context of programs aimed at supporting vulnerable women—particularly those facing social or economic disadvantage—such case studies reveal not only individual transformations but also key strategies that contribute to success. This essay presents two illustrative case studies and highlights a notable facilitation insight regarding blended learning.

Case Study 1: Empowering Communication for Employment

One of the participants, a **migrant woman**, entered the program with limited confidence in her language and communication abilities, which had posed a significant barrier to her employment prospects. Through targeted training sessions focused on communication skills, self-expression, and interview preparation, she gradually developed the confidence to articulate her strengths and engage more effectively in professional settings.

With consistent support from facilitators and peer feedback, she practiced role-playing job interviews and participated in group discussions. After completing the program, she successfully secured **part-time employment**, marking a major step toward economic independence and social integration. This case illustrates the power of skill-specific interventions combined with a supportive learning environment.

Case Study 2: Rebuilding Ambition Through Goal-Setting

Another participant, a **single mother**, had previously discontinued her education due to personal and financial challenges. During the program, she engaged in a **Growth Mindset** activity, where she was introduced to the concept of **SMART goals**—goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. With the help of her facilitator, she identified a long-held aspiration: to return to school and complete her secondary education.

By applying the SMART framework, she created a realistic and actionable plan that fit her lifestyle and caregiving responsibilities. The structure of the goal-setting activity helped her manage her time, stay motivated, and track her progress. Within months of finishing the program, she enrolled in an adult education course, taking her first concrete step toward long-term educational advancement.

Good Practice Insight: The Power of Blended Learning

Facilitators across multiple sessions observed a significant improvement in **participant retention** when a **blended learning approach**—combining both **online and in-person sessions**—was used. The flexibility of online modules allowed participants to learn at their own pace and manage family or work commitments, while in-person sessions fostered community, accountability, and emotional connection.

This hybrid method proved especially effective for women with limited mobility, those living in rural areas, or those balancing caregiving duties. The blend of formats enabled sustained engagement, deeper learning, and stronger peer support, making it a standout feature of the program's overall success.

Additional Tools & Acknowledgements

Tools:

- Activity planning templates
- Reflection journals
- LifeComp summary sheet

References:

- European LifeComp Framework
- Coaching Tools Company (GROW Method)
- Adult Education Best Practices

ANNEX 1 Activity Planning Template

(Use this template for structuring each session based on WP3 activity design)

Section	Content
Title of Activity	e.g., “Developing Empathy through Active Listening”
LifeComp Competency	e.g., Empathy (Social Area)
Objective	What skill or change in mindset is targeted?
Expected Learning Outcome	What should participants achieve by the end?
Materials Needed	Worksheets, pens, printed handouts, videos, digital tools, etc.
Format	Online / Offline / Blended
Duration	30–40 minutes
Step-by-Step Instructions	1. Icebreaker 2. Main Task 3. Group Discussion 4. Reflection
Facilitator Tips	Guidance on tone, language, engagement
Adaptation Options	For low literacy, no-tech, different cultural backgrounds
Evaluation Method	Reflection journal, group feedback, exit slips
Follow-Up Resources	Articles, videos, goal tracker tools

ANNEX 2 Reflection Journal Template

(For participant self-evaluation and coaching reflection)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Activity Title: _____

1. What did I learn today?

.....

2. What part of the activity was most meaningful to me? Why?

.....

3. What personal strength did I use during the session?

.....

4. What will I do differently after today?

.....

