



The **E**ducator is human too

ON PRESENCE, REGULATION, AND LIFE
OUTSIDE OF WORK

On presence, regulation, and life outside of work

A guide for educators and youth leaders

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A note on voice

This guide talks to you directly — as you, and as we.

You, because this is your work, your experience, your choices.

We, because I'm writing in the voice of a community — people who have been through it too.

We, because there's a whole team behind this project.

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MyFuture



This guide came out of a need. Not as an expert who has mastered everything. As a person who's still learning.

It's a shared work — mine, the Association of Friends of Jedlnia-Letnisko and Wrzosów, and EduPlus. It's also a bow — to all the mentors I've had and still have in my life. To the ones who believed in me before I believed in myself.

We wanted this guide to serve educators and youth leaders. To be a support. Maybe a fresh look at what they already do. We're not writing down the one right way. We're inviting you into a conversation. And if even a single sentence turns out to be useful in your work — for us, that's a success.

I've worked with young people for over twenty years. With adults for ten. I can speak. Tell stories. Explain. That comes naturally to me.

But listening?

Listening is my challenge. It always has been.

I'm writing this plainly, because this guide is full of directions, values, things worth doing. And I want you to know — its author is still working on them too. Every day. Not because he has a talent for it. Because he knows it's worth it.



When I manage to really listen to the young people in my care — I become a better educator. Not a perfect one. A better one.

And that's the whole point.

Every one of us has strengths and challenges. This guide isn't about being flawless. It's about staying pointed at what matters — even with those challenges.

It's also about this: an educator isn't only someone who passes on knowledge. An educator is a presence. A point of reference. Sometimes the first adult around whom a young person feels they don't have to pretend.

But to be a steady presence for others, you have to be at least a little able to come back to yourself.

And that's exactly where the Humming Method comes in.

Not as a magic technique. Not as a belief system. Not as an obligation. More as a practice of coming back to yourself — through breath, sound, the body, the voice, and gentle attention.



It grows out of a simple question: can I be with myself in a way that lets my body feel a little safer?

Because before you can regulate a group, you need to notice your own state. Before you can really hear a young person, you need to hear yourself at least a little.

I'll talk about the method itself — where it came from and how to practice it — at the end of the guide. That's where it belongs. First, I want to invite you into the journey.

So in this guide we'll talk about presence, regulation, listening, admiration, boundaries, and the kind of influence that stays for years. But underneath it all, one question will run the whole way through: can I be with myself in a way that lets others feel safer around me?

You don't have to believe in anything. It's enough to try it. Take what serves you. Leave the rest.

And thank you for being here.



When they feel safe.

When they don't have to pretend.

That moment when you're truly present — clear, attentive, steady — isn't a technique.

It's a state.

There's one word for it: presence.

Presence inspires.

It also costs something.

It means regulating your own emotions.

Noticing your fatigue.

Acknowledging your limits.

Accepting that you're a human being — not a project to be fixed, and not a machine for delivering the curriculum.

And here's the interesting part — being truly with someone doesn't rule out being close to yourself.

Do one, and you're already doing the other



Where this guide comes from



This guide grows out of the Humming Method — an approach that pairs breath and voice work with personal development.

It was born in workshops with young people and adults, and deepened in one-on-one work.

That's where the direction I'm sharing in this guide comes from.

Everything I write about in the chapters ahead — presence, regulation, authority, influence — grows out of that.

Not out of theory.

Out of experience.

One thing repeats everywhere.

If a person feels seen by you — not judged, but genuinely seen — and if you can meet them with patience and quiet assertiveness instead of stress, anger, or irritation, a bridge forms.

This bridge shortens the road to cooperation more than any punishment or raised voice ever could.

My approach is building authority without shouting.

Without dominance.

Without proving who's right.

Authority is born out of leading — yourself and others.

Out of transparency.

Out of inviting people to walk with you instead of controlling them the whole way.

Three directions

Three postures come back throughout this guide, as directions that point toward regulation.

They'll show up in different ways — in a specific situation in the room, in the way you ask questions, in how you react when things get hard — but above all, in how you take care of yourself.

It's worth asking yourself what these words mean to you.

Because the same word can mean something different to each of us.

And that's a good thing.

Presence.

Being here — really.

Not thinking about what happened a moment ago or what's coming in five minutes.

Just this moment. This room. You, and the person in front of you.

Curiosity.

Instead of judging — asking.

Instead of reacting — noticing.

Give time to what's happening.

Curiosity is the posture that turns a hard situation into information.

When you're curious, you stop fighting.

You start understanding.

You give yourself time.

You don't have to understand everything right away.

There's room for the situation and for a pause — before you decide what's next.

Kindness.

Not sweetness. Warmth.

Not agreeing to everything.

Kindness is the assumption that the person in front of you — even a difficult one, even one who's testing you — is doing what they can right now.

And that you are too.

These three together add up to something simple and very hard at the same time: you regulate yourself — and through that, you regulate what's around you.

We're affecting each other all the time.

Your state is a message.

Always.



What this guide is really about



This guide isn't about fixing young people.

It's about leading yourself, so you don't become one more burned-out educator.

Because young people don't need more tired adults.

They need steady ones.

We're going to talk about:

How not to burn out so fast.

How to build authority without shouting.

How to keep your dignity in hard situations.

How to stay present and curious — because that's what turns your regulation into the group's regulation.

How to take care of yourself well enough to have energy not just for surviving, but for creating.

You don't have to be perfect.

You can be real, and regulated on your own terms.

The things in this guide are the things that make up my direction.

Your job is to build your own — around your needs, your ideals, your vision.

I don't want to convince you of anything.

I'm not laying out the one right way.

I'm inviting you on a short journey.

A lot of what we'll talk about may seem obvious.



Maybe even simple.

But it's worth asking yourself honestly: am I actually practicing what we call common sense?

If even one part of this guide helps you feel more steady, more dignified, and more at ease in your work — that's enough.

Because the best educator isn't the one who knows everything.

It's the one who knows how to be present.

And that's where we start.



About this project



This text is part of something larger.

It's accompanied by podcasts for young people and by Humming Method exercises — breath and voice practices you can do on your own.

You'll find the links at the end of some of the chapters.

Everything — the guide, the podcasts, and the exercises — you'll find in one place: [the project website](#).

This guide simplifies, and it idealizes.

To pass on a direction and guidance that are actually useful — sometimes we give up nuance.

For balance, at the end of each chapter I hand the floor to two educators.

People I've worked with and learned a great deal from.

I'd like to introduce them to you now.

Sabrina Mayfeather

An independent tutor with Polish-American roots. She studied social anthropology at the University of St Andrews in Scotland and performance art at Drama Centre London (University of the Arts London).

She brings to this guide the perspective of someone working where education, culture, expression, and presence meet. In her voice, certain themes keep returning: attention to your own state, healthy boundaries, curiosity, and creating a space where a young person can gradually find their own confidence.

Marian Ferdinand Dohm

An educator with international experience and a holistic approach to working with young people. He studied social sciences and pedagogy at the University of Cologne and physical education at the German Sport University Cologne.

He brings to this guide the perspective of an educator who doesn't separate his students' growth from his own steadiness. In his approach, an educator doesn't have to be an exhausted hero. He can be an adult who takes care of himself — and by doing so, has more presence, more strength, and more attention for his students.

Voices from the room

Do you remember a specific moment when you felt truly present in the room — not as an educator running a session, but as a person among other people?

Sabrina (30 , Canada), educator

„I used to think being present meant focusing on the class.

But first you have to know where you are yourself.

When I check in on how I'm doing — I can actually hear them.

If you can't be with them, look inside yourself first."

."

Exercises for this chapter

[→ Return to the breath](#)

[→ I Am Here](#)

CHAPTER 2

What you carry with you

The state you're in when you walk into the room matters more than the lesson plan.

You can have excellent materials ready.

You can have experience, knowledge, good intentions.

But if you walk in tired, tense, fresh from an argument, with the sense that you've got too much on your plate — young people will feel it.

Not because they're difficult.

Not because they're testing you.

Simply because their nervous systems are looking for safety.

Young people pick up on tension faster than adults do.

They read your face, your tone, your smallest movements.

