

# A Handbook for Guidance Counsellors



# Foreword

**YOUNG PEOPLE** leaving comprehensive school at the age of 15 have a big decision to make about their post-comprehensive education. Making the right choice about which study path to pursue is important in order to stay motivated and complete the studies they have chosen. The My Path (Oma Linja in Finnish) programme, developed by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers, psychologists and specialists in youth work and learning, aims to help young people understand which line of study or which career choice is right for them. The key objective of the programme is to make sure that when students finish their final year of comprehensive schooling, they will be able to rely on their own ability to make the right choices about further education and tackle any challenges and obstacles they may experience.

**THE PROGRAMME** consists of two main elements: lessons and workshops. Together these will make schools better equipped to help young people increase their self-awareness, improve their self-esteem and other psychological skills, and learn the skills necessary in working life.

The workshops are organised by Walter Association, an NGO that works in schools and is in touch with young people's needs and dreams. This handbook focuses on lessons that are incorporated into the guidance counselling lessons provided as part of the national core curriculum.

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# RESEARCH-BASED BACKGROUND TO THE MY PATH LESSONS

**MY PATH** lessons are designed to give young people the skills they need to make the right career choices. This means building their self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence in their own ability to recognise personal interests, find information on interesting study paths, and create realistic plans. When young people feel capable of making their own choices, they will also feel more motivated to pursue their plans. Similarly, they will be better equipped to identify and deal with any obstacles or disappointments they may experience on their chosen career paths. Preparing for adversity builds resilience and helps students persevere despite setbacks.

# Content

**THE MY PATH** programme covers years 7–9 of comprehensive school; this means students aged 13–15. The contents of the lessons for each year are designed to optimally meet the needs of students at that age and to be in line with their developmental stage.

My Path offers students tools for building self-awareness, self-esteem and motivation. It also helps them to develop an ability to deal with disappointments and to understand the various options available, and the skills to deal with stress and to set targets.

## SELF-KNOWLEDGE

As a young person, understanding yourself helps you make better choices regarding your education. Students aged 13–15 are only starting to develop an understanding of their personal strengths, interests and values, and their ability to learn and transfer acquired skills to use in other areas of life. This is why efforts to strengthen teenagers' self-knowledge is an important part of guidance counselling.

## MOTIVATION

Understanding the difference between internal and external motivation is important for young people to enable them to make internally motivated choices about their educational path. Similarly, it is important to be aware of how other people (such as parents and friends) influence our decisions, and how much stereotypical thinking affects our choices. Positive feedback builds our self-esteem and internal motivation.

## KNOWING YOUR OPTIONS

To make informed choices about education or planning a career, young people need information about the various options available to them. Often, teenagers have misconceptions about training and educational paths, occupations, and working life in general. While

it is important to provide a wide range of opportunities, it is equally important to be realistic about occupations and training paths. If a student is considering dropping out, they may change their mind when interesting and relevant information is available about various occupations and training programmes.

## PREPARING FOR SETBACKS

Students may experience various challenges and setbacks when making decisions about further education and in the actual application process. The My Path programme aims to prepare them for setbacks and to help them deal with problems regarding career planning, or health and wellbeing. Sometimes problems arise as a result of insufficient support and guidance, differences of opinion with parents regarding career choices, unrealistic aspirations, lack of self-esteem required to pursue career plans, gender inequality in the labour market or career interruptions. The My Path programme contains exercises where students work in groups to identify potential setbacks and career obstacles, come up with ways of addressing these issues, and test coping mechanisms in practice. Having prior knowledge of how to overcome setbacks reduces the risk of discouragement later in life.

## STRESS

Students completing comprehensive schooling (the first nine years of school) face a stressful time at the end of year 9, when they apply to different schools through the joint application system. Regardless of the outcome of the application process, a major life change awaits these young people. Whether they see this change as a threat or an opportunity will affect their wellbeing and how they cope. It is important that they learn to understand what causes stress, and how to reduce and manage it.

## GOALS

When you learn how to match the options available to your personal strengths and interests, it becomes much easier to set goals for training and education, and eventually careers. The objective in the My Path programme is to equip students so they can identify and set realistic goals and prepare backup plans. It is more motivating to pursue goals when they are clear and reasonable.

Table 1. Lessons and themes

	Self-knowledge	Motivation	Preparing for setbacks	Knowing your options	Stress	Goals
<b>7TH YEAR</b>						
• I like	×					
• I am	×					
• Using my skills	×					
• I learn	×					
• The power of words		×				
<b>8TH YEAR</b>						
• What is important to you?	×					
• Why?		×				
• Stereotypes or not?		×				
• Useful praise		×				
• Overcoming challenges			×			
<b>9TH YEAR</b>						
• Knowing your options				×		
• Towards change					×	×
• Stressed out?					×	
• Step by step						×
• Dreams						×

Table 1 indicates the 15-hour lesson plan for each year and each theme. The focus in year 7 is on self-knowledge, in year 8 on motivation and potential setbacks, and in year 9 on available options, stress and goals. It is advisable to follow the order of lessons shown here because some content builds on previous lessons.

# Method

**THE MY PATH** programme uses methods derived from the social-cognitive learning approach to prepare students for the future, to boost their motivation and to help them make good career choices. The objective is to encourage students to be more proactive when it comes to education and career planning. To produce positive learning outcomes, the process requires three essential building blocks: active learning, social support and an atmosphere of trust.

## ACTIVE LEARNING

The key to active learning is to encourage the students themselves to gain insights and find answers to questions through group discussions, role play exercises and other activities. The educator's role is to provide an introduction to the exercise, to observe, to activate students, and to facilitate the learning process. Instead of answering students' questions, the educator encourages students to find the answers themselves. Gradually, as each group discussion makes students more confident and prepared to share and exchange views, they recognise their abilities as problem-solvers. These positive experiences reinforce their self-reliance and build a positive self-image.