5. One word to describe how I feel after this session:

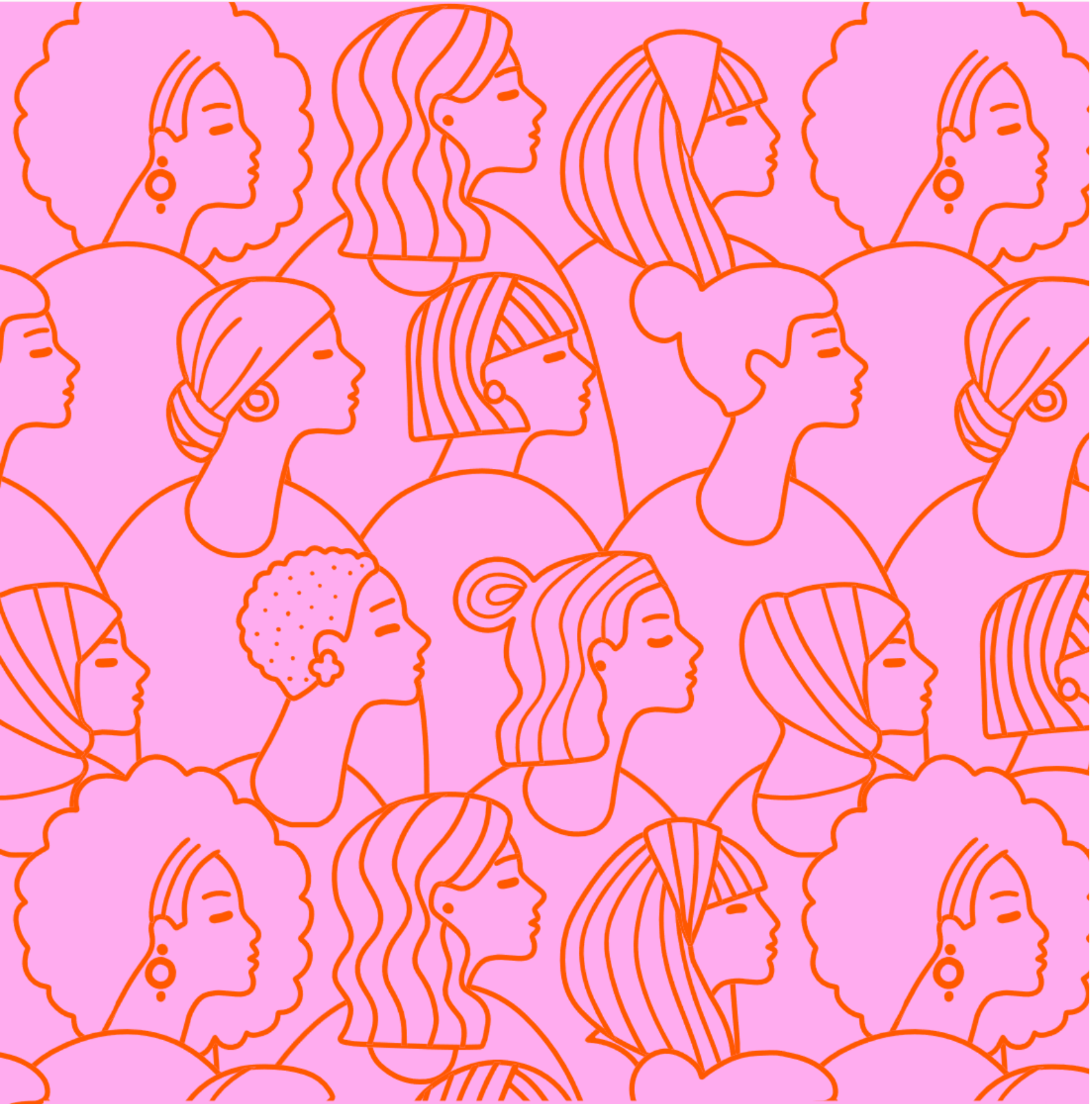
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ANNEX 3 LifeComp Summary Sheet

(For facilitators and participants – aligned with the 9 WP3 activities)

Area	Competency	Example Activity	Techniques Used
Personal	Self-regulation	Emotion mapping, journaling	SWOT analysis, visualization
	Flexibility	Change scenario role-play	GROW model, resilience discussion
	Wellbeing	Gratitude journaling, personal mission	Daily reflection, mindfulness prompts
Social	Empathy	Listening pairs, story-sharing	Active listening, perspective-taking
	Communication	Assertiveness training	Feedback circle, I-statements
	Collaboration	Group challenge, role negotiation	Conflict resolution tools, team tasks
Learning to Learn	Growth Mindset	SMART goal setting	Daily progress tracker, barrier mapping
	Critical Thinking	Problem-solving games	Decision trees, scenario analysis

Area	Competency	Example Activity	Techniques Used
	Managing Learning	Self-assessment logs	Learning goals, reflection tools



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