They're not only listening to your words.

They're watching who you are right now.

You can smile.

You can joke.

But if you're tense inside — the room will carry it.

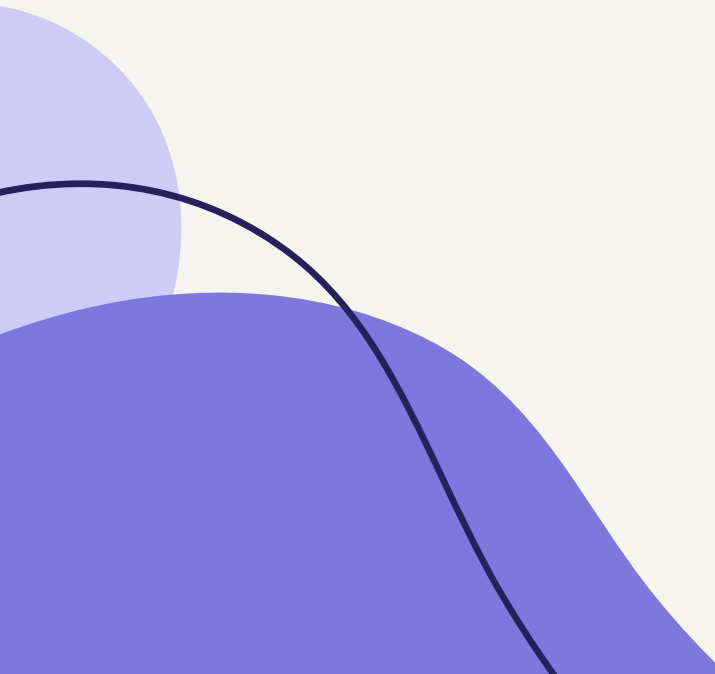
The adult in the room is a point of reference.

A shelter.

A model.

This isn't a poetic metaphor.

It's neurobiology.



Regulation doesn't give you instant control over a group.
It gives you control over yourself.
And that's the only kind of control that actually works.
Not through one big gesture.
Through many small actions that build momentum.
That build a bridge.

What this looks like in practice

Picture it: you're starting a session.

One of the students throws out a sarcastic comment.

You feel your chest tighten.

You want to answer sharper.

Or show them who's in charge.

You do one thing: you take a slow breath.

Not to be "nice."

So you don't hand the wheel to your impulse.

And you speak more calmly than you did a moment ago:

"I can see something's bothering you today. Let's find a way for you to be here with us."

Does the room suddenly go quiet?

Sometimes. Sometimes not.

Sometimes someone laughs anyway.

Sometimes someone rolls their eyes.

Sometimes nothing changes for a while.

But something more important has happened.

You didn't step into the spiral of tension.

And when an adult stops adding tension to tension — the energy in a group starts to settle, slowly.

Not because the young people got scared. Because somebody in the room stayed steady.

That's the moment an educator is really leading.

It isn't always dramatic.

Often it's very quiet.

But that's exactly when co-regulation starts to work.

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The mechanism — what co-regulation is

Regulation is contagious.

Calm is contagious.

Tension is contagious too.

That's good news.

Because it means you have real influence over the atmosphere, even when you don't have influence over everything.

A young person lives inside a natural developmental tension.

Part child, part teenager, part adult.

Shame shows up, and uncertainty, and comparison, and emotional chaos.

When an adult is steady — their nervous system supports the younger one's regulation.

That's what we call co-regulation.

When an adult is in chaos — the chaos multiplies.

An educator's own regulation is the quietest and, at the same time, the most powerful teaching tool there is.

That doesn't mean you're responsible for every emotion in the room.

It only means you have influence over which direction they go.

It isn't about always being calm.

It's about being aware of what's happening inside you.

Some days are hard.

Your patience runs out.

You're tired.



In moments like that, you can make a decision: "I'm not going to punish these young people for the fact that today is hard for me."

That's maturity.

You notice yourself.

You choose the action that matches your values.

And then something interesting happens — the calm starts coming back.

What happens under stress — the young brain

A young person's brain is still developing — and it will keep developing for years.

Especially the areas responsible for impulse control, planning, and logical thinking.

When fear, shame, or a sense of threat shows up — the defense system takes over.

We stop thinking logically and start operating in survival mode.

That's when you get withdrawal, silence, sarcasm, aggression, defiance.

This isn't "a bad character."

It's a defensive response.

A young person under stress isn't operating logically.

They don't need a lecture in that moment.

They don't need instructions.

They need an adult who will invite them back to a sense of solid ground.

If their tension is met with your tension — the spiral winds tighter.

If it's met with your steadiness — there's a chance the spiral stops.

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Why the adult is the stabilizer

To be able to learn, young people need safety.

In the middle of chaos they aren't looking for a perfect adult.

They're looking for solid ground under their feet.

Safety means predictability, steadiness, consistency, and authenticity.

Not perfection.

Not endless calm.

Authenticity.

It isn't about never getting upset. It's more about being able to say to yourself:

"I'm on edge. What can I do right now so I don't act against myself and against them?"

Your self-awareness becomes their lesson.

Sometimes what we say to young people doesn't land, because it sounds like an instruction.

And more than instructions, they need connection.

It always comes back to the relationship.

An instruction only works once there's contact.

When a group is difficult

Groups vary.

So do days.

The same class can work with you beautifully on Monday — and fall apart on Tuesday.

For no clear reason.

Through no fault of yours.

That's just how it goes.

And sometimes you get a group where no method works the way it should.

Where you don't feel respected.

Where every word you say gets tested.

Where the tension is there from the first minute.

This is a hard subject.

And a very individual one.

There's no single recipe.

But there is a principle worth remembering.

Be like a large dog that doesn't bark

It doesn't have to.

Its calm is the message.

When it walks into a room — everyone feels it.

Without a word.

Without a sound.

The silence of an educator who knows who they are works exactly the same way.

Calm doesn't mean soft.

Silence doesn't mean giving ground.

You can be cool, firm, and quiet all at once.

That's stronger than noise.

Sometimes, though, you do have to raise your voice.

Be louder. Colder. More stoic. Almost demanding.

Lay out the consequences plainly, without dressing them up.

In extreme moments — say less.

Say it slower.

Don't treat them like enemies.

But don't let them walk over the line either.

When it gets really hard, give yourself a moment.

Don't respond right away.

Let what's happening keep happening for a little longer — without you stepping in.

You stay quiet.

You watch.



You try to see the situation from the outside.

And then — the break.

A sharp sound. A clap. A whistle.

Something that shifts the energy in the room.

And then speak plainly. Calmly, but with no warmth in your voice:

"Today is hard for me with you. I want to find some way for us to work together. I'd rather work with humor and a light touch — and that's my first offer."

"But if you won't let me, that's fine. I'll switch into strict-teacher mode. I'll be demanding, more formal, and I won't leave room for anything but instructions and following them."

"You decide how today is going to go."

And then I say nothing. I don't allow comments.

I cut them off immediately, without emotion, without explanation.

That's a message that gives them a choice.

It shows I'm not afraid of them.

And that what they do has a direct effect on what happens next.

This isn't about dominance.

It's about never having to prove that you have authority — because they can already feel it.

I hope that what we talk about in this guide helps you tune your inner compass, so that in moments like these you act in a way you can feel good about afterward.

Not perfectly.

But in a way that's true to you.

Moving into practice

If the adult's regulation is the foundation, then a very concrete question follows:

What can you do before you walk into the room?

How do you prepare not just the lesson plan, but your own state?

You prepare the lesson plan at home.

You prepare your state inside yourself.

In the chapters ahead we'll look at simple, real practices you can do before a session and during it — so that your presence becomes a steady point of reference.

Because education doesn't start with content.

It starts with regulation.

And regulation starts with you.

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Voices from the room

When did you notice that your emotional state affects the whole group — and how did you learn to work with that?

Sabrina (30, Canada), educator

I knew it was a bad idea — adding tension to tension.

But knowing is one thing and living it is another.

I think every educator has to pour gasoline on the fire at least once.

Try being strict, hard, showing who's in charge.

And find out firsthand that it doesn't work — that it only creates a bigger problem.

