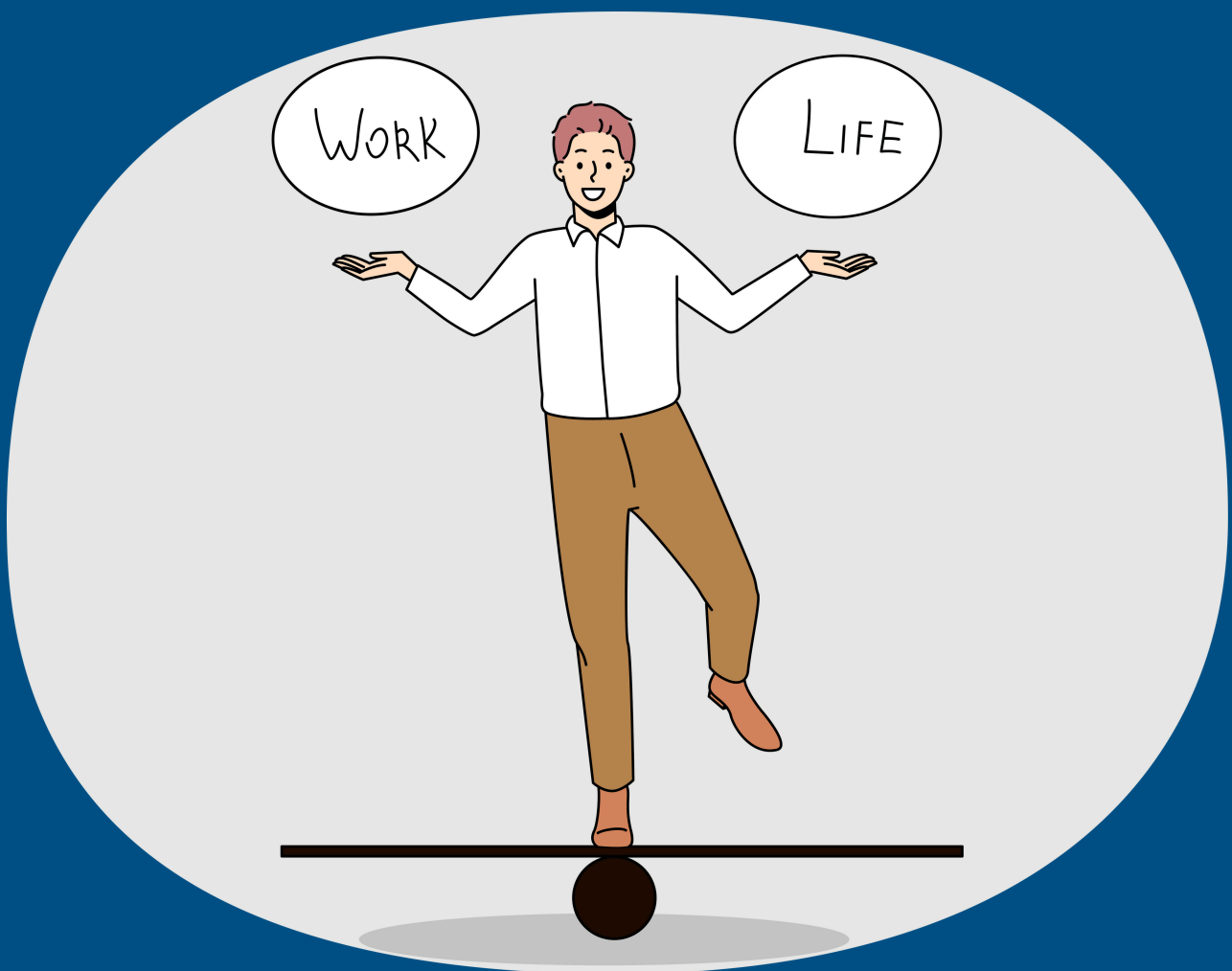


MENTAL HEALTH HOW-TO KIT

FOR YOUNG EMPLOYEES



YOU(TH)
CAN
THRIVE

Title: Mental Health: How-to kit for young employees

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Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information contained in this toolkit. All information was believed to be correct as of February 2024. Nevertheless, the Consortium Members Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation and Comune Di Cinisello Balsamo cannot accept responsibility for the consequences of its use for other purposes or in other contexts.

