

## MODULE 1: DIGITAL SELF-AWARENESS

### Module Introduction

In today's world, our workplace is characterized by constantly increasing usage of digital technologies and fast-paced work processes. We, as working people have to adapt to this changing situation. For example: Frequent online messages that we receive via different digital channels tempt us to react immediately thus distracting us non-stop from what we are doing. We do not determine our actions ourselves, but mostly react to outside events. Why do we allow this to happen? Mainly because we, as humans, strive for rewards. Our behaviour is designed to react as quickly as possible as an effort to please others.

Digital technologies have become an inevitable part of our life and work. Their main role is to facilitate our working processes and communication. However, the more we use and depend on digital technologies the more they become a burden instead of an ease. The technology development has made it possible to be 24/7 online, but being reachable 24/7 at work is not beneficial for us as humans. These are some of the reasons why stress, caused by use of digital technologies is becoming more and more an issue for the working people nowadays.

In order to be able to prevent and manage digital stress we should first develop our self-awareness, especially about using digital technology. The goal of this first module of the STRESS-LESS online training is to help you improve self-awareness in order to consciously perceive and rethink your own digital technology behaviour and to be able to apply improved structures in your everyday work in order to prevent and manage stress. In this module you will learn:

- about the importance of self-awareness regarding the use of digital technologies in everyday work;
- the basics and methods of reflecting on and changing your own behaviour when using digital technologies at work.

If we are not aware how to use digital technologies wisely in order to boost our productivity, we will fall into the trap of being non-stop at work but never able to finish all our tasks. We have to know how to resist the pressure to comply with messages requesting our attention and demands on our time. Instead, we should be able to prioritize our tasks for an active and self-determined working life. Digital technologies should assist us in our work and not create stress and cause burn-out.

In order to be on the same page, let's define what self-awareness is.

Self-awareness concerns knowing one's internal states (feelings and emotions), one's resources (strengths and weaknesses); one's preferences (drives, values, prejudices) and one's needs and impact on others. When speaking about self-awareness at work, and specially work in digital environment, it is extremely important to understand how the use of digital technologies affects our feelings and emotions and our behaviour.

One of the main ways to build self-awareness is through self-reflection.

What does self-reflection actually mean?

Self-reflection is a term that is used quite frequently in our everyday lives. But what exactly is meant by self-reflection? Here is a definition: Self + reflection = self-reflection

Self is a generic term for all information that a person possesses, processes, collects and uses in connection with his or her own person.

Reflection is an active process in which a person thinks about and critically examines his or her own actions and experiences.

**Self-reflection** is an active process of questioning one's own emotions and actions in order to learn about oneself and one's individual behaviours.

In order to deal with negative emotions, we have to think deeply about the reasons for them. Once we identify and understand the causes of some negative emotions, related to digital technologies at work, we can take actions to avoid them or at least minimize them.

An efficient self-reflection usually proceeds in a 5-step process, which is then repeated again and again. This is the **cycle of self-reflection**:

**The first step of the process is Awareness:** First, we have to be fully aware of what is happening in the present moment – what is the situation or the problem we are in.

**The second step is conscious perception:** we have to focus on our emotions/feelings.

**Next we have to set goals:** For self-reflection, setting our own goals is important. This is the only way to check later on, whether the reflection was successful. Third, if we want to change the situation or find a solution to the problem, we have to set goals about what we want to achieve.

**The fourth step is to plan concrete actions:** This will be how we change our behaviour or attitude in order to achieve the goals. The main focus here is on the effectiveness of the individual measures and whether they lead to achieving the goal.

**The last step is integrating experience:** The newly gained experience must be integrated in our future behaviour and attitude and that is the final step. We analyse the results from our adapted behaviour or attitude and if they are satisfying we apply this behaviour/attitude in future similar situations. If not, we continue looking for possible improvements by starting a new reflection cycle.

Next, we are offering you a set of activities, which will help you build awareness about your work in digital environment and help you change your behaviour and attitude in order to prevent and manage digital stress.

You can listen to the material [here](#).

## Activity 1

Think briefly!

Which digital technologies have you used in your work in the last 48 hours? Make a list of them and write down:

- How much time you have spent, using each one of them?
- Are you feeling satisfied, neutral or dissatisfied with your work results?

## Activity 2

Let's focus on the ability to recognise and understand your own feelings and emotions while using digital technologies at work. Think about the emotions and feelings that digital work is evoking in you.

On the list with digital technologies that you've used in the last 48 hours – name at least one emotion per item. The following list may be of help: anxiety, amusement, boredom, awkwardness, confusion, disgust, excitement, fear, interest, joy, satisfaction, sympathy, triumph, confusion, etc.

If you have some symptoms of stress (ex. headache), list them too.

For example:

1. Email – anxiety, difficulty to fall asleep
2. Mobile Phone - satisfaction
3. Zoom for conference meeting – boredom

## Activity 3

Usually, our bodies give us some signs when we start to accumulate stress. The problem is that often we are not mindful and do not “listen to our bodies”. A practice called body scan is designed to help us improve our mindfulness through examining body sensations.