It's only after that one time that you start looking for the need instead of reacting to the behavior.

When something really wasn't working, I'd change something about the space.

Sometimes I'd hand the lead over to a student.

Suddenly the lesson stopped being "I talk, you listen" — and we all started regulating what was happening in the room together.

Marian (34, Germany), educator

My state affects the group. Always.

Every single time.

If I come in with a lot of energy — the students feel it immediately.

If I'm quieter, or tired — they feel that too.

There's no hiding it.

Faking energy you don't have burns you out fast.

The key is awareness and acceptance.

Today I'm quieter — okay.

But then I have to give the group deliberate nudges, so it doesn't lose direction.

Knowing your state gives you control.

Not complete control — but real control.

[Exercises for this chapter](#)

[→ Breath Before Work](#)

[→ Coming Back to Myself](#)

[→ First Humming](#)

[→ A Break Without a Reason](#)

CHAPTER 3

Life outside of work as a condition for presence

A picture of exhaustion

Working with young people can be beautiful.

And it can wear you down to nothing.

It's a job where you're not just passing on knowledge. You're the one regulating the tension in the room, a point of reference, and sometimes a safe harbor.

You walk into the room with your own tiredness, your own life, your own worries — and all of it comes in with you.

If you don't have a space where you can simply be yourself — with no responsibility, no setting an example, no being "the adult" — your energy starts to shrink.

It doesn't happen all at once.

It's more like the light slowly narrowing.

You may know that moment when the last session ends. Everyone leaves, it goes quiet — and only then do you start to feel yourself. You feel how worn out you are.

Or maybe it only hits you at home. You're quiet. Not out of calm — out of having nothing left.

You can't be steady for other people if you have nowhere to lean yourself.



Why **life** outside of work is necessary



I'm not writing this to judge you.

I'm writing it because without it, you'll burn out.

It's worth asking yourself one honest question:

Do I have a place in my life where I'm not an educator?

And this isn't about grand passions or impressive projects. Sometimes life outside of work is an ordinary walk, a conversation, some quiet, a coffee you drink without rushing.

It doesn't have to be impressive.

It has to be real.

An educator who takes care of themselves outside of work walks into the group fuller. Not because they're perfect. Because they're alive.

Coming back to life

Sometimes the problem isn't that you're tired.

Sometimes it's that you've stopped feeling.

Work can fill everything. It gives you meaning. Structure. The sense of being needed. But if there's nothing outside it that moves you — your energy starts to go flat.

This isn't only about rest.

It's about living.

Ask yourself a different question:

What has moved me lately? Not as an educator. As a person.

Music. Movement. Silence. Nature. A conversation. Anything that makes you feel like you're alive — not just functioning.

Without that, you come back to work as someone giving from an empty place. And emptiness, however well hidden, always starts to show.



Boundaries as a form of care



A lot of people in education have enormous hearts.

And an enormous heart without boundaries runs dry fast.

For years I thought being available was proof of commitment. That if I answered students' messages in the evening, on a Sunday, in the middle of dinner — it meant I cared.

I do care. But those aren't the same thing.

A boundary doesn't say, "I don't care about you."

A boundary says, "I care about myself enough to be here for you again tomorrow."

When I started telling those two apart — what I teach changed too. Not through words. Through how I act.

If you don't respect your own time, your own energy, your own space — it's hard to expect young people to learn that from you.

Setting boundaries clearly and calmly is an act of maturity.

And one of the more important lessons you can give them.

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Regulation starts outside the classroom



Your regulation doesn't start in the classroom.

It starts in your life.

If you don't have a place where your nervous system can rest — you'll be trying to regulate other people from a place of tension. And that always costs more.

It isn't about always being calm.

It's about having somewhere to come back to calm.

Start with less than you think

If it feels like your life outside of work barely exists — don't try to change everything at once.

That won't work.

Do less.

If one hour a week just for you is too much — make it half an hour.

If that's too much — ten minutes.

But actually do it.

No phone. No work running in the background.

Actually.

If it isn't working — the bar is too high. Lower it.

And once it starts happening regularly — then you can deliberately give yourself more.

This isn't about ambition.

It's about coming back.



Recovery as professionalism



The more this work matters to us, the easier it is to fall into the trap of "even more." More preparation. More conversations. More giving.

Meanwhile, real quality often starts with less. Less talking. More listening. Less pressure. More breath.

Recovery isn't a luxury.

It's part of being a professional.

A professional knows their own resources. They know when those resources are full, and when they need refilling.

If your life is nothing but work —
that isn't devotion.

That's slowly fading away.

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Voices in the room

Has anything changed in how you take care of yourself outside of work — and how did that affect your contact with students?

Sabrina (30, Canada), educator

For a long time I was too close. I thought that was a good thing — that I felt them, understood them, was really with them.

But I learned that one step back gives me something more valuable than closeness: steadiness.

When a child is having a really hard day, I can be there with empathy — but their state doesn't knock mine over. That isn't coldness. It's a healthy boundary.

Children who can shake you that badly end up feeling too powerful. And a child who feels too powerful doesn't feel safe.

When you're steady, they get to be calm.

Marian (34, Germany), educator

An educator's work never has a natural end. You can always prepare more, go deeper, plan better. If you let it, it will eat all the energy you're supposed to have for the next day.

One of the more important things I've figured out: accept that you'll never be finished. Set yourself a stopping time and trust yourself — trust that you have enough experience to improvise.

Sports help me a lot. They pull my attention off the problem and let my head reset.

Questions to sit with

When was the last time you did something purely for yourself — and were really present in it?

What in your life gives you energy — and what steadily drains it?

Exercises for this chapter

→ Starting the Day with Curiosity

→ An Invitation to Close the Workday

→ Humming to Close the Day

→ Curiosity About Myself

CHAPTER 4

The skill of being yourself

Being with yourself isn't a state you reach once and keep forever.

It's a decision you make many times a day.

Especially when things are hard.

What presence is

Presence is a letting go.

Of constantly fixing.

Of instant reactions.

Of the belief that things aren't good enough.

It's an opening to what is — with the understanding that it changes.

And that it isn't always about you.

Life is full of challenges and surprises.

We don't need to understand everything.

And that's all right.

Humility — but not the kind you know

There's a word that describes this posture well.

Humility.

But not in the sense of self-effacement.

Not in the sense of backing down or making yourself smaller.

Humility is curiosity.

It's the question you ask yourself instead of fighting with reality:

I'm curious what else I can learn here.

Instead of:

This has to be different than it is.

The shift is simple.

And it changes everything.

Because when you stop fighting what is — real contact begins.

With the situation.

With the other person.

With yourself.

I don't punish myself when it's hard — I appreciate it when it's good

This is a practice, not a philosophy.

When a session doesn't go the way you wanted — stop.

Don't start analyzing right away.

Don't go looking for what you did wrong.

Ask first: What did I do to get through that?

That's noticing the effort — not the result.

When a session goes well — stop for that too.

Feel it for a moment.

Say it to yourself plainly: Today went really well for me.

Criticism costs you nothing.

Noticing what's good — that costs energy.

But it's an investment.

Because an educator who can stay with themselves — in the struggle and in the satisfaction — has something to give from.

Sometimes you can tell your students straight out:

"Today is a little harder for me. I need your cooperation."

That sentence changes the dynamic.

Because you stop being a perfect figure and become an actual person.

And that builds the relationship.

Feeling good in your own skin, understanding yourself, being at peace with yourself — these aren't an educator's private business.

They're qualities that seep into the space around you.

It's pleasant to be around a person who likes themselves.

Who respects themselves.

Who isn't fighting an internal battle all day long.

A person like that radiates something calm and steady.

And young people feel it.

But there are other moments too.

The moment a young person says something hard.

A comment you don't agree with.

A word that moves you, or wounds you.

A sentence that touches something in you so directly that you feel yourself losing control.

That is exactly the moment — not five minutes later, not after the session.

Right then.

That's the moment to pause.

Instead of reacting immediately, you can make eye contact.

Hear what was said.

Take a breath in.

And out.

That silence isn't weakness — it builds authority.

First inside you.

Then in the room.

In that second you give yourself room to think:

What's the right thing here?

How can I respond without punishing this young person for having a hard time?