## SOCIAL SUPPORT

Career guidance lessons in the classroom provide excellent opportunities for peer support. It is easy for young people in a similar situation in life to relate to each other, and to provide relevant advice and support. The guidance counsellor's role is to offer social support, to encourage teamwork, to observe, and to provide positive feedback for active participation. Positive feedback works best when it's specific enough and given immediately. Similarly, it is important to express appreciation to active students and encourage the quieter ones to participate. Group activities provide students with an opportunity to observe and to give and receive feedback.

## ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST

If students feel tense and stressed, they find it more difficult to engage in group activities in a positive spirit. It is also more difficult for them to give and receive information, and to learn. Conversely, an open, safe and encouraging atmosphere will motivate students to participate, share experiences, and contribute to group work.



## TRAINED EDUCATORS

For guidance counsellors, the My Path programme offers an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the My Path method and to update, complement and expand their pedagogical skills. They will learn different techniques for fostering an atmosphere of trust, peer-to-peer learning and solution-oriented thinking.

## LITERATURE:

Vuori, J., Koivisto, P., Mutanen, P., Jokisaari, M., & Salmela-Aro, K. (2007). Kohti työelämää -ryhmämenetelmän vaikutukset nuorten siirtymiseen toisen asteen opintoihin ja masennusoireisiin. *Työ ja ihminen* 21, 250–269.

Nykänen, M. & Vuori, J. (2018). Urahallinnan ohjaus opetuksessa. In J. Pirttiniemi, H. Kasurinen, J. Kettunen, E. Merimaa & R. Vuorinen (eds.), *OPO 2. Opinto-ohjaajan käsikirja*, (p. 90–96), Helsinki: Juvenes Print – Suomen Yliopistopaino Oy.

Koivisto, P., & Vuori, J. (2006). Urahallintaa vahvistavat ryhmämenetelmät oppilaanohjauksen tukena. In J. Mäkinen, E. Olkinuora, R. Rinne, & A. Suikkanen (eds.), *Elinkautisesta työstä elinikäiseen oppimiseen*, (p. 267–282), Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Vuori, J., Koivisto, P., Mutanen, P., Jokisaari, M., & Salmela-Aro, K. (2008). Towards Working Life: Effects of an intervention on mental health and transition to post-basic education. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 72, 67–80.

Koivisto, P., Vinokur, A. D., & Vuori, J. (2011). Effects of a career choice intervention on components of career preparation. *The Career Development Quarterly*. 59, 367–378.

# My Path lessons in practice

**THE MY PATH** programme consists of 15 lessons (45 minutes each) spread over the final three years (years 7–9) of comprehensive school. Schools are free to fit the lessons into their curricula, but it is strongly recommended that students complete the last lesson in year 9 before the joint application process.

The My Path programme comes complete with exercises and the related lesson-specific instructions and timetables. However, every group of students is different, and completing certain sections may take more or less time than estimated in the handbook. Commitment to completing each lesson in full is important to achieve the desired impact.

The guidance counsellor's role includes observation of both the group and individual participants, communication with the group, and recording the results of group discussions and exercises. Ideally the lessons should be run by two professional educators to ensure sufficient attention is given to all activities, but it is feasible for just one guidance counsellor to do it. In most schools that took part in the pilot project, guidance counsellors and special education teachers attended the My Path training and were responsible for the lessons.

# Materials

**MY PATH** lesson materials consist of 15 videos, each introducing the lesson's theme, and student workbooks.

## VIDEOS

Each lesson begins with a video clip that introduces the lesson's topic. Videos (with English subtitles) are available at <http://omalinja.fi/videot/> (password: omalinjavideot). The guidance counsellor selects the appropriate year group on the main page, and the specific topic.

## STUDENT WORKBOOKS

In addition to engaging in group activities, students complete exercises in their workbooks. Students use the same workbook through years 7–9 and can later use their workbooks and notes for educational and career planning purposes.



# Exercise types

## INTRODUCTORY VIDEOS

Each My Path lesson begins with a short video clip introducing the topic of the lesson. These include interviews with three adults whose real-life career paths are examined from different perspectives. The other videos are fictional and feature young people at school and in their free time. The duration of each video clip is 3–5 minutes.

## GROUP AND PAIR WORK

After watching the video clip, students work in pairs or groups (any group exercise can be done in pairs, and vice versa) to discuss the key themes of the video. Groups or pairs will then continue to work on the theme in more detail. To allow students to maintain a certain distance from the topic at hand, the exercises are based on imaginary situations. Lack of personal involvement reduces the risk of students becoming defensive and makes the topics easier to approach.

During the group discussion the guidance counsellor circulates around the classroom to make sure everyone knows what to do and provides encouragement. They also observe the students and provide positive feedback after the assignment has been

completed. At the end of the lesson, the class discusses the small group assignment together.

Heterogeneous grouping is recommended for boosting group dynamics and breaking up cliques and established roles. It is also advisable to change the group composition for each lesson. This ensures adherence to the key programme principles: active learning, social support and an atmosphere of trust.

## INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS

At the end of each lesson, students reflect on the meaning of the lesson's topic for them personally. These thoughts are not to be shared with others but can be used to facilitate personal guidance counselling and further self-reflection at a later stage.

# Description of the lessons

**EACH** lesson description is structured as follows:

**OBJECTIVE.** Learning objective, which is intended for the guidance counsellor only, and not to be shared with students.

**LESSON STRUCTURE.** What happens during the lesson, and in which order.

**INTRODUCTION.** Information about the key points and content of the lesson. Please read carefully before starting the lesson. This information serves as a basis for the exercises and discussions. The introductory text is intended for the guidance counsellor only; students will gain an insight into the topic through exercises and discussions.

**ACTION POINTS.** Step-by-step instructions for running the lesson.

**NOTE.** Any special points regarding the lesson.



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# I like

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective during the first lesson is to provide an overview of the My Path programme and its objectives, and help students identify specific areas of interest.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Guidance counsellor briefly describes the content and objectives of the My Path programme
- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students answer questions about their interests and talk about them in pairs
- Guidance counsellor writes down occupations listed by students

## **INTRODUCTION**

In order to make informed and motivated choices about their further education and career, students need to recognise their skills and strengths, and to identify areas of special interest. To do this, students answer a few easy questions. Gradually a more defined picture of their future dreams will emerge.



