

# NARRATE Exercise

Units In-House	Units In-Company	Skill cards
We	We	Self-awareness Self-control

## Personal mapping

Minimum number of participants	Average time length	Individual setting	Group setting	Special Equipment	Online
1	30-60 min	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



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## 1. Overview

*"Mapping builds excitement for a project because it provides powerful insight into a community almost immediately. Weaving mapping into the connective tissue of narratives, dialogues, and art-centred approaches grounds conversation, vision, and the complex reality of what actually exists in our community and who we are." (Ganley, 2011).*

This exercise, adapted specifically for PoAS in both individual and group settings, is designed to help improve self-awareness and promote personal development in an inclusive way. In group settings, the main goal is to improve mutual understanding, facilitate communication and promote collaboration effectively, taking into account the different modes of communication and the specific needs of PoAS. Individuals can use this exercise to map their personal values, the groups they belong to, the formal institutions and associations they feel connected to. This process not only facilitates the visualisation of social connections and interactions, but also offers a structured method for exploring personal interests and building a sense of belonging in a way that respects the communication and sensory processing needs of PoAS.

## 2. Aim / Benefits

Personal Maps help PoAS discover and generate an in-depth understanding of their problems, always maintaining a solution-focused approach. This process helps to develop new ideas and strategies to achieve life goals in a structured and visual way, respecting the different ways of processing information and communicating typical of PoAS.

Personal maps are an excellent tool for personal development. They offer a clear and orderly way to organise ideas, thoughts and concepts, making it easier to manage personal information and identify areas of interest. This visual approach can serve as a source of motivation, helping PoAS maintain a positive focus on their personal goals and aspirations.

When used in a group context with PoAS at risk of exclusion, personal maps can significantly improve mutual understanding and communication within the group. They facilitate the identification of common interests and shared challenges, providing a comfortable starting point for engaging in meaningful conversations. This process supports mutual empathy, allowing participants to explore and share personal experiences in a structured and welcoming environment.



### 3. Training tier and UNIT(s) related

This exercise can be related to Inhouse Training – Unit WE, as it can help professionals explore with PoAS the **dominant, problem-saturated narratives** affecting the way they see themselves and the labour market.

This exercise can be related to In-Company Training – Unit WE, as it help professionals explore with PoAS the **dominant, problem-saturated narratives** affecting the way they see themselves in relation with the company environment they are working in. Also, it can help companies identify and self-reflect on how the **dominant, problem-saturated narratives** they have about PoAS negatively affect the way thor working environment relates to PoAS employees/collaborators.

This exercise can be used to practise Self-Awareness and Self-Control reflected in the skills cards.

Personal maps offer an immediate and insightful view of one's community, helping individuals to visualise and understand the relationships and influences within their social and professional circles. This exercise aids in self-awareness by encouraging participants to reflect on their connections, recognizing their strengths, weaknesses, triggers, and motivations. By mapping out their personal and professional relationships, individuals can better understand the dynamics at play and how they interact with others. Personal maps foster self-development by highlighting areas for improvement in both self-awareness and self-control. When conducted in groups, this exercise enhances mutual understanding among participants, revealing how each person perceives and is influenced by their environment. This collective insight can lead to stronger team cohesion and more effective communication, as team members learn to appreciate each other's perspectives and emotional triggers. Moreover, personal maps help individuals practise self-control by identifying potential stressors and devising strategies to manage their reactions. By becoming more attuned to their social environment and its impact on their behaviour, participants can develop better self-regulation techniques. This exercise is a valuable tool for fostering a supportive and empathetic workplace culture, where everyone is aware of and can manage their emotions and behaviours more effectively.



## 4. How to do the exercise

### ***Step 1 / Preparation:***

(MANDATORY to explain how to prepare and introduce the exercise to the participant)

The professional introduces the exercise to the client or participants. When done on an individual level with PoAS, it explains the reason for the personal map, which could go from merely getting to know the client better to guiding her/him in self-discovery and building solutions for their desired future.

