

Title of the activity	YOUR TREE OF LIFE
Brief description	<p>Before you decide to do this activity, which can be rather confrontational, you have to be sure the participants feel safe in the group and are capable of listening to each other in a respectful way!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make clear to them that this activity is not about artistic skills, that the tree is used to give structure to the activity. ● Ask participants to draw a fruit tree on a piece of paper: its roots, the soil it stands in, the trunk, branches, leaves and the fruits. Ask them also to leave enough space in the different parts to write words. ● Once they have drawn the tree, ask them to add the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the roots: what you are rooted in. This can be your family, your birthplace, people and events from your childhood that have shaped you, etc... Write down all the elements that are important to you in terms of what shaped you. ○ In the soil in which the tree is rooted: that which you occupy yourself with in daily life. This can be your work, a hobby, any activity you like to spend time on. ○ In the trunk: your values and talents, according to yourself and according to others. ○ In the branches: your wishes and dreams for the future. What you want to achieve in the long term as well as in the short term. ○ In the leaves: the names of people who have helped you to get where you are and/ or might help you to realise your dreams and wishes. ○ In the fruits: what you wish to leave behind; your gift to society. ● There are no rules for how people should add the information, as long as it is clear for everyone which information belongs to which part of the tree. ● This activity works best if one dares to be honest and spontaneous towards oneself and dares to dream, especially when adding information to the branches. ● Give participants at least half an hour to draw their tree of life plus information. When people are ready, ask them to leave the drawing alone for a while and take a break. ● After the break (which might last an hour or a day, whatever fits in the programme, as long as there is break between this part of the activity and the next), ask participants to have another close look at their drawing and to question the information added to it, in a way such as: Why did I mention that experience in the roots? Why did I mention that person as a helper in the leaves, etc. Ask them also to look for possible links between the different parts. This could be a task for them to do at home between two training sessions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the next training session, divide the group in pairs. Within each pair, the two show each other their tree of life and question each other about the added information. The person that is questioned must be given the space to not answer a question if it is too painful. In that case he or she could circle the word or information that is associated with that pain. ● You, the trainer, have to stay very alert while the pairs are questioning each other. If you suspect someone feels uncomfortable answering questions, stay close and interfere, if you think that is needed to protect that person from becoming painfully overwhelmed by emotions. ● After the discussion in pairs you ask the whole group to sit together again. ● You can ask if someone likes to share his/her tree of life with the whole group (optional!)
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To (better) understand connections between one's past/roots, present, values, talents, future wishes and people that played or play an important role for who one is now and how one wants to be in the future ● To gain self-knowledge and/or insights ● To create a narrative of one's own life
Skills addressed	<p>Self reflective skills Language skills Social/communication/listening skills</p>
Why is this activity suitable for promoting civic participation and integration?	The aspects mentioned in the 'aims' are pivotal for any individual who seeks to integrate in 'a healthy way' (meaning: without losing one's own identity, wishes, ambitions, etc.)
Link to website (if available)	
Which non-formal learning tool is (mainly) used	(re)creating one's narrative / storytelling
<i>Suitable for how many participants (min. / max.)</i>	Preferably more than 2
<i>Indication of duration of the activity</i>	<p>Explanation: 15 minutes Drawing: at least 30 minutes Revising added information: at least 30 minutes, after a break Discussion in pairs: 1 hour</p>
<i>Indication of preparation (time, which material are needed)</i>	<p>Needed materials: Paper and pens for all participants Preparation: make yourself familiar with the tree of life</p>
<i>Evaluation method (if applicable)</i>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants if they think that drawing their tree of life has helped them gain self-knowledge and/or insights that might help them find a personal story they might like to share in a later stage of the training.
<p><i>Variations (if applicable)</i></p>	<p>You could use the part with the wishes and dreams for an additional task: Participants could create a moodboard to visualise their goals for the future.</p> <p>Instead of adding the information in words, participants could (also) use images to provide the information. Be aware that finding the right images might take some extra time!</p>
<p><i>Tips for the facilitator</i></p>	<p>If you have doubts about participants feeling safe/strong enough to do this activity, it might be better to ask the participants to make a mindmap instead.</p> <p>Before you ask the participants to draw a tree, you could draw one yourself as an example on a flipover. Make sure it has roots, a horizontal line picturing the soil, a trunk, branches, leaves and some fruit.</p> <p>In the ideal situation the participants will be able to connect the different parts of the tree by the questioning and answering session in pairs. If you notice they still find this very difficult, you could help them by asking questions yourself. For instance: do you think that the things that you have written in your 'roots' have something to do with the things you have written in your trunk, and in the branches?</p>