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CONSORTIUM

CYPRUS YOUTH CLUBS ORGANISATION (KOKEN) – CYPRUS

KOKEN, Leading Partner, is a non-profit, nonpartisan, non-governmental organization (NGO) which forms the central coordinating body of 70 Youth Clubs in urban and rural areas of Cyprus. The organisation successfully coordinates, supports, and provides expert guidance to volunteer groups who actively participate in youth clubs. Additionally, the organization develops and delivers inclusive activities, educational seminars, awareness campaigns, whilst aiming at enhancing the well-being of young individuals.



COMUNE DI CINISELLO BALSAMO – ITALY

The Youth Policy and Social Innovation Department of Cinisello Balsamo Municipality organizes and manages actions with/for young people. The activities aim to develop the soft skills, referring to key competences for lifelong learning as well as the growth of the active citizenship and youth participation. As a Public Body, it works for a shared youth policy strategy for a sustainable local development.



THRIVE

You(th) can THRIVE! Enhancing adaptability, resilience and learnability skills in young employees

About the Project:

Thrive project focuses on the development and enhancement of resilience, adaptability and learnability skills of [young employees](#) in the workplace, especially those with fewer opportunities and other obstacles such as mental or physical health difficulties, mobility or financial difficulties.

Thrive project brings together two organisations from two European countries who are experts in the field of youth work, aiming to:

- Assess the needs of young employees in terms of being happy, healthy and thriving in their working environment
- Assess the employers' perspectives on what makes young employees happy and thriving at work
- Discuss ways of developing and sustaining work-life balance
- Assess the impact of poor resilience, adaptability and learnability skills on job satisfaction, quality of work
- Enhance adaptability and resilience among young employees

To do so, partners have created [two online "How-To" kits](#) based on the outputs of focus group discussions and literature review. One kit was designed for [employers](#), while this one target [young employees](#). The primary objective of these kits is to enhance adaptability and resilience among both employers and young employees.

Specific [objectives](#) follow:

- Raising awareness on the impact of poor resilience, adaptability and learnability skills on job satisfaction, quality of work, mental and physical health and identifying when and how to implement effectively these three core skills

Developing and sustaining work-life balance

- Developing and enhancing resilience adaptability and learnability skills of young employees

INTRODUCTION

The Toolkit's content was mainly shaped by the needs assessment, which largely stemmed from the input of participants in the Focus Groups held in Cyprus and Italy, respectively. The opinions and suggestions of the participants were carefully considered in crafting the content in line with the literature, with the specific aim of creating a toolkit tailored to young employees.

Mental health in the workplace is a critical issue, particularly scrutinized in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The latest report from the European Commission (2023) depicts a growing concern within the EU in regards to poor mental health of young individuals. In fact, the percentage of young employees (aged 18-29) reporting symptoms of depression more than doubled during the pandemic, indicating that work-related stress is also a vital issue affecting mental health and well-being in Europe.



What is stress?

The [European Commission](#) (2002) defines stress as the pattern of emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological reactions to adverse and noxious aspects of work content, organization, and environment. Job stress carries serious consequences for both employers and employees. Human consequences include anxiety, depression, anger, cardiovascular disease, headaches, accidents, and even early onset Alzheimer's disease (Desler, 2013, p.555).