In a group context, the professional explains the purpose of the exercise, as an icebreaker to facilitate mutual understanding (e.g. at the start of a group meeting) or to identify common interests, challenges or themes within the group. community. Regardless of how the exercise is conducted (as outlined in the final step), it is critical that the professional explains the process.

### ***Step 2***

The exercise begins by placing each PoAS' name in the centre of a sheet of paper or a blackboard, and then writing the categories of interest around it.

The most common categories include: work, education, friends, family, hobbies, goals, values and home. However, it is important that these categories reflect the specific interests of PoAS, so a preliminary conversation to identify them may be useful.

You can use different colours or coloured post-it notes to represent the ideas, thoughts, potential solutions, etc., related to each specific category of interest.



### **Step 3:**

Allow each PoAS to think about each category and begin filling in the information. The categories are not fixed, so encourage her/him to change the categories along with what she/he finds interesting as she goes along.

Ask her to place the most important items or those she/he most identifies with closest to her/him, and arrange the least important or least related items further away. Rearrange post-it notes or visual ideas to show how each element relates to the others.

If the client shows resistance or scepticism toward the exercise, you might start with a personal example and draw your own map to show how the process works.

### **Final step / Conclusion:**

At the end of the exercise, the professional can ask each PoAS to present her/his personal map to the other participants if the exercise was carried out in a group, or to use it for their own personal analysis (without sharing it with the group).

There are several ways in which the resulting personal maps can be used:

Each PoAS creates a map about herself/himself, which is then shared and discussed with others within a solution-based approach.



When working in groups, participants can be divided into pairs to create personal maps for each other. This allows them to explore and discuss what interests them mutually. This process supports mutual empathy and facilitates communication within a structured and comfortable environment, respecting the needs and information processing methods of PoAS.

During the exercise, one of the participants is assigned to create a personal map of another participant for a week. The goal is to better understand each other through informal conversations and shared activities, without asking direct questions like "*What are your hobbies?*".

During designated moments, such as session breaks, the person in charge observes and interacts with the other participant, paying attention to their interests, ways of communicating and behaviours. This approach allows us to collect information in a non-invasive way that respects the preferences and personal rhythms of PoAS.

At the end of the week, all participants gather for a plenary session dedicated to reflecting on the experience. During this structured discussion, the various learnings that emerged during the interaction period are explored. The focus is on the positive aspects of mutual discovery and on awareness of possible misunderstandings or incorrect judgments that may have been overcome during the activity.

This approach aims to foster mutual understanding and promote an environment that is inclusive and respectful of the different ways of communicating and interacting with PoAS. The activity and subsequent discussion are structured to facilitate the comfort and involvement of all participants, valuing respect for the individuality and unique experiences of each participant.

## 5. Debrief

- Hang each PoAS' personal map on the wall and look at it carefully to identify patterns, similarities and differences, and to understand what this reveals about this group.
- After the session, the results can be analysed:

**At an individual level:** The professional can use each client's personal map to better understand his/her motivations, interests and concerns. This can be the starting point for a conversation that helps the person further explore their thoughts and feelings.

**At the group level:** Once personal maps have been shared, the professional can analyse them to identify common elements, shared interests, similar challenges, etc. This process can help create a sense of belonging among participants and increase mutual awareness of individual differences, promoting mutual respect.

The professional should take care to use clear and direct language during the debrief session, considering the possible communication and understanding difficulties of autistic people. It is important to maintain a safe and welcoming environment, where everyone has the opportunity to express their opinions and feelings freely.

Some questions that might be useful for debriefing with PoAS include:

- What thoughts or feelings do you have now after completing your personal map (or seeing others' maps)?
- Has the process of creating the map influenced your ideas or feelings about your life and interests in any way?
- What did you learn about yourself and other participants during the personal mapping exercise?

These questions can help facilitate meaningful discussion and promote personal and mutual reflection between participants, thus contributing to the process of personal development and mutual understanding within the group.