## ACTION POINTS

- 1** **Tell students** they will have five My Path lessons every year during years 7–9 of comprehensive school. Explain that each lesson starts with a short video clip, and that the focus will be on themes associated with further studies and dream jobs, which students will discuss in groups and individually.
- 2** **Hand out workbooks** and ask students to write their names on the cover. Explain that the workbook will be used throughout years 7–9, and that everyone can use their personal workbook for career planning, even after finishing school.
- 3** **Watch the video.** Ask students what they thought the video was about.
- 4** **Ask the students to complete** parts 1–3 of the I like exercise in the workbook independently. Tell the students to write down what comes to mind and not overthink their answers.
- 5** **Divide the group into pairs** and ask students to share their answers with each other.
- 6** **Write down** occupations the students referred to as their dream jobs. Take a picture of the list so that you can look at it again at the end of year 9.



# I am

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students recognise their unique skills and strengths.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students work in groups to understand what strengths are required in various roles
- Students work individually to identify the skills and strengths they use at school, in their free time and in their hobbies

## **INTRODUCTION**

Identifying your skills and strengths is difficult for everyone, even for adults. It takes a bit of practice, but it's important to have an idea of what you like and what you are good at when you ask yourself 'What do I want to do when I grow up?' Young people who choose an educational path that matches their strengths are more likely to complete their upper secondary schooling.



### **NOTE**

Encourage students to ask questions if they are unsure of the meaning of some words on the strengths and skills list. However, rather than answering a student directly, ask the class first. Activating students will teach them to rely on themselves instead of accepting something given to them.

## ACTION POINTS

- 1** **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students: What skills and strengths does the person in the video have?
- 2** **Ask the students** to open the first part of the I am exercise in the workbook. Tell the students that the left-hand side of the page contains different roles that a person can have in a group, for example, in working life. Skills and strengths are listed on the right. The students will then combine the roles with the strengths (one strength per role) in a manner that seems right to them. There are no right or wrong answers. Let the students think about the exercise independently for a few minutes and divide them into small groups where they can find the solution through discussion. Give them 10 minutes to discuss.
- 3** **Review the answers** of each group and write the selected strengths under the roles on the board.
- 4** **Discuss the results.** Did the groups agree on the strengths? How did the students justify their selections? At the end, ask the students to choose the role that suits them the best on the list.
- 5** **Thank the students** for their active participation and ask them to open the second part of the I am exercise, which contains the list of strengths. Start by telling them what

is meant by strengths and skills in this exercise: Personal strengths mean characteristics and ways of working in different situations at school, with friends, at home, in hobbies, etc. Personal skills, on the other hand, include social skills, technical skills, manual skills, and language skills, among others. Ask the students to fill in the list of strengths according to instructions. The students mark the skills and strengths they use at school, in their free time, at home or in hobbies on the list. Give them about 10 minutes to fill in the list.

- 6** **Next, discuss** their thoughts about filling in the list of strengths. Example questions:
  - Was it difficult to fill in the list? Why?
  - How could the list be useful in the selection of an educational or professional field?
  - Did you find any unexpected strengths during the exercise?
- 7** **Ask the students to choose** one of the skills or strengths they had checked on the list (for example, their favourite one) and write it in the box on the next page (part 3). After this, the students will think about the following independently: a) when, where and how have they used the skill?, b) how was the skill useful in the situation?, and c) in which professions could this skill be useful? If the exercise feels difficult to the students, you can divide them into pairs to think about the questions.

# Using my skills

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students learn to recognise the skills and strengths they have acquired in their free time but can use in school or at work.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students work in groups to discuss the skills and strengths they use in their free time, and to identify occupations or lines of study where these might be useful

## **INTRODUCTION**

Students continue to reflect on the various skills and strengths they have acquired through hobbies or other free time activities. We all develop skills and strengths over time, but we may be completely unaware of them. For instance, playing computer or video games can improve problem-solving and language skills, both of which are useful in further studies and at work. Skills and strengths acquired in free time or with family and friends contribute to a person's self-knowledge. Where a skill was acquired is irrelevant; it's how you use your skills that matters. The exercises in this section help students understand which of their skills and strengths could be useful, and in which occupations. Rather than building specific plans for the future, this section focuses on a more theoretical reflection on the connections between skills, studies and working life.



## ACTION POINTS

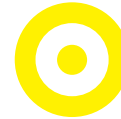
- 1** **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students: How does the person in the video combine the jobs of a drummer and a chef?
- 2** **Ask the students** to list their free time activities in the first part of the Using my skills exercise of the workbook.
- 3** **Divide the students** into small groups and ask them to discuss 1) the skills and strengths they have learnt in their free time and 2) the occupations where the skills and strengths could be useful. Ask the students to write their observations in the second part of the Using my skills exercise.
- 4** **Ask each group** to share an example of skills and strengths related to a particular free time activity and a occupation where they could be useful. Draw a table on the board on the basis of the discussion to illustrate the idea of transferrable skills, following the example below. You can continue to think up other professions with the entire class.

### Example:

Hobby or free time activity	Skills or strength	Occupation
playing on the computer	problem solving, language skills	IT support, tour guide
taking care of a pet	organisational skills, responsibility, persistence, systematic approach	stock-keeper, gardener, project manager, researcher
team sports (for example, floorball, football)	interaction skills, perseverance, physical fitness	youth worker, musician, sales representative, receptionist, practical nurse, nurse, real estate agent, teacher
listening to music, watching films	language skills, musical skills	customer service advisor, tour guide, salesperson at a music shop
arts and crafts	craftsmanship, creativity	carpenter, artisan, upholsterer, artist, graphic designer
social media, YouTube content creation	written and oral communication	media assistant, editor, host, author

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**Tell the students** that transferrable skills mean precisely this kind of skills that can be used in other contexts than the ones in which they were originally learnt. If you have time, discuss why it is important to think of skills as transferrable. For example: In addition to school, we learn new things through hobbies and in our free time. Many of the strengths we use in free time and hobbies can also be used in studies and working life. Similarly to Rasmus in the video who transferred the skills he had learnt in his other job to his new job.



