The Skilled Counsellor Manual

Project Title: Soft skills for women's reintegration into the labour market
Project Acronym: E-MOTION Project No: 2024-1-TR01-KA210-ADU-000255103
Consortium Partners:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Context: E-MOTION

The **E-MOTION** project ("Soft skills for women's reintegration into the labour market") was established to address a critical gap in adult education and employment support. While technical skills are often the focus of reintegration programs, research indicates that emotional stability and "soft skills" are decisive factors in facing long-term unemployment.

This manual is the primary result of Project Result 1 (PR1). It aims to equip adult education professionals with the necessary tools to guide women—particularly those in rural areas or facing long-term unemployment—back into the workforce.

1.2 Purpose of the Manual

This manual serves as a "Train the Trainer" resource. It is designed to:

- Define the 10 most critical soft skills for job searching and retention.
- Provide counsellors with theoretical frameworks based on Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).
- Offer concrete, step-by-step activities and tools that can be used in individual counselling sessions or group workshops.

1.3 How to Use This Manual

The manual is organized into chapters dedicated to each of the 10 identified skills. Each chapter contains:

- **Theory:** A brief overview of the skill, its types, and its relevance to employment.
- **Activities/Tools:** specific exercises with clear instructions on resources needed, application steps, and learning outcomes.
- To access the fully developed content of each Pill and Tool, please follow the link provided: https://e-motion-eu.eu/products

2. Methodology

2.1 Development Process & The Soft Skills Gap

The selection of the 10 skills featured in this manual was data-driven. The project consortium implemented a survey targeting experts in the field of employment and social work.

- **Participants:** A total of 58 questionnaires were evaluated across the partner countries.
- **Target:** Social workers and job counsellors with direct experience supporting the unemployed.
- **Objective:** To determine, from a list of 16 potential skills, which were the most crucial for the job search process.

The consensus among experts was that emotional skills play a key role in avoiding the negative health and social effects of long-term unemployment and in meeting the expectations of modern recruiters.

The quantitative results of this survey identified the following **10 Main Emotional Skills**, which form the backbone of this manual:

1. Empathy
2. Communication
3. Motivation
4. Self-awareness
5. Time management
6. Flexibility
7. Self-regulation
8. Decision making
9. Conflict resolution
10. Teamwork

2.2 Emotional Intelligence & NLP Framework

The manual adopts an approach grounded in **Emotional Intelligence (Goleman)** and **Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)**.

- **EI Focus:** Recognizing that the ability to manage one's own emotions and understand others is as important as vocational training.
- **NLP Focus:** Using language and behavioral modelling to reframe limiting beliefs (e.g., transforming "I am unemployed" from an identity to a temporary state).

2.3 Target Groups

- **Direct Users:** Job counsellors, adult education trainers, social workers, and HR professionals.
- **End Beneficiaries:** Women re-entering the labour market, particularly those dealing with long-term unemployment or living in rural areas.

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3. Skill 1: Self-Awareness

> *"Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom." — Aristotle*

3.1 Description and Theory

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize one's own emotional states, motivations, and behavioral patterns in the moment. It involves knowing *what* you are doing and *why* you are doing it.

- **Internal Self-Awareness:** Clarity on your own values, passions, and reactions.
- External Self-Awareness: Understanding how others view you.
  For job seekers, this skill is vital for identifying genuine career interests and managing the stress of rejection.

3.2 Activity: Duck to Duck

Description: A drawing activity because each stroke reveals more than we think.

Objectives:

- Encourage emotional self-awareness.
- Make diversity visible.
- Generate a safe space for personal reflection and public exposure.

Connection to Skill:
Self-awareness involves recognizing our emotions and thoughts. Drawing a duck—a simple and symbolic figure—allows participants to project internal aspects without rationalizing them. The result is a visual metaphor for how we express ourselves and how we feel when we show ourselves.

Material Resources:

- Folios (one per participant)
- Pens or markers
- Clock or stopwatch
- Space to display drawings (wall, table, floor)
- Optional: soft music

How to Apply:

1. Introduce the activity with humor: "Today we are going to draw ducks. But not just any duck: yours."
2. Mark time with energy to prevent overthinking.
3. Display the drawings.
4. Guide reflection with open questions, without interpreting the drawings for them.
5. Close with an integrating phrase: "Each duck is different. Like us. And that's okay."