And without punishing them for the fact that I'm having a hard time with them?

Your job isn't to discharge your own tension at a student's expense.

Your job is to lead.

The skill of being with yourself isn't perfect calm.
It's the ability to come back to yourself — even in a hard moment.
And an educator who can come back to themselves gives young people something priceless: a model of mature regulation.
It doesn't show them that emotions disappear.
It shows them that emotions can be held, and then let go.
Young people respond remarkably well to authenticity.
To truth. To candor. To honesty.
They sense it naturally.
Authenticity doesn't mean saying everything.
It means being present in what's actually happening.
In a hard situation, sometimes the best thing we can do is say honestly what we're experiencing.
For example: "What you're doing right now isn't helping me or anyone else. It isn't easy for me when you respond that way. I need a moment to think about what we can do with this."
That isn't an accusation.
That isn't a punishment.
It's a message rooted in responsibility.
Young people don't need a perfect educator.
They need an adult who can be honest, present, and responsible for themselves.
And when they see that you can say, "This is hard for me, but I'm here with you" — they learn something far more important than the content of the session.
They learn how to be a human being in a relationship.

Voices from the room

How do you come back to yourself in a hard moment — when you can feel you're about to lose your balance?

Sabrina (30, Canada), educator

"I learned one thing: before I start giving anything, I check what I'm missing.

Water. Movement. Breath. Sometimes just a minute in the sun.

It sounds trivial — but that's exactly the point.

When you meet your own need first, you can really be with them.

Even if you only have thirty seconds for it."

Marian (34, Germany), educator

When I can feel a situation starting to boil, I say so directly.

I tell the students a line is being crossed — and that this behavior is blocking their own progress.

I don't say it from above.

I try to be on the same level.

I want them to see that I'm a person.

That I have the same emotions they do.

When they see that — the communication becomes honest.

It isn't about hiding what you feel behind the educator role.

I try to say it in a way that opens things up, not shuts them down.

Exercises for this chapter

→ Relaxing and Letting Go of Control

→ What It's Like to Be Me

→ I See Myself, I Hear Myself

CHAPTER 5

The skill of listening

Listening to others

Listening is curiosity in action.

You're not judging.

You're not fixing.

You just want to know what's on the other side.

Listening doesn't mean waiting for your turn.

You let what someone is saying to you actually reach you.

Give even a second of silence when someone has said something — let it land in you.

You're not preparing a response.

You're not fixing the situation.

You're not building a counterargument while someone is speaking.

You let the other person affect you — you let go of control.

If we decide to put this into practice, it may surprise us how much it loosens things.

When we're listening — we don't have to prove anything.

We often listen in order to answer, to fix, to win — or through the filter of our own frustration and fatigue.

Which is why it's worth asking one honest question:

Am I listening right now — or am I preparing my answer?



Listening to yourself

It isn't easy to listen to others when we're shutting ourselves down.

Stop for a minute before a session starts.

Ask yourself:

Am I tired today, or overloaded?

Is something already irritating me?

Do I feel tension in my body? Where?

What kind of shape am I in today?

What do I need today to feel good about myself?

This isn't philosophy.

It's basic upkeep.

Noticing what's happening in us — we don't have to change it.

You have the right to be tired.

You don't have to feel any other way.

What happens if you stop pretending you're not tired?

It might get lighter.

This reflection connects to a deeper question.

Who do I want to be as an educator?

What are my boundaries?

What are my ideals?

Why do I consider something right?

You don't have to know the answers right away.

But the question itself gives you a direction.

It helps when things are hard. It helps when things are dull. And it helps you
keep your head when things are going great.

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The inner critic

You're running a session.

Someone isn't listening.

A voice shows up in you: "I can't handle this group." "I'm hopeless." "I'm losing control."

That's a decision point.

Time for a breath.

Name it: "That's my inner critic." "That's my shame." "That's my perfectionism."

You have the right to experience it.

But it doesn't define you.

Naming it lowers the tension.

Don't fight the voice.

Hear it.

And decide whether it's the one running this session.

Listening to yourself means knowing your own comfort.

And that gives you the option to say:

"I need a moment." "We'll come back to this tomorrow." "I don't have the resources for this today."

That isn't weakness.

That's honesty.

Not listening to yourself ends in an explosion.

Listening to yourself is a return to contact.



Listening to young people



Behavior is information.

When a student throws out a sarcastic comment — that isn't necessarily an attack on you.

It's information about what's going on inside them.

When they go silent — that isn't disrespect.

It's information about their state.

The behavior isn't against you.

It's a message from a young person.

This is kindness in practice — you assume the person in front of you is doing what they can.

A student says, "This is pointless."

What's underneath might be: "I feel like I'm not good enough." "I don't understand." "I'm afraid it'll come out bad."

This isn't the moment for fixing.

It's the moment for listening.

You can ask: "What exactly is pointless?" "Help me understand."

Or you can simply wait.

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Withdrawal

A student goes quiet. Doesn't look up. Has closed off.
That doesn't have to mean they're not engaged.
It might be overload, fear, shame — something they can't name yet.
Don't pull that person into the middle of the room.
Go over calmly. Ask quietly:
"Are you with us?" "Do you need a moment?"
Just being noticed means they aren't alone.
That's already regulation.

The question as a tool

When you ask — you're looking for the key to this particular person's attention.
Not for an answer.
For contact.
A question gives a person room.
It lets them be with themselves for a moment.
Both when I ask and when a student answers — I look them in the eye and I watch.
That's how I build a bridge.
There are days when the connection comes easily.
There are days when it doesn't come at all.
And both tell you something important — about that person, about that moment, about yourself.
When you ask, you open. When you listen to the answer, you lead.



Being heard is regulation



A person who feels heard breathes slower, lowers their voice, fights less, and comes back to focus faster.

Being heard is a basic human need.

Listening is a decision.

The decision to stop being the most important person in the room for a moment.

And in that space, something very simple and very powerful begins to happen.

A person stops shouting when they feel heard.

When we really listen — that's when we learn.

That's when something starts to change us.

We open to what is.

Without hurrying.

Without judging it on the spot.

With curiosity.

And we give ourselves time to let life affect us.

If an educator has this skill — there's a good chance their students will know what to do in hard moments.

Voices from the room

Has the way you listen to students changed over the years?

Sabrina (30, Canada), educator

I used to listen too hard.

I gave every word too much weight — and the students felt it; they felt heard, but sometimes I wound up feeding a spiral I didn't want. I learned one thing: you give attention to what you want to strengthen.

When a student says something hard or provocative — sometimes the best response is a calm "interesting" and moving on.

Not because you're ignoring it.

Because you don't want to give it more room than it needs.

I hear everything the same as I always did.

I just don't give everything the same weight.

Marian (34, Germany), educator

When I see that instructions aren't landing — I stop.

A student who isn't hearing the next instruction is often already full of instructions.

From educators, from parents, from the voice in their own head.

So I don't give them another one.

I ask.

I ask them to repeat the task we just went over — it shows me where they got stuck.

If they know what to do but can't start — we look together at what's going on.

Where are you right now? What's blocking you?

Sometimes the best thing I can do is give them space.

A different spot in the room. Two minutes outside.

Or sit them next to someone who already understands — so they hear it from a peer, not from me.

Exercise for this chapter

→ First Humming with the Group

CHAPTER 6

Admiration as a foundation

Gratitude as a starting point

Admiration is kindness in action.

You're not looking at the result.

You're looking at the road.

If you aren't grateful for the place where you're standing — you'll keep wanting to fix it.

And admiration rarely grows out of a fight.

Admiration isn't praising everything.

It isn't motivational manipulation.

Admiration is noticing the effort.

The road.

The process.

What admiration is — and what it isn't

The difference between judgment and admiration is enormous.

Judgment focuses on the result.

Admiration focuses on the process — on watching the effort, regardless of the final outcome.

You can admire someone who didn't reach the goal.

You can admire someone trying for the tenth time — and failing again.

Because admiration doesn't measure results.

Admiration sees the road.