### NOTE

**It may be easier for students to match specific skills and strengths with occupations if they think about occupations they see every day, at school, in their free time, on television, in the media, in a shopping centre and so on. This technique will be useful later in this programme. Students can also be instructed to look for information on various occupations online.**

# I learn

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students understand that everyone has the ability to learn. We all learn at our own pace and in our own way, but we all can learn.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students interview the guidance counsellor about a difficult learning experience
- Students think about something difficult they have learnt and interview each other in pairs
- Write down a list of different study techniques ('We learn together')

## **INTRODUCTION**

The most important thing with learning is that we have confidence in our ability to learn. When a person trusts their ability to learn, they will have the necessary motivation, tenacity and perseverance to retry after any setback. The key point to make during this lesson is that everyone can learn, in their own way and at their own pace.



## ACTION POINTS

- 1** **Watch the video** and discuss it. After the video, ask the students: What helped the main character to solve the task?
- 2** **Tell the students** that next, they get to interview you. Share your own learning experience with the students by describing something you learnt although it felt difficult at first.
- 3** **Ask the students to think** in pairs about questions they want to ask you in relation to the learning experience.



## NOTE

For the interview, the guidance counsellor recalls a learning experience to share with the class. This may involve learning an individual skill, or a more complex experience. The key point is that despite difficulties, you were able to learn. It is also important to recognise factors that contributed to learning.

- 4** **Let the students ask** you questions and answer them to the best of your ability. Make sure to discuss the methods and ways of learning that you found effective. Encourage the students to take notes in the first part of the I learn exercise.
- 5** **Next, ask the students** to answer the following question in the I learn exercise independently: "What would you like to learn during this school year that feels difficult to learn right now?"
- 6** **Divide the students into pairs** and ask them to think up ways to learn what they wrote. The students write their ideas in their workbooks. Encourage them to use the tips listed in the workbook.
- 7** **Read the list of tips** given in the I learn exercise together. Make sure that the students understand the point of each method. Ask the students which methods they have used.



# The power of words

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students understand how the behaviour and words of others may affect their thinking and actions.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students work in pairs and write a letter to the main character in the video
- Students complete workbook exercises independently

## **INTRODUCTION**

It is a natural part of the identity-building process of young people to be very receptive to the opinions and comments of their peers, family members and other adults. The purpose of this lesson is to help young people recognise and understand how other people's words and actions affect their own thinking and behaviour. It also encourages them to consider when to pay attention to the opinions of other people and when to ignore them.

## ACTION POINTS

- 1** **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students: What happened in the video?
- 2** **Divide the students into pairs** and ask them to write a positive letter to the person in the video (first part of the Power of words exercise).
- 3** **Ask a few volunteers** to read their letters out loud. Summarise the key messages of the letters.
- 4** **Ask the students to answer** the questions on the second part of the Power of words exercise independently.
- 5** **At the end of the lesson** tell students this was the last My Path lesson in year 7. Ask the students to browse through the exercises they completed in their workbooks, and ask them to list the three best things about them and write them down on page 25 of the workbook.



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# What is important to you?

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students identify their personal values and make a connection between their values and different occupations.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students select 3–5 values that are most important to them
- Students work in groups to identify occupations that reflect their shared values
- Write down values and related occupations on the board

## **INTRODUCTION**

Values are a core part of who we are. When we identify our personal values and accept them as our own, we can make choices that are aligned with those values. If we are able to make value-based career choices, we are more likely to enjoy life and thrive personally and professionally. Values may change over time, which is why re-examining our values occasionally is well worth the effort. Sometimes a shift in personal values may prompt us to change our lifestyle or even change careers.

## ACTION POINTS

- 1 **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students: What kinds of values did you see in the video? What was important to the main character?
- 2 **Ask the students to complete** the first part of the What is important to you? exercise independently. The students choose 3–5 values that are most important to them.
- 3 **Divide the students into groups of 3–4** and ask them to complete the second part of the What is important to you? exercise. In this exercise, the students select three values for closer examination (for example, three values they all share) and think of occupations and ways in which each of these values is visible.
- 4 **Discuss the results together** by asking each group to present one value and their thoughts about it, using the table below as guidance.



Value	Example occupation	How is the value reflected in the profession?
Beauty	Cosmetologist	Helps the customers feel beautiful
etc.		

# Why?

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students understand the difference between internal and external motivation.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion on what internal and external motivation mean
- Students work in pairs first, then the whole class together, to discuss the consequences of internal and external motivation
- Students reflect on their internal and external motivation for school and post-comprehensive educational path

## **INTRODUCTION**

Motivation gives us a sense of direction and it is the basic driver for all of our actions. It affects the intensity of effort and allocation of resources. When we are motivated, we are excited about what we do, we feel a sense of achievement, and we succeed in our efforts. If we lack motivation, we are passive and only do the bare minimum.

There are two types of motivation: internal (or intrinsic) and external (or extrinsic). Internally motivated people do something because they want to, because the action in itself is rewarding and brings joy. Externally motivated people, on the other hand, seek external rewards such as good grades, praise, appreciation or money, or their actions are guided by fear of loss or punishment, such as criticism, hostility, or the end of an important relationship.

External motivation is often short-lived. Once the person has achieved the desired outcome, motivation disappears. Meanwhile an internally motivated person enjoys what they do and wants to become better at it; achieving a specific goal is less relevant.

Students should be, at least to some degree, internally motivated when making choices about their post-comprehensive education. This would maintain student engagement and motivation.