## 6. Specific materials

- A3 paper
- Sticky notes
- Coloured pencils or markers

## 7. Tips and Tricks for use Inhouse

- **Create a comfortable environment:** ensure the physical space is quiet, well-lit, and free of distractions to help participants focus. Provide comfortable seating arrangements and allow participants to choose where they sit.
- **Use visual supports:** provide visual aids and templates to help participants understand and follow the exercise. Use colour-coded sticky notes and markers to make the activity more engaging and easier to follow.
- **Provide clear instructions:** use simple, concrete language to explain the exercise.
- Break down the instructions into small, manageable steps and repeat them as needed.
- **Allow for processing time:** give participants plenty of time to think about each category and fill in their personal maps. Encourage them to take breaks if they need to process information or relax.
- **Model the exercise:** demonstrate how to create a personal map by making one for yourself first.
- Show examples of completed maps to give participants a clear idea of the end goal.
- **Encourage individuality:** allow participants to personalise their maps with drawings, symbols, or other creative elements. Respect each participant's unique way of expressing their thoughts and ideas.
- **Facilitate open discussion:** encourage participants to share their maps with the group, but make it optional to respect individual comfort levels. Create a supportive atmosphere where everyone feels safe to express their thoughts and feelings.
- **Be flexible:** adapt the exercise to fit the needs and preferences of each participant. Allow changes to categories and the overall structure of the map based on individual interests.
- **Use positive reinforcement:** provide positive feedback and encouragement throughout the exercise. Highlight the strengths and insights shown in each participant's map.
- **Reflect and debrief:** hold a debrief session to reflect on the exercise and discuss what was learned.
- Use guided questions to help participants articulate their experiences and insights.

## 8. Tips and Tricks for use In-Company

- **Promote an inclusive culture:** foster a workplace culture that values inclusivity and respect for neurodiversity. Educate employees about the importance of understanding and supporting PoAS colleagues.
- **Provide training and resources:** offer training sessions on creating personal maps and understanding their benefits. Provide resources such as handouts, templates, and examples to support the exercise.
- **Use team-building activities:** incorporate personal map exercises into team-building activities to enhance mutual understanding and collaboration. Use these activities to help team members learn more about each other's interests and strengths.
- **Leverage technology:** use digital tools such as Miro Board or Mural for creating personal maps in a collaborative online environment. Ensure that the technology used is accessible and easy for all participants to use.
- **Encourage open communication:** create opportunities for employees to share their personal maps in a supportive and non-judgmental setting. Encourage managers to practise empathic listening and provide constructive feedback.
- **Provide continuous support:** offer ongoing support and coaching to help employees develop and maintain their personal maps. Create opportunities for employees to update their maps as their interests and goals evolve.
- **Measure impact:** collect feedback from participants to assess the impact of the exercise on their self-awareness and communication skills. Use this feedback to improve future sessions and tailor them to better meet participants' needs.
- **Promote awareness:** share success stories and testimonials from employees who have benefited from the personal map exercise. Highlight the positive impact of the exercise on workplace relationships and team dynamics.
- **Create safe spaces:** establish safe spaces where employees can work on their personal maps without interruptions or distractions. Ensure these spaces are comfortable and conducive to focused work.
- **Align with company goals:** integrate the personal map exercise into the company's broader goals and values. Highlight how the exercise contributes to a positive workplace culture and overall success.

## 9. On-line version

The exercise can be done online, and in essence follows the same steps as indicated for the offline version. In this case, a video conferencing tool should be used for young people to discuss. While in a face-to-face setting the professional can better monitor and interact with several groups at the same time (and guide them in the process), online this can only be done by using a videoconferencing app that allows for breakout rooms, in which the pairs or threesomes can discuss among themselves, while the professional listens in. For one group of 2 or 3 participants breakout options are not needed.

Plus, there are plenty of digital tools that can help you and your client(s) to create and fill Personal Maps. You can use different online tools to work with them, e.g. Miro Board, Mural.

## 10. Bibliography - Sitography

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