Admiration toward yourself

It's hard to admire a young person if you don't admire yourself. If you can't see your own effort, your own work of regulating, your own returns to calm — you'll slip into correction mode. And in correction mode we mostly see what's missing. We often say: first take care of yourself, then others. As if they were two separate steps. Let's try approaching it differently. When you give yourself admiration — you change in that moment.

Not after.

Now.

You're calmer.

Less defensive. More open.

And young people feel it — not because you told them, but because you're different. Every step toward yourself — is also a step toward them.

That's how a worldview is born. That everyone deserves kindness — you and them. That you're doing everything in your power. And that it's enough. Admiring yourself can start with a simple question:

What did I do well enough today?

Not perfectly.

Well, or well enough.

Criticism is free.

Noticing what's working — that costs energy, which is why it doesn't come easily. And it's one of the hardest things a burned-out educator has to learn.

Because for years they saw only what wasn't working.

Now they're learning to see what is — and that it's enough to keep moving forward.

Admiration toward young people

When you start to admire yourself, something fundamental shifts in the way you look at young people.

You stop hunting for mistakes.

You start seeing effort.

It's a great honor — to see a young person as they are.

To see their worth before they see it themselves.

And to hand that worth back to them.

Admiration in action — an example from a session

A student sits over a task.

You can see it isn't going well.

Time to decide.

You can judge: "Again. You need to try harder."

That focuses on the missing result.

Or you can admire: "I see that this is hard. And I see that you're still trying.

That takes strength."

To say that — you have to be really present.

Not in your head.

Here. In this moment. With this person.

And in that moment something changes — the tension eases.

Because someone saw not a mistake, but the road.

It still surprises me how moving it can be, that moment when you give warmth to the young people in your care.

Something good happens in me then, too.

Gratitude as a decision

Just like gratitude, admiration is a practice.

We learn that it's up to us — to be grateful and to be able to admire ourselves and others.

It's a deeply human practice — and a way not to give up.

So admiration is a decision.

A decision that you see your own road.

A decision that you see the road of young people.

A decision that you bet on the process, not only the result.

It isn't about a grand transformation.

It's about precision.

If you know how to give warmth to a group — include yourself.

If you give yourself warmth — share it with the group.

These things happen together, not in sequence.

Curiosity and kindness, together with gratitude and admiration, create an incredible warmth.

That's the direction presence grows out of.

Every one of us knows where our gaps are.

You don't have to fix everything at once.

It's enough to notice — and take one small step.

And in time, maybe we'll come to see that every one of us deserves warmth and support — and there's no reason to withhold it from anyone.

Voices from the room

How do you respond to students' mistakes — can you see the effort and the road, not just the result?

Sabrina (30, Canada), educator

My husband taught me something from baseball: so what, next pitch.
Even the best pitchers throw bad pitches. If they treat every one of them like a disaster — they'll never finish the game. A mistake is information.
You learn something.
And you keep playing.
I don't tell students to be perfect.
I say: be a little better than last time.
One small step.
That's enough.
And honestly — I tell myself the same thing.

Marian (34, Germany), educator

I've learned not to react to the mistake itself.
What matters more is the moment right after it.
Does the student feel judged — or do they feel that someone still sees them?
So I say what I actually notice: the effort, the direction they were heading, the part that already works.
"I can see you're thinking. Show me how you got there."
A mistake isn't a verdict. It's a point on the road.
And when a young person feels you're watching the road, not just the result — they stop being afraid to try.
Fear closes people down. Patience opens them up.

Exercise for this chapter

→ I Admire Myself

CHAPTER 7

The lesson as a story

Everything we've talked about so far — regulation, listening, admiration — happens in a specific place.

In the room.

In this one hour.

With these people.

I once had an educator around whom time passed differently.

He spoke slowly. Calmly.

He'd tell you why something mattered to him — and suddenly it mattered to me.

He didn't do anything spectacular.

But he was present in it.

And that was enough.

Going back to other classes was painful.

For a long time I thought it was a matter of personality.

That you either have it or you don't.

Today I think differently.

He knew how to tell a story.

And that can be learned.

When the hour starts — the curtain goes up.
You're not only an educator.
You're on stage.
You're standing in front of people who could drift off at any second.
Lose focus.
Float away.
Your job is clear:
catch their attention — and lead it somewhere that matters.
Maybe that sounds dramatic.
Good.
Because there's something to it.
This isn't only passing on knowledge.
It's leading attention.
You don't start with the topic.
You start with presence.
In the first few seconds you show them whether it's worth coming along
with you.
Your body.
Your voice.
Your pace.
Those are what decide whether the group comes in with you —
or stays outside it.
Some people have natural stage presence.
Others have to learn it.
But it isn't a talent.
It's a skill.
And like any skill — it can be developed.
And when you start developing it deliberately,
something more than effectiveness shows up.
Satisfaction shows up.

An Example

You walk into the room.

— "Okay, open your notebooks. Today we're doing the topic from last time..."

You start talking right away.

No pause.

No eye contact.

Someone is still talking.

Someone is hunting for a pen.

Someone is looking at their phone.

You raise your voice:

— "Hey — quiet, please!"

You start explaining.

A minute in, half the room has drifted off.

Not because the topic is boring.

Because nobody brought them into the story.

Now a different version.

You walk into the room.

You don't speak right away.

You stand.

You look.

You breathe.

You catch a few pairs of eyes.

A second of silence.

— "Let me tell you something... what we're doing today is simpler than you think. But most people get it wrong."

A pause.

Someone looks up.

Someone stops talking.

— "And if you catch one thing from this class — seriously, one — you'll remember it for the rest of your life."

Now you begin.

Not with the topic.

With the tension.

Obviously — this is a simplification.

We're leaving a lot out to get at the point.

It isn't about perfect monologues.

It isn't about playing a part.

It isn't about reciting.

It's about awareness.

About noticing that there are moments when you speak differently.

That you're in it.

That you feel satisfaction yourself, sharing what you know.

And that's when something changes.

Enthusiasm shows up — and it carries.

A lot of the educators I've met are wonderful, sensitive, sometimes shy people.

And when they start speaking — a strength comes out of them.

Often they don't even know they already have the craft.

That they already know how to speak in a way that makes people want to listen.

And yes — in a sense, they're already actors.

And speakers.

They just don't quite see it yet.

Structure as regulation

Every story has its own natural structure.

A beginning.

A development.

A climax.

An ending.

This isn't theory — it's how our minds organize experience.

When a young person understands where they are in that structure, it's easier for them to stay in the process.

They know this is only the beginning.

Or that we're in the middle and it takes holding on a little longer.

Or that the moment of understanding is coming.

And most importantly — they know it will end.

That brings calm.

Which is why narrative isn't only a way of speaking.

It's a way of regulating tension.

With groups that have trouble focusing — at the start I say plainly what's going to happen.

Where we start.

What's in the development.

Where the climax is.

And what we'll walk out with at the end.

That transparency brings calm.

Because a brain that runs faster and more impulsively needs a direction.

When I name it — things get easier.

It's a kindness to them.

But it also helps me.

Because when I say it out loud — I ground myself in what I'm doing.

On harder days I go one step further.

I get specific:

"This is the introduction. It'll take us about five minutes."

"We're wrapping up the introduction. Moving into the development — about ten minutes."

"In a moment there's a point where this all comes together."

And when the climax arrives, I say it plainly:

"Now, two minutes of full focus.

Can you give me that?

Okay — here we go."

That changes everything. Because I stop fighting for attention.

I start leading it.

I ask a lot of my groups.

But without pressure.

Through invitation.

I give them a choice.

Sometimes I say:

"Right now we focus and we listen. And if you can't — fake it. Just do it well enough that I don't notice."

That's a bit of a provocation.

But it's also letting go of control.

And it works better than constantly shushing.

Because when you're shushing all the time — somebody loses face.

Sometimes you.

Sometimes the student.

This way, there's room left.

And the responsibility goes back to them.

The intensity curve

My pattern for telling a story is very simple.

It's a game of intensity.

Intensity is your presence, your contact, your pauses, how you speak, your gestures.

It's everything you lead attention with — not just the words.

You start calmly.

Around twenty percent.

You leave room for people to come in.

To make contact.

To tune in.

The development is around forty percent.

More energy.

More content.

More leading.

But you still leave room.

You don't overwhelm.