## ACTION POINTS

- 1** **Watch the video** and discuss it. Ask the students how they understand internal and external motivation after watching the video. At the end of the discussion, read the definitions on the Why? page of the workbook together.
- 2** **Divide the students into pairs** and ask them to discuss what kinds of thoughts and feelings internal and external motivation could lead to in different cases. Give each pair one example case to discuss. The examples are in the appendix, and you can take copies of them and hand them out to the class. Each example has three questions for the students.
  - Example 1. Ira studies for hours on end for the history exam, because she wants to have the best grade (external motivation).
  - Example 2. Ira studies for hours on end for the history exam, because she is fascinated by history and wants to understand it (internal motivation).
  - Example 3. Leo wants to become a nurse, because he wants to help others and enjoys practical work (internal motivation).
  - Example 4. Leo wants to become a nurse, because his parents are nurses and they would be disappointed if Leo chose a different occupation (external motivation).
- 3** **Discuss the examples together** one case at a time. Discuss the students' answers to each question. At the end, emphasise the importance of internal motivation in making our actions feel meaningful.
- 4** **Ask the students to complete** the first part of the Why? exercise independently and write down internal and external motives for going to school around the characters. Circle around the classroom and make sure that everyone has understood the assignment. If a student is unable to decide whether a certain motive is internal or external, discuss the motive together to determine which one it is or if the same motive can be either internal or external, depending on the situation.
- 5** **Ask the students to complete** the second part of the Why? exercise independently and think about internal and external motives for applying for upper secondary school or vocational school after comprehensive school.
- 6** **Ask the students to examine** the graph in the exercise after they have completed the second part and think about their own application for further education – which of the two options has more internal motives?

# Stereotypes or not?

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students recognise occupational gender segregation and understand how it affects their thinking.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students complete the workbook exercise (link characters with occupations)
- Class discussion about occupational gender segregation
- Students think about occupations they find interesting and identify whether they are male- or female-dominated

## **INTRODUCTION**

There are many male- and female-dominated fields in Finland, as everywhere, and the situation hasn't changed much over a period of 30 years. In 2019, only 10 per cent of the Finnish workforce were employed in fields where men and women were equally represented. The dichotomy between male- and female-dominated fields seems particularly clear in vocational education and training, while the contrast is less striking in universities and other institutes of higher education. It also seems that women are moving into previously male-dominated fields, but not vice versa.

Occupational gender bias is a reality in all Nordic countries, but the contrast is starkest in Finland. For example, in 2016, 82 per cent of all health and well-being students and 78 per cent of all education students were female, in contrast to technology, where 81 per cent of students were male, and data science and telecommunications, where 85 per cent of students were male.



Occupational gender segregation will continue to divide the labour market unless something is done to address the issue. Young people should understand that certain jobs are not automatically reserved for women or men. Men are not necessarily better in technology roles, or women in care and service occupations. It is crucial for young people to become aware of occupational gender segregation and to make their own choices based on motivation rather than gender.

## ACTION POINTS

- 1** **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students: What kinds of stereotypical thinking did you see in the video?
- 2** **Divide students into small groups and** ask them to complete section 1 of the Stereotypes or not? exercise (link characters with occupations). The correct answers, clockwise from the top, are principal, strategic manager for internal security, practical nurse, software engineer and accountant.
- 3** **Ask the groups to write** their answers on the board.
- 4** **Review the answers together.** Were there differences between the groups? Ask the groups to justify their answers. You should also ask the students what other thoughts they had during the exercise.
- 5** **Finally, ask the students** to complete the second part of the Stereotypes or not exercise independently and list professions that interest them at the moment, thinking about whether these are in a female- or male- dominated field.



### NOTE

You can encourage the students to find more information on the gender division of occupations online.

# Useful praise

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students understand the importance of positive feedback and learn to accept compliments.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Class works together to propose what kind of feedback should be given to the main character and how the person should receive it
- Students work in pairs and practise giving and receiving positive feedback

## **INTRODUCTION**

Positive feedback can increase feelings of self-worth, provide motivation, and build trust and a sense of security. Although positive feedback is rarely given and people tend to feel awkward receiving it, giving and receiving positive feedback is a skill that you can and should practise. Sometimes people react to praise with denial, resistance or even criticism, but the best way to receive positive feedback is to simply say 'Thank you', or 'How nice to hear that'.

## ACTION POINTS



1

**Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students:  
How did the person in the video accept the compliments?

2

**Tell the students** that during this lesson, they will practice giving and receiving positive feedback. Read the following example scenario to the students: "Siiri tells her friend Maisa that she has gotten a summer job in a clothing shop." Ask the students what nice things Maisa could say to Siiri. Then ask how Siiri could respond to the positive feedback.

3

**Divide the students into pairs** and give each pair two of the example stories from the appendix. The students write a dialogue between the characters giving and receiving compliments in examples 1 and 2 (the first and second part of the Useful praise exercise) and then act out the scene. Circle around the class and ensure that everyone has understood the assignment.

4

**At the end, the students complete** the third part of the Useful praise exercise independently, in which they imagine having been admitted to their first choice of further education after comprehensive school. The students must think how they would respond when a friend, an adult they know or the student counsellor compliments them on the achievement.

If the students target the positive feedback to something other than the result, activity or person (for example, "You were lucky") or if their responses to the feedback contain rejection, denial, resistance or criticism, ask them to think about their answers again.

If the positive consequences (see introduction) and principles of accepting compliments (see introduction) are not brought up in the discussion, emphasise these for the students.

# Overcoming challenges

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students find ways of overcoming any challenges they may face in terms of their educational path, career planning or achieving their dream job.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- The counsellor describes the principles of overcoming challenges with the help of an example.
- Students work in small groups to practise ways of tackling various challenges
- Class discusses the different ways of addressing challenges they might have with further education and career choices
- Students try to identify any obstacles to their dreams and suggest ways of overcoming them

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this lesson is to identify any challenges students may have when they make choices about further education, and to find appropriate solutions. It is also designed to make students aware of the importance of their own attitudes and actions. Knowing that their actions can make a difference increases their self-confidence and belief in future possibilities.