What to Learn:

- Emotional expression can be simple and powerful.
- There is no "right" way to be or feel.
- Difference does not separate; it enriches.

3.3 Activity: Mirror Moments

Description: Through journaling and feedback, participants reflect on their emotional reactions in a recent challenging situation.

Objectives:

- Develop personal insight.
- Understand emotional triggers.
- Build inner observation habits.

Material Resources:

- Journals or reflection sheets.
- Optional: trusted peer for feedback.

How to Apply:

1. Recall a recent emotionally charged moment.
2. Reflect: What did I feel? Why?
3. Discuss patterns or insights.
4. Set an intention for future awareness.

What to Learn:

When we understand ourselves, we can better regulate our reactions and relate to others.

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4. Skill 2: Self-Regulation

> *"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response." — Viktor E. Frankl*

4.1 Description and Theory

Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage emotions, behaviors, and impulses, especially under pressure. It is not suppression; it is conscious choice.

- **The Loop:** Trigger -> Emotional Response -> Awareness -> **Pause** -> Chosen Response.
- **Relevance:** Prevents reactive behaviors (snapping, quitting) that damage professional relationships.

4.2 Activity: The Internal Traffic Light

Description: A visual and reflective dynamic where each person identifies their internal signals of emotional alertness (red), moderate tension (yellow), and calm (green).

Objectives:

- Recognize one's own emotional states before reacting.
- Promote body and emotional awareness.
- Activate self-regulation strategies in the face of stress.
- Generate a common language to talk about emotions.

Material Resources:

- Cards/Cardstock in Red, Yellow, Green.
- Markers.
- Soft music.

How to Apply:

1. Each person receives three cards.
2. **Red:** Write "How do I feel when overwhelmed? What signs appear?"
3. **Yellow:** Write "What tells me I am starting to get upset?"
4. **Green:** Write "What helps me stay calm?"
5. Share in small groups.
6. Create a collective mural of self-regulation strategies.

What to Learn:

- Self-regulation begins by recognizing internal signals.
- Each person has their own resources to calm down.
- Sharing strategies strengthens group emotional intelligence.

4.3 Activity: Pause Button Practice

Description: Through breath and visualization, participants learn to interrupt impulsive responses and choose conscious reactions.

Objectives:

- Improve impulse control.
- Develop emotional regulation.
- Promote calm under pressure.

Material Resources:

- Quiet room.
- Mindfulness audio or breathing scripts.

How to Apply:

1. Introduce a simple breathing technique (e.g., box breathing).
2. Practice with a mild stress trigger (sound, prompt).
3. Reflect on feelings before and after.

What to Learn:
We always have the power to pause before reacting. That moment defines outcomes.
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5. Skill 3: Empathy

> *"Empathy is the antidote to shame."* — *Brené Brown*

5.1 Description and Theory

Empathy is the ability to recognize, understand, and share the thoughts and feelings of another.

- **Empathy vs. Sympathy:** Empathy is "feeling with" (connection); Sympathy is "feeling for" (distance).
- **Types:** Cognitive (understanding perspectives), Emotional (sharing feelings), Compassionate (taking action).

5.2 Activity: Borrowed Shoes

Description: A symbolic role dynamic where each participant "puts themselves in the shoes" of another person in the group.

Objectives:

- Foster cognitive and emotional empathy.
- Make visible how we perceive others and how they perceive us.
- Activate deep listening and mutual recognition.

Material Resources:

- Cards with names or symbols of each participant.
- Chairs in a circle.
- Optional: symbolic objects (shoes, scarves).

How to Apply:

1. Each person chooses a card at random (cannot be their own).
2. They say: "Today I am [Name]. I think it feels..." describing their perception of that person's state or situation.
3. The real person listens without intervening.
4. The real person responds: "I recognize myself in that / It surprised me / It made me think..."
5. Repeat until everyone has participated.

What to Learn:

- Empathy requires listening, humility, and openness.
- Our perceptions may be accurate or incomplete.
- Recognizing the other transforms us.

5.3 Activity: The Wall of Emotions

Description: A visual and collective dynamic where participants write down emotions they have recently felt and place them on a mural.

Objectives:

- Make the emotional diversity of the group visible.
- Foster emotional empathy by acknowledging what others are feeling.
- Generate a space for validation.

Material Resources:

- Post-its or colored cards.
- Large poster/wall.

