

Module 2 – Section 4

Creating a psychologically supportive and safe environment



<https://pixabay.com/de/illustrations/de-menz-alzheimer-alter-puzzle-595638/>

Self-reflection:

Consciously analyse your own thoughts, feelings and actions.
The first and most important step against everyday prejudices is to recognise them.
And to realise that no one is truly free of them.

Ask yourself the following questions, for example:

- When was the last time I noticed a prejudice in myself (consciously or unconsciously)?
- What values are practiced in the institution/organisation where I work/volunteer?

It takes a lot of honesty and courage to deal with these questions, but it also helps you to understand yourself better and develop further.

Module 2 – Section 4

44

Creating a psychologically supportive and safe environment

Here are some tips for dealing with structural discrimination or discrimination tolerated within the structure:

1. When confronted with discriminatory structures:

- **Establish contact points:** Professional, internal contact points such as anti-discrimination officers or project groups help to deal with discrimination in a low-threshold manner. They require a clear mandate, training and resources. Small and/or voluntary organisations can create a list of contact points that is accessible to all.
- **Establish internal anti-discrimination policies** based on existing legal requirements (national anti-discrimination laws, EU directives such as the Anti-Racism Directive).
- **Reflect on educational goals:** Educational content and goals should be fundamentally rethought. Systematic disclosure of discrimination within the system is necessary.
- **Conduct regular training sessions** to raise employee/volunteers awareness of discrimination.
- **Develop prevention strategies** to prevent discrimination from occurring in the first place.

Module 2 – Section 4

Creating a psychologically supportive and safe environment

Consideration and reflection on institutional/organisational framework conditions

2. When dealing with colleagues:

- **Avoid direct accusations:** Instead of asking, ‘Are you prejudiced?’, ask, ‘In what situations would you say that your expectations of certain people are particularly strong?’
- **Focus on experiences:** Try to understand where the attitude comes from by asking, ‘What led you to form this opinion?’
- **Change perspective:** Instead of arguing, you can also ask a hypothetical question such as, ‘What would change for you if you didn't have this assumption?’

Module 2 – Section 4

46

Creating a psychologically supportive and safe environment

3. In class/classroom

- **Avoiding traumatic memories:** A particular challenge in interpreting potentially trauma-related behaviour in migrant or refugee learners is that many objects, sounds or events that we consider completely harmless and innocuous can suddenly trigger memories of traumatic events and sometimes cause drastic reactions. These are referred to as **triggers**.

Modul 2 – Section 4

47

Creating a psychologically supportive and safe environment

The following factors can particularly often trigger traumatic memories:

- Loud noises and noise, banging noises, e.g. fireworks Large areas of red colour.
- Fire Uniforms, military/war costumes, toy weapons.
- Crowds, confusing situations.
- Screaming, shouting.
- Lack of oxygen, confined spaces.
- Smells of barbecued food.
- Pictures from home.
- Depictions of war.
- Specific/insistent questions.

Module 2 – Section 4

Creating a psychologically supportive and safe environment

3. In class/classroom

- **Culturally sensitive approach**

We must learn to see what the world looks like without our cultural glasses.

Here are some helpful steps to do so:

- I. Actively observe the situation: If a particular event upsets or confuses you, take a closer look at what exactly happened or is happening.
- II. Allow for multiple interpretations: Your cultural background and cultural orientation system probably give the situation a certain meaning. Remember that your experience may have a completely different meaning in a different context and culture.
- III. Listen actively: Make an effort to listen consciously. At the same time, be aware that your brain automatically filters what it 'hears' and interprets it according to the context of your own culture.