In this exercise, case examples are used as a tool to allow students to identify challenges and come up with solutions. Some of these solutions and strategies can be applied in real life, making it easier for students to cope when facing adversity.



## ACTION POINTS

**1** **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students:  
Why do you think the character continued practicing despite the challenges?

**2** **Tell the students** that the next exercise is about problem solving. Form small groups and give each small group a different “challenge card” (see appendix). Ask the students to think about factors that the person can influence in the situation described in the card. Give the small groups time to come up with solutions and circle around the class to support the process. You can facilitate the discussion with the following questions that can also be found in the first part of the Overcoming challenges exercise of the workbook:

- How can the person influence their own situation?
- What should they do next?
- How could the person change their way of thinking?
- Where could they turn to for help, guidance, or advice?

### Content of the challenge cards:

- Insufficient information on options or difficulty of choosing:
  - I don't know where to apply after comprehensive

school.

- I'm interested in more than one option. I don't know how to choose.
- I want to work with people. I just don't know where to apply.
- I'd like to have a job where I can use my creativity. I'm not sure whether to apply to general upper secondary or vocational school.
- Decisions or attitudes of others:
  - All my friends go to upper secondary school. I'm interested in technology and automobile studies in a vocational school. But then again, I'd like to be where my friends are.
  - My parents want me to get a profession right after comprehensive school. However, I'd like to go to upper secondary school.
  - The people who are dear to me will be disappointed if I make a decision against their wishes.
- Gender stereotypes in selecting the field:
  - I've always been interested in technology and machinery. But I wonder why so few girls select these fields at vocational school.
- Allergies:

- I'm interested in the construction sector. I don't know if my asthma will prevent me from working in that field.
- Learning difficulties:
  - I want to study and get a profession, but I've never had much of a head for studying for exams. I wonder if I'll make it.
  - I'm interested in the health sector, but I heard that practical nurses are expected to perform medicine calculations. I've always struggled with mathematics.
- Comprehensive school final GPA:
  - My grades are so poor that I won't probably apply anywhere after comprehensive school.
- Language skills:
  - My Finnish skills are below average. I feel like my language skills are not good enough for studying.

You can also prepare customised challenge cards for your group.

Challenge	Solutions
Gender stereotypes (own or by others):	Ask yourself why you are letting stereotypes affect your thinking. Talk with someone who studies the field to find out what it's really like.
Learning mathematics:	Identify things that support your learning. Who could you turn to for help?
Difficulty of choosing:	Search for information on different professions, education options and schools and list their pros and cons.

- 3** **Review the results** together and write them on the board, following the example below. Point out that the ways of overcoming challenges identified by the class can also be applied in real life. It is important to find solutions for each challenge and write the challenges in the imperative to strengthen the students' trust in overcoming them.
- 4** **Next, ask the students** to complete the second part of the Overcoming challenges exercise in the workbook, identifying potential challenges they may face when pursuing their dreams and ways of overcoming them. Encourage the students to use the tips you came up with together earlier. The students may also think about the solutions in pairs, depending on the group.
- 5** **Finally, summarise** the principles of overcoming challenges:
  - Situations that feel difficult or challenging on the education and career path can be overcome.
  - If you encounter a challenge, pay attention to the things you can influence through your own actions and attitude.
  - You can approach challenges as targets that you want to achieve. For example:
    - Poor grades → improving one's grades/backup plans
    - Uncertainty with choices → finding more information on the options, discussing with friends/parents
  - Sometimes, there can also be other similar options that meet the student's wishes and interests. Identifying the challenge can sometimes lead to setting new targets.
- 6** **At the end of the lesson,** tell the students that this was the last My Path lesson of year 8. Ask the students to browse through the workbook exercises they have completed in year eight and write three motivational phrases for themselves on page 48. The students can create their own phrases or use phrases they find on the Internet.

OMA  
LINJA

YEAR



# Knowing your options

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students can link their personal interests with occupations and education options. They know how to find information on occupations that interest them.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students choose topics and themes of special interest to them
- Students work in small groups to link areas of interest with occupations and training and education options

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this section, students identify their individual areas of interest and then seek information on related occupations and educational and training paths towards those occupations. Students also gain an understanding of the various options available in working life that allow them to pursue their interests.





## ACTION POINTS

- 1 **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students: What did the professions in the video have in common?
- 2 **Ask the students to choose** two work cards that interest them the most in the first part of the Knowing different options exercise in the workbook.
- 3 **Divide the students into small groups** and ask them to present the work cards they selected within the group **and select two cards** for further discussion. Ask the students to write the content of these two cards in the yellow circle in the second part of the Knowing different options exercise. After this, ask the students to think **of occupations or tasks** (1–4) that are related to the cards and write them in the white circles in the exercise. If the students have difficulties finding professions that match both of their cards, they can think about professions for only one of the cards. Ask the students to think of **educational paths** that lead to these professions. You can use the educational system diagram on page 51 of the workbook as assistance.
- 4 **Write the occupations** related to the work cards on the board together and discuss possible education paths that lead to these professions. It is important to discuss the educational paths leading to different professions. The students write the education paths in the boxes of the workbook diagram.

### Example:

Work card	Solutions	Education paths
Helping people + Doing research	Nurse Doctor Psychologist	Nurse → University of applied sciences Doctor → University Psychologist → University
Technology and machinery + Making things	Engineer Vehicle mechanic	University of applied sciences

- 5 **Ask the students to choose** the occupation that interests them the most in the diagram they just filled in and write it in the centre of the diagram in the third part of the Knowing different options exercise. After this, ask the students to think of other similar professions in pairs.
- 6 **Finally, ask the students to choose** one question about the profession they would like to find an answer to and guide them to find the answer using online search engines.