How to Apply:

1. Each person writes down 1–3 emotions they have felt lately (anonymous).
2. Place them on the mural.
3. Group observes and groups them by similarity.
4. Reflection: What emotions predominate? What connects me to what others feel?
5. Close with a collective phrase: "Today the group felt..."

What to Learn:

- Empathy begins by recognizing what the other feels.
- Sharing emotions generates connection and trust.
- Emotional diversity is wealth, not a threat.

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6. Skill 4: Communication

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." —
George Bernard Shaw

6.1 Description and Theory

Communication is the exchange of information via verbal and non-verbal channels.

- **The mix:** 7% Words, 38% Tone, 55% Body Language.
- **Styles:** Passive, Aggressive, Passive-Aggressive, Assertive.
- **Goal:** To express self honestly while respecting others (Assertiveness).

6.2 Activity: What I Say, What I Keep Silent, What I Show

Description: A three-phase dynamic where participants explore verbal vs. non-verbal communication.

Objectives:

- Identify verbal and non-verbal channels.
- Promote coherence between what is said and transmitted.
- Activate self-observation.

Material Resources:

- Cards with emotional phrases (e.g., "I'm fine," "It's okay").
- Ample space.

How to Apply:

1. **Phase 1:** Choose a card and read it with a neutral tone.
2. **Phase 2:** Read the same sentence with a body gesture that contradicts it.
3. **Phase 3:** Read the phrase with total coherence between voice, body, and emotion.
4. Group reflects: What changed? What felt authentic?

What to Learn:

- Non-verbal communication can reinforce or contradict the message.
- Authenticity is perceived beyond words.
- Communicative coherence strengthens trust.

6.3 Activity: The Human Phone

Description: A playful dynamic simulating "Chinese Whispers" with emotional/symbolic messages to

observe distortion.

Objectives:

- Make noise and distortions in communication visible.
- Encourage active listening.
- Reflect on communicative responsibility.

Material Resources:

- Cards with symbolic phrases (e.g., "Today I feel like a compass with no direction").
- Space to form a row/circle.

How to Apply:

1. Facilitator whispers a sentence to the first person.
2. Person transmits it to the next ear, and so on.
3. Last person says aloud what they received.
4. Compare with original. Reflect on changes.

What to Learn:

- Communicating is listening, interpreting, and transmitting carefully.
- Communicative errors are learning opportunities.
- Clarity enhances connection.

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7. Skill 5: Motivation

> *"People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing — that's why we recommend it daily." — Zig Ziglar*

7.1 Description and Theory

Motivation is the inner drive that pushes us to action.

- **Types:** Intrinsic (passion, purpose) vs. Extrinsic (rewards, pressure).
- **Signs of Low Motivation:** Procrastination, apathy, negative self-talk.
- **Re-igniting:** Focus on Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose.

7.2 Activity: The Impulse

Description: A dynamic working on motivation from a sensory/collective perspective. The body expresses what cannot be verbalized.

Objectives:

- Connect with motivation from the corporal/symbolic.
- Activate group energy and shared purpose.

- Explore how movement reflects drive.

Material Resources:

- Ample space.
- Rhythmic music (optional).

How to Apply:

1. Group stands in a wide circle.
2. Prompt: "Represent with a gesture/movement what drives you today. No talk."
3. One person starts (jump, push, posture).
4. The group imitates that gesture in unison.
5. Pass to the next person.
6. Reflect: What moved you? What do you take from others' impulses?

What to Learn:

- Motivation is felt in the body.
- Expressing it in a group empowers it.
- Each person has unique energy that can inspire others.

7.3 Activity: Fuel the Flame

Description: Participants identify personal motivators through reflective prompts and connect them to current goals.

Objectives:

- Recognize internal vs. external motivation.
- Strengthen self-awareness around goals.
- Enhance resilience.

Material Resources:

- Worksheets/Journals.
- Pens.

How to Apply:

1. Ask: "What gives me energy?"
2. List current goals and the reasons behind them.
3. Share insights in pairs.
4. Create a motivational statement/mantra.

What to Learn:
Motivation fuels direction. Knowing our "why" is a powerful anchor during difficulties.
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8. Skill 6: Flexibility

"The bamboo that bends is stronger than the oak that resists." — Japanese Proverb

8.1 Description and Theory

Flexibility (Adaptability) is the ability to adjust thoughts, behaviors, and emotions to changing situations without losing direction.