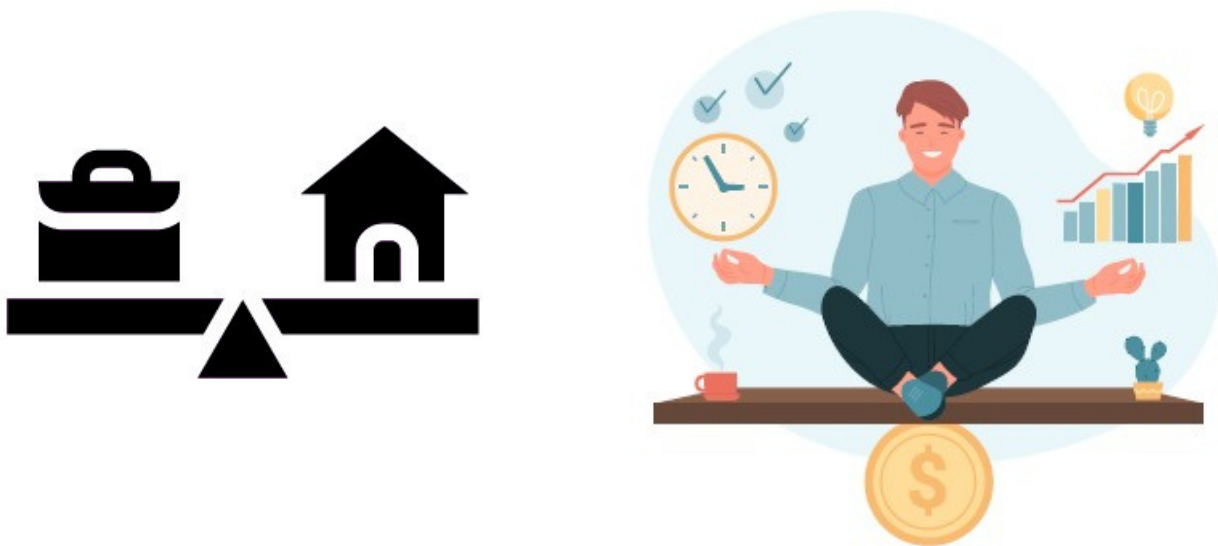
Stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree.

The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being (WHO, 2023).

A recent report from the [European Agency for Safety and Health at Work](#) estimates that 44% of workers experienced increased work stress as a result of the pandemic. Additionally, the OSH Pulse survey conducted by EU-OSHA in 2022 shows that 27% of workers' experience stress, anxiety, or depression caused or exacerbated by work.

In line with this evidence, our data collection through the THRIVE Project and focus groups in Cyprus and Italy gathered the opinions of young employees regarding their experiences. Specifically, the **Cyprus focus group** revealed that young employees prioritize satisfactory compensation, a mentally healthy work environment, and employer-provided motivation. Conversely, the **Italian focus group** participants emphasized the importance of creating optimal working conditions for young people, enabling them to perform tasks effectively without excessive stress.

Moreover, **the pandemic** has introduced new stressors across all aspects of life, increasing the risk of burnout for everyone. Therefore, understanding the vital signs of burnout and promoting mental health at work has become a crucial response to these challenges.



WORK RELATED STRESSORS

At times, work-related stress may not stem from a single source. It could be a cumulative effect of various minor factors over time, or it might result from a toxic blend of stressors from both work and personal life.

According to the World Health Organization, burnout is a syndrome resulting from workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It's characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's job or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job, and reduced professional efficacy (World Health Organization, 2019).

Work context stressors

- employee's role in the organisation
- career development
- interpersonal relationships
- organisational culture
- work-life balance

Work content stressors

- job content
- lack of support
- working hours
- toxic environment
- participation and control
- workload

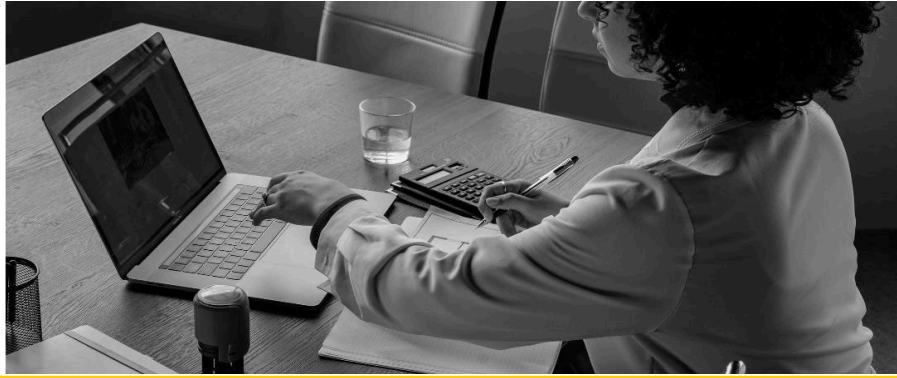
WORK-LIFE BALANCE



Achieving [work-life balance](#) has long been a priority for those who value the quality of their work experience and its impact on overall life satisfaction. Research consistently highlights the detrimental effects of work-life imbalance on both well-being and productivity (Guest, 2002).