# Towards change

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students understand that change can be perceived as a threat or an opportunity. Seeing change as a threat will lead to stress, while seeing it as an opportunity leads to learning new things.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students give useful tips to the main character to ease their transition
- Students discuss their own transition from comprehensive to upper secondary education and the threats and opportunities involved. They also talk about things they need to do to capitalise on the opportunities.
- Write down suggested actions

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the biggest changes in the life of a teenager is leaving comprehensive school. While for many this is a much-awaited transition to the next stage, it may involve some uncertainty and even anxiety. The purpose of this lesson is to analyse these threats and opportunities. Preparing for change helps young people focus on the positives instead of the negatives, and makes it easier to seize the opportunities available after the transition.

## ACTION POINTS



**1** **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students: What was troubling the person in the video? How was the situation solved?

**2** **Ask the students to complete** the first part of the Towards change exercise in the workbook independently and imagine themselves at the end of comprehensive school. The students start by listing aspects of the change that they see as threats. Next, they list things that they see as opportunities.

**3** **Ask the students** how they felt doing this exercise. Which of their lists is longer, threats or opportunities?

**4** **Next, ask the students to complete** the second part of the Towards change exercise and think of what they could do to make the opportunities come true. The students can do this exercise in pairs or small groups if they like.

**5** **Finally, ask the students to choose** one of the ways of achieving the opportunities and write it on the board.

# Stressed out?

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students are able to identify causes of stress and understand how to relieve it.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students work in small groups and discuss causes of stress and ways of easing stress
- Students prepare a list of tips for reducing and managing stress
- Students write down in their workbooks what causes them stress and how they manage it

## **INTRODUCTION**

When we feel we have to deal with more challenges and demands than we can manage, we feel stressed. Stress is a psychological experience, which is why each person's unique resources, perspectives and attitudes determine whether we consider something stressful or not.

Not all stress is harmful; in fact, short-term stress can help us perform better. Long-term stress, however, can be harmful in many ways. It can cause anxiety, irritation, aggressive behaviour, restlessness, depression, memory loss, inability to make decisions and sleep disorders. Some develop physical symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, palpitations, nausea, stomach problems, frequent colds or back pain. Stress may also cause social withdrawal or problems with family members or other relationships.

There are many ways to reduce stress, and each person has to find those that are most suitable for them. Good stress-relieving strategies include sharing your concerns with others, reducing rumination and obsessing, relaxing, taking physical exercise, interaction with others, good deeds, humour and optimism. Young people may have other good ideas for relieving stress!

## ACTION POINTS

- 1** **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students:  
What was the theme of this video?
- 2** **Divide the students into small groups** and ask them to prepare three lists:
  - What causes them stress?
  - How do they notice stress?
  - How do they relieve stress?The students write their answers in the first part of the Stressed out? exercise.
- 3** **Ask each group** to write about three ways of relieving stress on the board. Review the list together.
- 4** **Next, ask the students to answer** the questions in the second part of the Stressed out? exercise independently. The students think about what stresses them out in the transition to further studies, which helps them to identify the causes of their stress and possible ways of relieving it.



# Step by step

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students learn to set milestones that help them achieve goals at school and in free-time activities.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Guidance counsellor explains the principles of setting milestones
- Students work in small groups and learn to define milestones
- Students set milestones for education and training, studying or pursuing their dream career

## **INTRODUCTION**

Breaking bigger goals down into smaller milestones helps to focus on the essential and increases students' confidence in their ability to reach their goals. This lesson is about practising how to set milestones.

## ACTION POINTS



1

**Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students:  
What did the students have to do to get a dog for the school?

2

**Tell the students** that setting milestones is a skill you can practice. When you learn to set milestones, you are more likely to achieve your goals. Tell the students that they can divide their goals into milestones. Milestones are concrete steps along the way towards the goal. When it comes to milestones, the following questions are important:

- What will you do to achieve the milestone? What tasks or actions does it require?
- Do you think you can achieve the milestone? Is it realistic?
- When will you achieve the milestone? What is your schedule?

Give an example of your own life, for instance, from hobbies.

3

**Tell the students** that they will practice setting milestones next. Divide the students into small groups. Ask the students to select a celebrity, for example, an athlete, artist or actor, and give their celebrity an imaginary goal that they want to achieve. After this, the students divide the goal into milestones or smaller steps that the person has to take in order to achieve the goal. The students can use the following questions to support their work:

- What does the person have to do in order to achieve the milestone?
- Can they achieve the milestone?
- When will they achieve the milestone?

4

**Ask each group** to present their results to the class. Discuss the benefit of milestones together: they help us focus on relevant things and help us achieve our goals.

5

**Next, ask the students** to choose one goal that is related to their dream profession or studies and write it on top of the stairs in the Step by step exercise. If a student is unable to come up with a goal related to studies or working life, the goal can be, for example, “successful joint application procedure”. Ask the students to think of milestones that can help them to achieve their goal. The students write these milestones on the steps of the stairway. In the case of successful joint application procedure, the milestones could be related to preparing plans and making selections (for example, finding information on different options, mapping out one’s interests, preparing backup plans, visiting different schools, and discussion with the student counsellor). Circle around the classroom and make sure that everyone writes something at least on the first steps and has means for achieving the milestones.

# Dreams

**DURATION** about 45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students envision their future at the age of 25.

## **LESSON STRUCTURE**

- Introductory video followed by discussion
- Students prepare a dream board, depicting their lives at the age of 25

## **INTRODUCTION**

Dreams refer to something we hope will happen in the future. Dreaming serves a purpose: it creates new ideas and serves as a driving force. Whether big or small, unrealistic or mundane, abstract or concrete, all dreams are equally valuable and important.

For this exercise, students create a **dream board**. They are free to use any techniques they like: writing, drawing, or creating a **collage of images**. Having your dreams and goals in front of you is an effective way of staying focused on what you want to achieve.



## ACTION POINTS

- 1** **Watch the video.** After the video, ask the students: What did the characters in the video dream about?
- 2** **Ask the students to explain** what dreams are. Tell the students that during this lesson, each of them will prepare a dream board of their life at the age of 25.
- 3** **Provide materials** for the dream map at the front of the classroom (magazines, scissors, glue, adhesive tape, markers, watercolours, etc.) and tell the students that they can choose how to make their own dream map (writing, drawing, using images, etc.). Circle around the classroom and make sure that everyone gets started with the exercise. Make your own dream map, as well.
- 4** **Ask a few volunteers** to share their own dream board with the class. If there are no volunteers, share yours.
- 5** **Tell the students** this was their last My Path lesson. Ask the students to write a short letter to themselves at the age of 25 on page 67 of the workbook.