- **Vs. Rigidity:** Flexible people ask "What is another way?"; Rigid people say "It must be this way."
- **Key:** Recovering from disappointment and viewing change as data, not failure.

8.2 Activity: Change of Hat (Six Thinking Hats)

Description: Based on Edward de Bono's method. Participants change "hats" (thinking styles) during a discussion to adapt to new perspectives.

Objectives:

- Encourage cognitive adaptability.
- Practice changing perspectives.
- Activate divergent thinking.

Material Resources:

- Six hats/colors:
  - **White:** Facts.
  - **Red:** Emotions.
  - **Black:** Risks.
  - **Yellow:** Benefits.
  - **Green:** Creativity.
  - **Blue:** Organization.
- Case study (e.g., "Improving employability in rural areas").

How to Apply:

1. Introduce hats and meanings.
2. Divide group or assign individually.
3. Present case study.
4. Each hat gives its vision.
5. **Switch:** Each person assumes a *new* hat and argues from that perspective.
6. Reflect: Which hat was hardest?

What to Learn:

- Adaptability involves changing focus without losing purpose.
- Mental flexibility improves collaboration.
- Putting yourself in another role helps understand others.

8.3 Activity: Plan B Builder

Description: Faced with a changing scenario, participants must quickly adapt their strategy.

Objectives:

- Encourage creative problem-solving.
- Embrace uncertainty.
- Shift from rigidity to adaptability.

Material Resources:

- Scenario cards with unexpected changes.

How to Apply:

1. Give a team a goal and initial plan.
2. Midway, change the context drastically (e.g., "Budget cut," "Location closed").
3. Teams must adapt and present a new solution.
4. Reflect on emotional responses.

What to Learn:
Adaptability is a superpower in unpredictable environments.
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9. Skill 7: Time Management

"Time is what we want most, but what we use worst." — William Penn

9.1 Description and Theory

Time management is planning and controlling how hours are spent to accomplish goals effectively.

- **Concept:** It's not about doing *more*, but doing what *matters*.
- **The Matrix (Eisenhower):** Urgent vs. Important.
- **Traps:** Multitasking, Perfectionism, Saying "Yes" to everything.

9.2 Activity: The Priority Clock

Description: Using the Eisenhower Matrix to prioritize collectively. "Not everything urgent is important."

Objectives:

- Identify/differentiate Urgent vs. Important tasks.
- Encourage reflection on planning habits.
- Make group prioritization visible.

Material Resources:

- Cards with tasks (e.g., "Prepare report," "Scroll social media," "Call client").
- Eisenhower Matrix Template (4 Quadrants).
- Stopwatch.

How to Apply:

1. Divide group into teams.
2. Hand out task cards and empty matrix.
3. Teams have 10 minutes to sort tasks into quadrants.
4. Teams present and justify decisions.
5. Reflect: What criteria were used? Which tasks caused debate?

What to Learn:

- Managing time is managing decisions.
- Not everything urgent deserves immediate attention.
- Delegating and deleting are valid actions.

9.3 Activity: Time Audit Challenge

Description: Participants track their time for one full day to identify blocks and wasters.

Objectives:

- Gain awareness of time usage.
- Learn prioritization techniques.

Material Resources:

- Time audit sheets.
- Highlighters.

How to Apply:

1. Record every activity for 12–24 hours.
2. Categorize: Urgent, Important, Wasteful.
3. Reflect and reallocate time to "Important" tasks.
4. Set 1–2 action goals.

What to Learn:
Time is finite. Managing it well means choosing wisely and aligning with values.
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10. Skill 8: Decision Making

> *"In the end, we only regret the chances we didn't take." — Lewis Carroll*

10.1 Description and Theory

Decision making is choosing between courses of action based on logic, emotion, context, and values.

- **Traps:** Analysis Paralysis, Fear of Failure.
- **Strategy:** Align decisions with values (e.g., "Will I be proud of this in 5 years?").

10.2 Activity: Beyond the Point

Description: The "9 Dots Puzzle." Participants must connect 9 dots with 4 straight lines without lifting the pen.

Objectives:

- Encourage creative/strategic decision making.
- Make visible how beliefs condition choices.
- Challenge self-imposed limits.

Connection to Skill:
A visual metaphor: "I can't get out of the square" (Who said it was a square?). Effective decisions require breaking patterns.