The climax is where you raise the intensity.

From that forty percent you climb slowly.

To around eighty.

This is the moment of focus.

Of connecting the dots.

Of the "oh — I get it."

But you don't go to a hundred.

You leave room.

Because the missing twenty percent belongs to them.
It's their thinking.
Their imagination.
Their moment of understanding.
And then — the ending.
You come back to zero.
You slow down.
You close it.
You let what happened settle.
Silence is part of the story.
If everything is intense — nothing matters.
If you can work with intensity — you start to lead.
And then a lesson stops being only a transmission.
It becomes an experience.
The lesson as a story is a direction.
Below — the practice.
What you can do each day to turn that direction into a habit.

Voices from the room

How do you think about the structure of a lesson — between what's planned and what actually happens in the room?

Marian (34, Germany), educator

Early in my career I over-prepared. I thought the more detailed the plan, the better the lesson.

Over time I understood that teaching is probably sixty or seventy percent improvisation and thirty or forty percent preparation.

If you plan every step too rigidly — you lose your flexibility exactly when you need it most.

You can't respond to the mood of the group.

To what's actually happening in the room.

Good structure gives you direction.

But it has to leave room.

Room for what the students bring.

Exercise for this chapter

→ Second group humming.

CHAPTER 8

Practice

How to actually do this — when the day begins.

It isn't about perfection.

It's about coming back.

You'll do something wrong — notice it.

No long explanations.

No punishing yourself.

Notice.

Forgive.

Come back.

That's the whole practice.

The rest is details.

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Before you walk into the room

The session starts outside the door.

Stop for a moment.

One minute is enough.

Ask yourself:

- What state am I walking in with?
- Am I dragging something in from the last conversation?
- Am I already tense, before anything has even happened?

You don't have to be ready.

You have to be aware.

Your regulation is the first message you send.

And yes — they read it faster than they read the lesson plan.

This is the practice of hearing yourself — the one we talked about earlier.

Give yourself a moment outside the door.

1.

Set a direction

A session always has a rhythm.

Either you lead it,

or chance leads all of you.

The beginning.

It doesn't have to be spectacular.

It has to be real.

Look at them.

Make contact.

Say something simple:

"Good to see you."

"Let's see what we make of today."

(That second one is often more honest than "this is going to be great.")

The middle.

Hand them the structure.

"We've got seven minutes."

"We're focusing on one thing."

"In a moment we'll come back and check."

People regulate through clarity.

The end.

Close it.

"That was so that we could..."

"The next step is..."

Without that, what's left is chaos.

And chaos is tiring.

2.

Give warmth — but real warmth

This isn't about being nice.

It's about noticing.

"I can see you're trying."

"That was hard — and you did it."

"I'm glad you said that."

You're not admiring the result.

You're admiring the movement.

And this matters:

if you don't feel it — don't say it.

False warmth is worse than none at all.

3.

Instead of correcting — get curious

A common educator's mistake?

Correcting too fast.

A student does something wrong.

You already know why.

You already have the solution.

And... you've just taken their moment of discovery away.

Instead of:

"That's wrong."

Try:

"Show me how you got there."

And now the magic (sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't):

The student starts talking.

Thinking out loud.

And suddenly:

"...oh, wait... that doesn't make sense."

They see it themselves.

And sometimes they won't see it.

And that... is okay too.

It's a process.

4.

Boundaries theater

without

Boundaries are necessary.

But they don't need emotion.

You don't have to get worked up.

You don't have to play "the strict adult."

Just say:

"This is what we need right now."

"I'm not okay with that."

"Back to it."

Short.

Quiet.

No extra story attached.

The less drama, the more force.

5.

The moment you lose yourself

It's going to happen.

Someone will say something.

The group will scatter.

You'll feel it: "I've had enough."

That's the moment of practice.

Not five minutes later.

Now.

Stop.

Notice your body:

— shoulders

— jaw

— stomach

— feet

Breathe.

That doesn't solve the situation.

It gives you back to yourself.

And only then can you do something that makes sense.

6.

When nothing works

There are days like that.

The group isn't working.

You're not leading.

Nothing's working right.

Name it.

"Today is hard for me."

"We're not finding our rhythm today."

That doesn't weaken your authority.

It builds it — as long as you don't run.

Then give a direction:

"Let's try that again."

or

"Today we're doing this the simple way."

And sometimes... you do less.

And the world doesn't end.



7.

One more minute

The most important things often happen after everything is over.

One minute.

"I could tell something was off today."

"Do you want to talk?"

You're not solving anyone's life.

You're sending a signal:

"You are seen."

For some of them, that will be the only moment like it all week.

Afterward

Instead of analyzing everything — ask four questions:

- Was I honest?
- Did I try to come back to myself?
- Did I avoid punishing them for my own state?
- Did I do at least one thing better today than yesterday?

That's enough.

Really.

Notice the small things:

Today you spoke more quietly.

Today you came back faster.

Today you didn't go with the impulse.

These are the fruits.

Not big breakthroughs.

Just daily decisions.

And tomorrow?

You'll walk into the room again.

And again it won't be perfect.

And that's exactly right.

Because this work isn't about being perfect.

It's about

whether you can come back and lead them, so they come back to themselves.

Exercise for this chapter

→ Third group humming

Voices from the room

What do you actually do when something isn't working — mid-lesson, in a hard moment?

Sabrina (30, Canada), educator

Games. Play.

When I feel frustrated — I know the students would feel the same in my shoes.

So I flip it: I give them the lead.

Suddenly they're the ones standing in front of the group, struggling.

And I get to laugh along with them.

Or I do a group check-in: how are you all doing? What do we need to change?

Is it too cold, too hot, what's going on?

Sometimes they say it straight out — I don't like history, it's boring.

Okay. So how can we bring it to life?

I bring in whatever isn't working — through curiosity, not through pressure.

Marian (34, Germany), educator

I've learned to do the opposite of what instinct suggests.

When a group is loud and not listening — I stop.

I wait. I watch.

Very often the group starts quieting down on its own.

They start to notice something is different, and they remind each other to focus.

Raising my voice and fighting for attention is a mistake I made at the beginning.

It drains your energy and it rarely works.

Silence works better than noise.

Almost always.

CHAPTER 9

When you fell short

There was a moment when I fell short.

Not in the sense that I did something terrible. In the sense that I was someone I didn't want to be.

In front of them. In the room. Before their eyes.

It was hot. It was stuffy. It was harder than usual. The group I could usually work with was suddenly somewhere else. Laughter. Chatter. Interruptions. Distraction.

I was trying. I took breaks. I breathed. I spoke calmly.

But it wasn't working.

And then something started to shift in me. I was angry. At them. At myself. I stopped leading from a place of presence and started reacting from a place of tension.

I didn't know what to do with it.

I really didn't.

Anyone can lose their footing. Too little sleep. Too many expectations. Too much in your head. Too much responsibility that we carry alone, even when no one asked us to.

Sometimes the tools we write about in this guide don't work right away.

A breath doesn't always change the situation instantly. A pause doesn't always calm the group. Reflection doesn't always make things suddenly clear. Sometimes you know what's wise, and you still feel anger, helplessness, or shame.

And that is exactly the moment where the deeper practice begins.

Because the practice isn't that from now on you'll always be calm.

The practice is that when you stop being calm — you don't abandon the direction.

You can have a hard day and still try to act with integrity. You can not know what to do and still not punish yourself or the group. You can feel yourself losing control — and still look for the way back.

You won't always manage to come back to full presence right away. Sometimes we come back only a little. But even a small step in that direction matters.

Because you set the tone.

Maybe for yourself first. Maybe not for the whole group yet. But that's exactly how change begins. Not with a great victory. With a decision: I won't stop at shame. I won't turn one hard day into proof that I'm not cut out for this. I won't let anger tell me the whole story about me and about them.

Sometimes the only thing we can do is keep going.

Not pretend nothing happened.

Not make a drama of it.

Not punish ourselves for a week.

Just come back. To the work. To the group. To the values. To one simple sentence:

Okay. That was hard. Let's see what we can learn from it.

The next day I walked into the room and said to them:

— It was interesting to have a hard lesson with you, too. I appreciate that we tried to get through it together.