TIPS FOR ACHIEVING WORK-LIFE BALANCE:

At work:



1. Set achievable daily goals

Completing important tasks gives a sense of satisfaction and control. Research shows that having more control over our workload reduces stress. Prioritize tasks, make a list, and don't hesitate to ask for help when needed.

2. Manage your time effectively

Procrastination can make tasks seem overwhelming. Break down large projects into smaller ones and reward yourself for each completion. Discuss unnecessary routines with your boss to maximize productivity and free up personal time.

3. Seek flexibility

Many companies offer flexible work arrangements like flex time and telecommuting. Inquire about options for adjusting your schedule or working remotely. Research suggests that flexible schedules lead to higher productivity and loyalty.

4. Take regular breaks

Short breaks during work hours can refresh your mind and help manage stress. Stepping away briefly can improve focus when you return to your tasks.

5. Enjoy music for focus

Listening to music you love while working can boost concentration, reduce stress, and spark creativity. Studies have shown that music can have positive effects on well-being, such as lowering blood pressure. Remember to use headphones and adjust the volume to your liking.

6. Communicate openly

Transparent communication with colleagues and supervisors is key when facing challenges. Offer practical solutions rather than just expressing concerns. Considering different perspectives can ease stress. In tense situations, reconsider your approach or calmly state your position. Be open to compromise and give everyone time to cool off before resolving issues constructively.

7. Be kind to yourself

Remember that nobody's perfect. Embrace your humanity and aim to do your best without striving for perfection.



At home:



1. Unplug

While technology offers flexibility in our work, it's essential to recognize the importance of personal time. Don't let the temptation to be constantly available lead to burnout. Take breaks and prioritize your own well-being.

2. Divide and conquer

Ensure that household responsibilities are divided evenly and clearly defined. This helps prevent confusion and reduces potential issues later on.

3. Avoid overcommitting

If your calendar feels overwhelming, don't hesitate to say no to additional activities. Resist the urge to take on too much and prioritize self-care over trying to be a superhero.

4. Seek support

Talking to friends and family can be invaluable for both your personal and professional life. Strong support systems have been shown to improve overall health and resilience.

6. Take care of your body and stay active

Maintaining physical health improves your ability to handle stress and reduces the likelihood of sick days. Eat well, exercise regularly, and ensure you get enough rest. Avoid relying on substances like drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes to cope with stress, as they can exacerbate problems. Incorporate physical activity into your routine to boost your immune system and overall well-being.

7. Seek help when needed

Don't let stress affect your health and happiness. If you're feeling overwhelmed, don't hesitate to reach out to a mental health professional. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Prioritize self-care and seek support when necessary.



HOW- TO...BUILD RESILIENCE:

Grounding Technique:

A grounding technique is a strategy that helps you **connect or ground yourself to the present moment**, assisting in regulating your emotions and breaking away from negative thoughts. Studies have shown that just one hour of grounding exercises can improve mood in people with anxiety. This technique can be done at any time, requiring no special equipment.

The 5,4,3,2,1 technique

The 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 method is a popular grounding technique. It involves taking a few deep breaths and then identifying five things you can **see**, four things you can **touch**, three things you can **hear**, two things you can **smell**, and one thing you can **taste**. This exercise engages your senses and helps you get in touch with the present, which can be highly useful in stressful situations.

The idea is that this technique helps you shift your focus to what's currently happening around you instead of what's making you feel anxious.

HOW TO GET GROUNDED

DESCRIBE 5
THINGS YOU
CAN SEE

NAME 4
THINGS YOU
CAN FEEL

NAME 3
THINGS YOU
CAN HEAR

NAME 2
THINGS YOU
CAN SMELL

NAME 1
GOOD THING
ABOUT YOURSELF

Think like an Optimist

Optimistic thinking can prevent high levels of distress and boost your inner resilience. When under pressure, it is easy to react with unhelpful feelings like frustration, annoyance, and irritation. Growing your **internal resilience** by practicing optimism will prepare you to react to and handle everyday stressors effectively. Notice the difference if you think about a task that you have to do and then change the wording and think about a task in this way: I get to do this task and notice if and how it changes your approach and attitude to the task. One way to learn optimistic thinking is to **identify a set of sentences** that will mobilize your resilience and gear you for optimistic thinking. The next step is to use them generously!