Let's do the practice now and continue doing it on a daily basis for a minimum of 1 week.

Once we are mindful about our digital work emotions, we can take the next step – work on the negative emotions in order to prevent stress at work.

Here is a guided Body scan:

<https://youtu.be/Y3TQnLRQmMY>.

## Activity 4

The next step towards improving self-awareness is to work on better understanding of your own values and how they shape your behaviour while working in digital environment. There is an easy way to discover your values (or if you think you know them, it's always useful to double check). Follow this simple process:

Step 1: Who are your top 3 heroes?

Step 2: What do you admire about these 3 heroes?

Step 3: What are your top 3 values?

Here you can access a worksheet, which will guide you through the process.

You can download the worksheet [here](#).

## Activity 5

Once you are familiar with your own emotions, body symptoms and values, let's use the 5 steps of the self-reflection cycle, to work on a specific problem you face in the daily work with digital technologies. BE CAREFUL: You will only be able to answer the questions and benefit from the reflection if you are working on a specific problem, for example "I receive so many emails!".

### 1. Awareness of the present moment

Questions to ask yourself:

- What is exactly happening? (ex. I am having too much unanswered messages in my mailbox)
- Why does this situation make me want to change something? (ex. I do not want to leave job undone)

### 2. Conscious perception

Questions to ask yourself:

- What am I feeling? (ex. I am feeling anxious because I am having too much unanswered messages in my mailbox)
- What exactly caused this emotion in me? (ex. I do not want to make people wait and to feel bad because I have not delivered something to them)

### 3. Set goals

Questions to ask yourself:

- What are my values?

- Are my values in conflict with some aspect of my work with digital tools?
- What do I want to achieve (ex. I want these emails not to create nervousness and anxiety in me)?

#### 4. Plan concrete actions

Questions to ask yourself (about the specific problem you are reflecting on):

- What can I do to avoid negative emotions in my work with digital technologies?
- What can I improve in my digital work? How can I do it – What steps should I take?
- How do I know that my actions are working?

#### 5. Integrate experience

General questions to ask yourself:

- What worked well and what did not work from the actions I took?
- Do I have new behaviour pattern to use at work?
- What attitude is helping me to avoid negative emotions and stress?
- How can I change my overall experience while using digital tools at work?

The above questions are designed to facilitate your self-reflection. Of course, you can expand this set of questions with your own ones.

You can download the worksheet [here](#).

Choose a specific problem that you face due to working in digital environment and go through the following steps:

### Activity 6

Now that you have done one full cycle of self-reflection with the questions, we have prepared for you, it is time to create your own set of questions.

And don't worry: In the future, you don't have to design a separate list of questions for every situation! It is more important to practice the 5 steps of the self-reflection, using a set of your favourite questions. In this way, after a certain period of time, an automatism develops in which, in important situations, you follow the cycle of self-reflection rather naturally. This equips you with an ease in doing self-reflection when dealing with digital technologies.

Now grab a pen or use a digital device to create a list with your own favourite questions for self-reflection.

### Activity 7

The letter to yourself is another method for self-reflection. It consists of three steps. This method is especially suitable to support you in case of negative feelings and to enable an easier coping with the situation at hand. Take a pen and paper or a digital device, on which you can write, secure some quiet space and time (about 30 minutes) and start.

Steps:

1) Identification: look for situations or your own behaviour, related to digital technologies that you personally consider unsatisfactory. Write them down in a list together with the emotions that go with them.

2) The writing down: Now imagine that your best friend is facing these problems and you are trying to provide support and help to find a positive outcome. Write a letter to this friend (yourself), in which you show compassion and understanding for the problems you have listed.

3) The confrontation: when such problems occur, open the letter and use the support it contains to process the situation and to be able to react better in the future. The confrontation is repeated several times as needed.

Do mindfully all the 3 steps of this method and see how it is helping you to develop a deeper understanding of your own behaviour when working with digital technologies.

## Activity 8

Let's go back the first activity from this Module. Remember the list you did about which digital technologies you had used in your work in the 48 hours prior to starting the Module and your answers to the questions:

- How much time you have spent, using each one of them?
- Are you feeling satisfied, neutral or dissatisfied with your work results?

Now, if you have to plan the next 48 hours would you change the way you use technology? What would you do differently?

## Activity 9

Congratulations, you have successfully completed the Self-awareness module of the Stressless program! Here is what you have learned:

- **What is self-awareness and self-reflection** = process of questioning and understanding one's own thoughts, emotions, values and actions to learn more about oneself and one's individual behaviour. These are valuable instruments for behavioural optimization.

- **What are the steps of the self-reflection cycle:** 1) Awareness of the status quo; 2) Conscious perception; 3) Set goals; 4) Check concrete actions; 5) Integrate experience.
- Two effective methods for self-reflection are **the set of questions for effective self-analysis** and the **letter to oneself**, which can be especially supportive when negative feelings about a situation arise.

Use self-reflection to improve the awareness about your work with digital tools!

If you want to continue the journey towards reducing digital stress, choose another module of this programme.