And then one of the students asked me a question I wasn't expecting.

— When are we allowed to laugh?

I stopped.

It was such a good question that the tension in me vanished at once.

It turned out I hadn't given them that information earlier. I'd assumed they knew how to work with my expressive style. They didn't.

To me it was obvious that sometimes I joke, sometimes I use strong expression, sometimes I raise the energy and then come back to focus. To them it wasn't obvious. They needed a frame.

And suddenly I saw that part of that chaos wasn't rebellion. It was a lack of information.

That matters.

Sometimes the group isn't working against you. Sometimes it just doesn't understand the rules of the game that are obvious to you.

As an educator you can have your own style. You can be expressive, calm, dynamic, quiet, funny, highly ordered, or full of energy. But the group needs to know how to work with that style.

They need to know:

when there's room for laughter,

when we come back to focus,

what a joke means,

what a boundary means,

what we do when it gets too loud,

what working with you looks like.

This doesn't take away spontaneity. It protects it.

Because freedom without a frame quickly turns into chaos. And a frame without warmth turns into control.

We need both.

After that conversation, something changed. Not because everything suddenly became perfect. No. This isn't an educational fairy tale with a moral and a grant for a happy ending.

What changed was that we came back into contact.

I stopped being alone with my shame. They stopped being just "the difficult group." A conversation appeared. Curiosity appeared.

And curiosity is very often the beginning of repair.

That's why, after a hard day, it's worth coming back to the group and naming what happened. Calmly. Without accusing. Without explaining yourself for half an hour. Without making the young people to blame for our whole state.

You can say:

— Yesterday was hard for us. I wasn't in the best place either. I want us to look calmly at what we need in order to work better.

Or:

— I noticed we never set clear rules. That's my part of the responsibility. Let's set them now.

Or:

— I don't want to pretend everything was fine. But I don't want to make a disaster of it either. I want us to come back to working together.

That's strength.

Not perfection. Coming back.

An educator doesn't build authority by never losing their footing. They build it by being able, after losing it, to come back — without pretending, without humiliating themselves or others.

Young people see more than we think.

They see when someone is playing a role. They see when an adult can't admit that it was hard. They also see when an adult has the courage to come back the next day and tell the truth in a calm voice.

A moment like that can stay in them for a long time.

Because that's when they learn something very important: that a hard day doesn't end the relationship. That conflict doesn't have to mean rejection.



That you can lose your footing and come back. That being an adult isn't about being infallible, but about being responsible.

And maybe that's exactly what young people need most from us.

Not proof that we're perfect.

Just the experience that we're real, steady as much as we can be today, and ready to come back into contact.

If, as you get to know this guide, you feel that this approach is yours — use it. Not as a system that's supposed to work instantly. Just as a direction.

Because a direction matters most exactly when the results aren't visible right away.

On easy days we all like to talk about presence, regulation, and trust.

On hard days we find out whether we really want to live by it.

And we don't always pass that test perfectly.

But we can pass it well enough.

We can come back.

We can apologize, if we need to.

We can make the frame clearer.

We can ask the young people how they experienced it.

We can listen to the answer.

We can say to ourselves:

Today was hard. But I'm still heading in a good direction.

And sometimes that's enough.

For today.

CHAPTER 10

What stays for years

Most young people don't remember the content of a lesson.

They don't remember dates.

They don't remember definitions.

They don't remember which topic came up in November.

But they remember how they felt around you.

They remember whether they could breathe.

Whether they felt tension.

Whether they were afraid to speak up.

Whether they felt that someone saw more in them than their current grade.

That's what stays.

One sentence

In times like these, overstimulated by too much information, we forget that people are remarkable.

It takes so little for us to do things that are beautiful, important, out of the ordinary.

A little support can change everything.

Maybe you were lucky.

There was someone who believed in you.

An educator. A teacher. A mentor.

Maybe around that person you felt safe — free to make mistakes and keep trying.

That this is the whole point: to make plenty of good mistakes that carry us forward.

Simple words, like: "You'll be fine in life."

A sentence like that can become an inner voice for years.

So can others:

"You're not cut out for this."

"You won't manage it."

Words have a long echo.

Sometimes one sentence stays in someone for a decade.

Sometimes one look builds more than an entire lecture.

How it actually works

A student answers hesitantly.

Gets it wrong.

The class laughs.

You have two seconds.

You can say: "Sit down."

Or you can say: "Hold on. He just tried. Every one of you is going to be in that spot — let's give each other a chance."

The scene lasts a minute.

But his body remembers whether he was mocked or protected.

That's how someone's confidence gets built — or broken.

Not by grand statements.

By micro-moments.

A borrowed way of seeing

When a young person trusts someone, they often borrow that person's way of seeing the world.

If you look at them with faith — they learn to look at themselves with faith.

If you see potential in them that they don't understand yet — your way of seeing can become their future confidence.

That's long-range influence.

And that's exactly why it has to be taken seriously.

What actually leaves a mark

Regulation. Admiration. Gratitude.

Those are the three things that leave a mark.

If you know how to regulate yourself — you create a space where others can regulate.

If you can admire the process and not only the result — students learn to respect the road, not just the outcome.

If you're grateful that you get to work with them — they feel that they aren't a burden.

These aren't techniques.

This is a stance — and a direction.

Responsibility without overload

You're not responsible for everything.

You have influence, but not over everyone.

You don't have control.

You won't save everyone.

You can't fix every family.

And you don't have to.

Your job is to do your part — honestly.

To be present.

To come back to yourself.

If you carry all of it — you'll burn out.

And then you won't help anyone.

Responsibility without overload is maturity and professionalism.

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When you're no longer in the room

What stays for years isn't the material and the theories.

It's the experience of being around someone who believed.

Who didn't shame.

Who didn't humiliate.

Who looked at you calmly and said, "Try again. I know you can."

And sometimes that one sentence comes back to them fifteen years later, in the hardest moment of their life.

And then you're still working — long after you've left the room.

It won't show up in a gradebook.

There's no award for it.

But it's real influence.

And that's enough.

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Voices from the room

What do you think really stays with students — years later, long after the content of the lesson is gone?

Sabrina (30, Canada), educator

I think what stays most is the confidence we build together.
Not something we give them, but something we help create with them
— until they learn to create it themselves.
Young people need safe adults.
People who don't expect perfection, who don't wait until they've done
everything right, but are ready to be there with them.
Part of that is making the world a little more understandable.
Taking what feels overwhelming and breaking it down into smaller parts
you can approach step by step.
Because when you're young, the world can feel enormous and full of
chaos — and someone who helps you find your way through it with
patience can stay with you for years.

Marian (34, Germany), educator

Students remember trust.
They remember whether you kept your word.
Whether you respected them.
Did you take them seriously — not as "just kids," but as people who are
learning and who deserve attention.
An educator can learn from students too.
When communication happens on the same level — respect shows up.
Not because you demand it.
Because they feel it.
And that's exactly what stays.
Not the material. Not the grades.
Whether they felt seen around you.

CHAPTER 11

Where all of this came from

On the Humming Method and coming back to yourself

The structure of this guide wasn't built at a desk.

It came out of a need.

Out of the need to regulate myself.

Out of chaos.

Out of stress.

Out of pressure I put on myself.

Creating always helped me.

Beatboxing always helped me.

But one day something important happened.

I was about twenty. I was running workshops at the Musical Theatre in Gdynia. I felt the pressure. The expectations. The tension. My head was full of "I have to." Full of "if I don't do this, it'll go badly."

I sat down at the piano.

I started playing four simple chords.

And the tension was gone.

Not gradually.

Immediately.

Lightness came in. Play. Clarity.

That was the first moment I felt that sound can regulate. That something in the body loosens. That you can come down from the level of thoughts and pressure to the level of presence.

I didn't know yet that this would be the beginning of a method.

From music to regulation

Over the following years I ran workshops, concerts, and meetings with young people. Beatboxing was a tool of expression for me. It helped people open up their voice, feel the rhythm, break through shame, do something brave.

But over time I understood that expression alone isn't enough.

You can hand someone a microphone, but if they don't feel safe inside, their voice will still shake.

You can teach someone rhythm, but if their body is in constant tension, it'll be hard for them to really rest.