Material Resources:

- Sheet with 9 dots printed.
- Pens.
- Whiteboard for solution.

How to Apply:

1. Present challenge: "Who dares to think outside the box?"
2. Do not give clues.
3. Show solution (lines extend beyond the dots).
4. Reflect: What beliefs limited you? How does this relate to life decisions?

What to Learn:

- We often limit ourselves without realizing it.
- Breaking mental frameworks is key to solutions.
- Thinking differently is a necessity, not a luxury.

10.3 Activity: What Would You Do?

Description: Participants are given dilemmas and must decide using logical, emotional, and ethical filters.

Objectives:

- Apply structured thinking.
- Recognize bias and pressure.
- Foster responsible decisions.

Material Resources:

- Printed dilemmas/case studies.
- Worksheet.

How to Apply:

1. Present dilemma.
2. Analyze using logic, emotion, ethics.
3. Justify and discuss choices.
4. Compare group decisions.

What to Learn:
Every decision shapes outcomes. Doing it consciously builds leadership and self-trust.
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11. Skill 9: Teamwork

> *"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."* — *Helen Keller*

11.1 Description and Theory

Teamwork is working collaboratively to value shared goals and mutual support.

- **Key Elements:** Shared vision, open communication, psychological safety.
- **Roles:** Thinker, Communicator, Organizer, Doer.

11.2 Activity: Squaring the Circle

Description: Weaving equipment with eyes closed. True teamwork is measured when we don't see, but trust.

Objectives:

- Encourage coordination without vision.
- Activate non-verbal communication/active listening.
- Make collective decision-making challenges visible.

Material Resources:

- Ball of thick wool or rope.
- Large safe space.
- Blindfolds (or closed eyes).

How to Apply:

1. Group holds rope in a circle.
2. Prompt: "Transform this circle into a perfect square. Eyes closed."
3. Observe without intervening.
4. Reflect: How was the decision made? Who led? Who followed?

What to Learn:

- Coordination depends on listening and trust, not just sight.
- Roles change depending on context.
- The process matters more than the outcome.

11.3 Activity: Lost at Sea

Description: Participants rank survival items individually, then as a group.

Objectives:

- Build trust and collaboration.
- Identify decision-making dynamics.
- Highlight value of diverse input.

Material Resources:

- "Lost at Sea" item list.
- Score sheets.

How to Apply:

1. Rank items individually.
2. Re-rank as a group.
3. Compare scores (Groups usually outperform individuals).
4. Reflect on influence and listening.

What to Learn:
Synergy is built through trust and active participation.
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12. Skill 10: Conflict Resolution

> *"Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."*
> *— Ronald Reagan*

12.1 Description and Theory

Conflict is a natural disagreement arising from opposing needs or values. It is not a failure; it is information.

- **Strategy:** De-escalation (Stay calm, Listen, Separate person from problem).
- **The Agreement Frame:** Replace "But" with "And."

12.2 Activity: The Invisible Bridge

Description: Two opposing groups must build a "bridge" connecting them without speaking directly.

Objectives:

- Explore emotions in conflict.
- Encourage indirect listening/empathy.
- Activate search for shared solutions.

Material Resources:

- String, paper, cardboard, tape.
- Two separate zones.

How to Apply:

1. Divide group into two "shores."
2. Each team builds their half.
3. Rule: Cannot speak to the other team. Only written/gestural messages allowed.
4. Goal: Connect the bridge halves.
5. Reflect: What blocked/facilitated agreement?

What to Learn:

- Conflict is not the problem; management is.
- Indirect communication is powerful if there is intention.
- Creativity and respect build bridges.

12.3 Activity: From Clash to Clarity

Description: Participants analyze a conflict using a mapping tool and role-play resolution.

Objectives:

- Understand conflict sources.
- Practice de-escalation.

Material Resources:

- Conflict map template.
- Role cards.

How to Apply:

1. Break into groups.
2. Analyze conflict components (Needs, Fears, Triggers).
3. Role-play and resolve.
4. Reflect on process.

What to Learn:
When understood, conflict becomes a bridge, not a wall.
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13. Appendices

Appendix A: Client Intake Form

- **Name:**
- **Current Status:**
- **Top 3 Skills:**
- **Top 3 Barriers (Perceived):**

- **Primary Goal (Well-Formed Outcome):**

Appendix B: Bibliography & References

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End of Manual