Positive thinking can help reduce distress and strengthen your resilience. When facing pressure, it's common to feel frustrated, annoyed, or irritated. Building inner resilience through optimism can better equip you to handle everyday stressors. Try reframing tasks from "I have to do this" to "I **get to do this**" and see how it shifts your approach and attitude. One way to cultivate optimistic thinking is to identify sentences that activate your resilience and promote positivity and use them frequently.

Examples:

- This is possible and manageable.
- I get to do it...
- I can manage...
- I will ask for help.
- I know how to calm myself...

Exercise

According to Yooks (2020), studies have found that getting your body moving with some exercise can really help with job stress.

Essentially, when you work out, it boosts your overall health and makes you feel good.

Specifically, it releases endorphins, those happy hormones that help lift your mood.



As you begin to regularly shed your daily tensions through movement and physical activity, you may find that this focus on a single task, and the resulting energy and optimism, can help you stay calm, clear and focused in everything you do. Thus, exercising not only reduces the bad effects of stress but also makes you feel better overall.



Eisenhower Matrix

Aim: Sort tasks and activities by their importance and urgency, helping individuals manage their time well and concentrate on the most important actions.

Steps: Make a list of all the tasks and activities you have to do. Decide how important and urgent each task is. Sort tasks into four groups based on their importance and urgency.

The Eisenhower Decision Matrix



FURTHER MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

CYPRUS

Discuss what is troubling you with your general practitioner in order to get a referral for a mental health professional. You can visit the site of [State Health Services Organization](https://bit.ly/3oUgFdH) <https://bit.ly/3oUgFdH> to find a psychologist or visit the site of the [General Healthcare System \(GESY\)](http://www.gesy.org.cy) www.gesy.org.cy to find a mental health professional.

There are also many psychologists or psychotherapists in the private sector, with whom you can book an appointment directly.

You can also call the [Mental Health Hotline](https://www.youthboard.org.cy) 1410 of the Youth Board of Cyprus for confidential and anonymous counselling.

- Monday – Friday 10:00-23:00
- Saturday – Sunday 15:00-23:00



ITALY



Croce Rossa Italiana – 1520 : Free-phone number for psychological support accessible to all citizens over 18, from Monday to Saturday, from 8:00 to 20:00.

The Italian Mental Health Department (DSM) includes all facilities and services related to mental health care in the Italian area connected to the Azienda sanitaria locale (ASL). The care offer is complemented by private clinics and private nursing homes.