You can invite a young person into creativity, but first you have to give them an experience:

I can be here just as I am.

I saw that sound can do more than build music.

It can build a return to yourself.

That's how the Humming Method slowly came to be.

Not as a finished system. Not as a theory dreamed up on paper. Not as something meant to look good in a project description.

As an answer to a question that kept coming back to me over the years: what helps a person feel they can be with themselves without a fight?

The Humming Method as a direction

The Humming Method, as a direction for working on yourself, isn't a promise of quick transformation. It's an invitation to discover simple but very important skills.

The first is the skill of feeling safe — as the person you are today. Not as someone fixed. Not as someone perfect. Not as a better version of yourself who will someday finally earn some peace.

As you. Now.

We practice this through humming. Through sound, breath, and vibration that give the body a signal: you can be here. You don't have to run. You don't have to prove anything.

The second skill is a deep, practical curiosity. It's the ability to observe, take in, listen, and admire — instead of constantly correcting, judging, and fixing yourself.

We practice it through breath, pauses, and short moments of observation between exercises. We stop not in order to understand something right away.

We stop in order to notice:

what's happening in me?

what is it like to be me right now?

what is this moment to me?

And out of that place, something very important appears: the possibility of a pause.

A pause gives you a choice.

I can ask myself: do I want to treat myself like an ally? Maybe even like a friend? Or do I want to keep being the eternal critic of my own life?

I'm not pushing you toward either road. These are personal choices. Every one of us has our reasons for being the way we are. Every one of us has our own story, our own tensions, our own defenses, and our own ways of surviving.

And of course — so it doesn't get too sweet — really becoming your own friend takes reflection. Sometimes courage. Sometimes help. Sometimes many returns to the same place.

Because these aren't simple matters.

What is friendship with yourself, really? Does it mean gentleness? Boundaries? Responsibility? Forgiveness? Honesty? Or maybe all of it at once?

Every one of us deserves support in searching for those answers.

That's why the Humming Method doesn't say: "from now on you have to love yourself."

It says, rather:

stop,

breathe,

listen,

look at yourself a little more gently

and check whether, today, you can be even a little more on your own side.

Sometimes that's enough.

To begin with — that's really a lot.

Is this for everyone?

Not every tool fits every hand.

I'm not saying this to discourage you. I'm saying it because I care about being honest.

This method isn't a belief system. It isn't an obligation. It's an invitation — and everyone decides for themselves whether to step in.

Often it's the case that after the very first session a person knows whether it serves them. You don't have to search long for the answer. The body knows it faster than the head.

If something loosened after you tried it — come back.

If it didn't — that's good information too.

You're here to get to know yourself, not to check off another technique.

The basic elements of the method

Below I describe four exercises I always show in a first session.

In the Humming Method we learn to give ourselves four qualities a person needs in order to feel safe: presence, being seen, being heard, and admiration.

These are the ingredients of safety. Sometimes also the ingredients of warmth. And maybe even of love — if we understand love not as a big word, but as an experience:

someone is here,

someone sees,

someone hears,

someone notices my road.

In the Humming Method we slowly learn to give these qualities to ourselves as well.

Not to replace relationships with others. A person needs people. They need community, conversation, closeness, and support. But they also need an inner place to come back to.

When I say "I am here," I'm learning presence.

When I say "I see myself," I'm learning to look at myself without instant judgment.

When I say "I hear myself," I'm learning not to interrupt my own experience.

And when I really see my road, admiration can appear — not for perfection, but for the fact that I'm trying, coming back, learning, and moving on.

This is the essence of the method.

The practice of warmth



Reading about these exercises is a different thing from doing them. If you'd like — come back to this text after your first attempt. You'll see what's changed in how you read it.

For now — I'm simply inviting you.

With no expectations.

With no judgment.

1.

Observing the breath

Before you start working with sound — give yourself a moment to stop. Sit down. Close your eyes, if you want to. Bring your attention to the tip of your nose — to the air moving in and out.

Thoughts will come.

That's natural.

Don't fight them.

Every time you notice you've drifted into the past or the future — just come back.

To the air.

To that one point.

To now.

You don't judge. You don't correct yourself. You come back.

The goal isn't an absence of thoughts.

The goal is a direction.

You send yourself a signal:

I don't have to fix anything right now.

I don't have to prove anything.

I can loosen up.

It's a very simple exercise. And that's exactly why it can be so hard.

Because many of us are used to doing, analyzing, correcting, solving.

And here, for a moment, you're not solving anything.

You are.

That's enough to begin.

2.

Humming

This is the essence of the method.

I play four simple chords. We don't change them for the whole session.

First comes curiosity:

How do these sounds touch me?

What is it like to be me today?

What stirs in me when I don't have to prove anything?

Curiosity is a question.

Not an answer.

We aren't trying to establish anything. We aren't analyzing. We aren't looking for the perfect conclusion. We're opening the subject up.

When we're ready — we start humming.

Mouth closed. A soft sound. No ambition.

Humming is permission for everything in us to have somewhere to go.

It might be calm.

It might be tension.

It might be something we can't even name.

We give a voice to whatever is alive in us.

Sometimes relief comes. Sometimes a sense of safety. Sometimes tears.

Sometimes nothing spectacular. Just a little more room.

We don't control it.

The sound vibrates in the body. And the body starts getting the signal: it's safe here.

Not because everything in life is already sorted out.

Because in this one moment you aren't running from yourself.

3.

"I am here"

To those same chords, we start adding words.

First, one sentence:

I am here.

Spoken calmly. Or sung.

This isn't an affirmation of success. It isn't "I'm the best." It isn't an attempt to convince yourself that everything is wonderful when it isn't.

It's a decision.

I'm not running.

I'm not explaining myself.

I'm not attacking.

I am here, on my own side.

This sentence builds the foundation of presence.

This sentence trains the narrator in our head.

Because so often, inside, we hear the critic's voice:

"Not enough."

"Not like that."

"You blew it again."

"Other people are doing better."

And here another voice appears.

Quieter. Simpler. More human.

I'm with you. As if you were saying it to an old friend.

That's the beginning of a changed relationship with yourself.

Not a great revolution. Not a theatrical breakthrough. More a small, honest return.

I am here.

And that already changes something.

4.

"I see myself. I hear myself."

To the same melody we add more sentences:

I see myself. I hear myself.

How often do you give yourself real attention?

We watch other people.

And we skip ourselves.

When you say "I see myself," it means:

I'm looking at myself with curiosity, not with judgment.

I see the effort.

I see the road.

I see what I've already done.

I see that I'm trying.

It's the same kind of seeing that can change a young person.

The look that says:

"You're already handling something. Even if you don't see it yet."

Now you turn it toward yourself.

When you say "I hear myself," it means:

I don't interrupt myself after the first sentence.

I don't dismiss it.

I don't make fun of my own needs.

I don't say right away: "other people have it worse."

I don't escape into tasks.

I listen all the way through.

Every young person needs to be heard.

So does every adult.

Here you learn to give that to yourself.

Why this matters

Everything this guide was about — presence, regulation, listening, admiration, boundaries, responsibility without overload — all of it keeps happening in relationships: with yourself and with everyone else on your road.

The Humming Method isn't an add-on to an educator's work.

It's the practice of experiencing what we've talked about throughout the guide.

Because sometimes words sound beautiful but feel abstract.

How do you admire yourself?

How do you stay present?

How do you not react on impulse?

How do you come back to yourself after a hard moment?

How do you be an adult who doesn't pretend to be a rock, but can find solid ground under their feet?

First you have to feel it.

In the body.

In the breath.

In the sound.

Only then is it easier to recognize these qualities in relationship with others.

In closing

Thank you for making it to the end of this guide.

This is my first guide, so I appreciate your patience, curiosity, and openness all the more.

If even one sentence, one thought, or one exercise stays with you for longer — that means a great deal to me.

It would help us a lot if you wrote us a few words about your experience of reading it.

What was important?

What moved you?

What was helpful?

What was missing?

You can write to us here:

hummingprojecteu@gmail.com

Thank you for your presence.

And for the work you do — even when no one sees it.

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Exercise for this chapter

→ Full Session