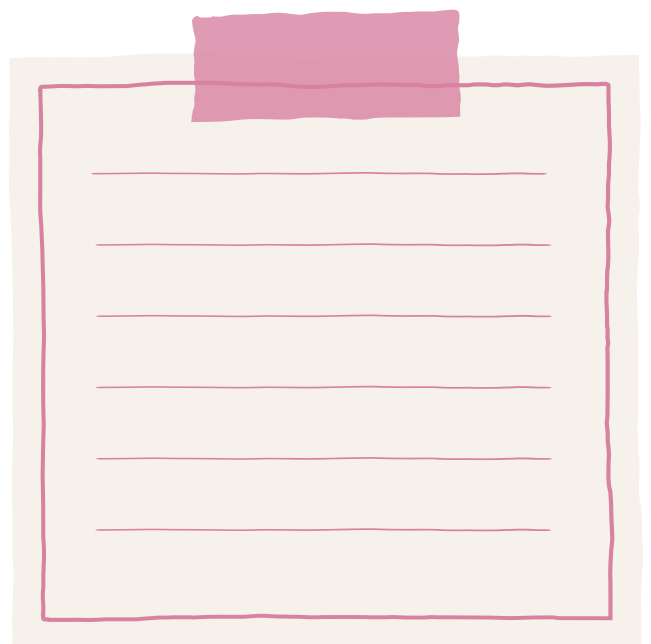
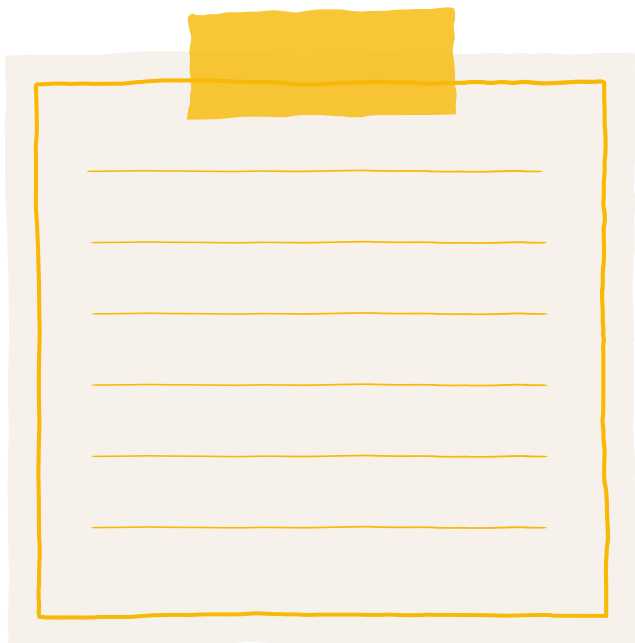
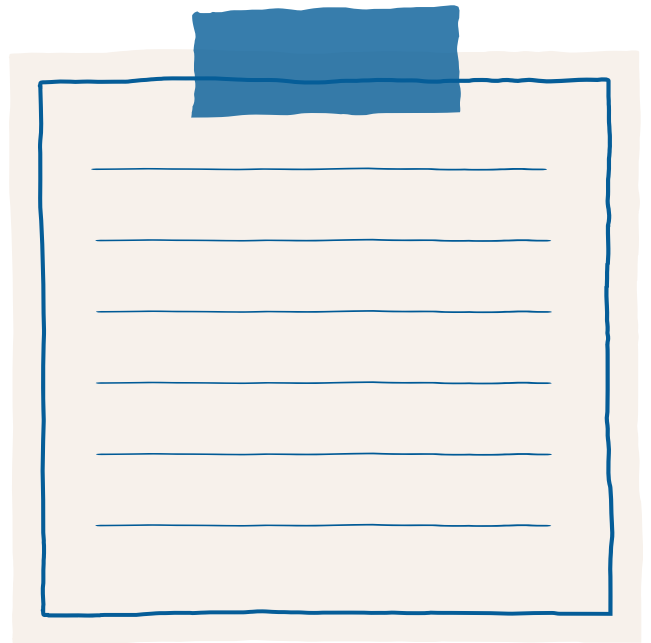
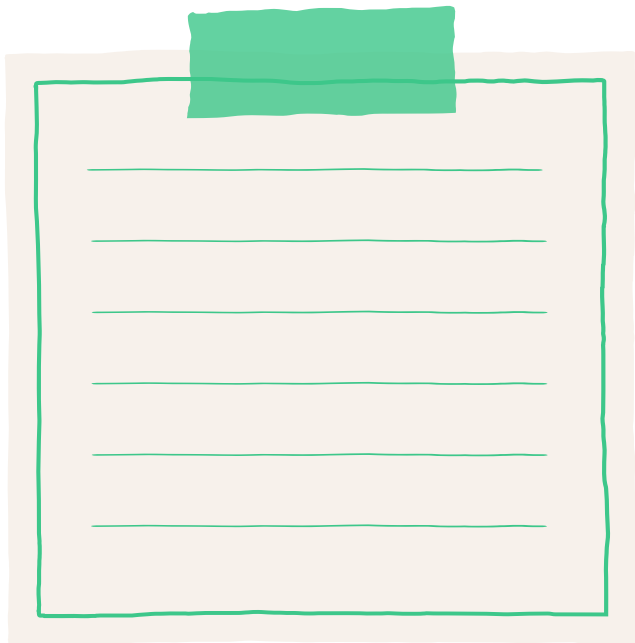
There are also psychologists or psychotherapists who work privately, with whom it is possible to have a direct appointment.

For more information you can check this part of the Official Government website related to **Mental Health**:

<https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/saluteMentale/homeSaluteMentale.js>

The website of the **Ministry of Health**, where all the health facilities are divided for every Italian region:

https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/documentazione/p6_2_8_1_1.jsp?lingua=italiano&id=29





www.thrive4youth.com

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