### NOTE

Make sure you have magazines, scissors, glue, tape, markers, watercolours, etc. for this lesson.

# APPENDICES

## WHY? APPENDIX

Ira studies for hours on end for the history exam, because she wants to score a ten.

- 1 Are her actions guided by internal or external motivation?
- 2 What might Ira be thinking or feeling while she studies for the exam?
- 3 What might Ira be thinking or feeling if she scores a nine in the exam?

Leo wants to become a nurse, because he wants to help others and enjoys practical work.

- 1 Are his actions guided by internal or external motivation?
- 2 What might Leo be thinking or feeling while he studies nursing practice?
- 3 What might Leo be thinking or feeling when he graduates as a nurse?

Ira studies for hours on end for the history exam, because she is fascinated by history and wants to understand it.

- 1 Are her actions guided by internal or external motivation?
- 2 What might Ira be thinking or feeling while she studies for the exam?
- 3 What might Ira be thinking or feeling if she scores a nine in the exam?

Leo wants to become a nurse, because his parents are nurses and they would be disappointed if Leo chose a different profession.

- 1 Are his actions guided by internal or external motivation?
- 2 What might Leo be thinking or feeling while he studies nursing practice?
- 3 What might Leo be thinking or feeling when he graduates as a nurse?

## USEFUL PRAISE APPENDIX

Lauri has been doing artistic gymnastics since the age of 8. Today, he won the title of European Champion on the parallel bars, and his father was cheering in the audience.

Johanna loves knitting. She has learnt Fair Isle knitting and just finished a pair of woollen socks for her grandfather.

Iris has been saving for a new bike for a long time. Now she has finally bought the new bike and ridden it to school with her friend Henna.

Jere has given an excellent presentation on the Second World War in history class. The presentation focused on the German attack on Stalingrad. The teacher was very impressed.

Malla has always considered herself to be bad in mathematics. But in the latest maths exam, she received the best grade in the whole class, and her big brother Teijo notices this at home.

Orienteering has always felt really difficult for Kaarle. In today's PE class, he was one of the first to finish the orienteering route, and his friend Tero noticed it.

Susanna is often late. However, today she arrived on time for her summer job interview and met her friend Outi, who was waiting for her.

Iina bought a beautiful top from the flea market. She wore it to school the next day. Her friend Laura noticed her new top.

Markus has just won the school's essay writing contest. He got the information via e-mail and showed the message to his friend Toni.

Hugo has played basketball since he was a child and was finally selected to the youth national basketball team on his third try. His coach was extremely proud of him.

Lauri has knitted a beanie in school and wants to give it to her sister Olivia.

Casper has played the violin for four years. He tells his friend Eetu that he has decided to start playing the drums next year, because he wants to try something new.

Acting is Aarni's passion. In biology class, he held a presentation on the importance of plants for humans in the form of a play. Aarni's friend Ilari complimented Aarni on the play.

Painting is an important hobby for Timo, but he wanted to try a different art medium for a change. After being encouraged by the art teacher Iiris, he finally had the courage to participate in the school's comics contest.

Oona loves cooking. She decided to set up a food blog and got 200 followers after her first post. On the next day at school, her friend Petra noticed how popular the blog had become.

Sebastian and Ville are playing football outside. Yesterday, they won a match 3-1. Their coach is very proud of them.

Viivi has moved to a new home with her family. Viivi's friend Niina comes to visit for the first time and sees Viivi's new room.

After months of studying, Aino has been admitted to the second phase of the university's entrance exam. She calls her friend Senja and shares the news.

Jyri is visiting his grandma and gets to eat delicious cinnamon rolls she has baked.

Viola graduates from comprehensive school with excellent grades and receives two scholarships from the school. Her friend Ulla is happy for Viola.

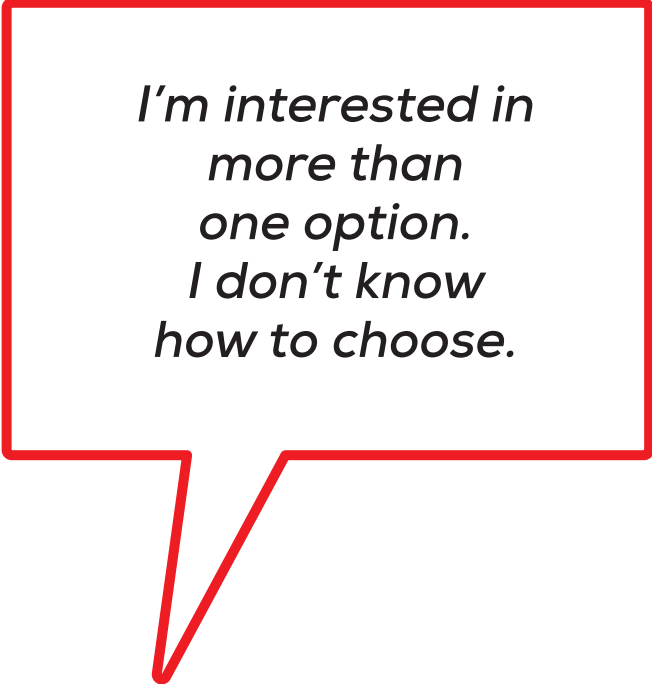
Ben has just found out that he was accepted to the upper secondary school he applied to. He shares the news with his mother at home.

Sakari was admitted to a vocational school after he improved his grades from the spring's report. Sakari's friend Jaakko will start in the same school, and he compliments Sakari on his hard work.

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES APPENDIX



*I don't know where  
to apply after  
comprehensive  
school.*



*I'm interested in  
more than  
one option.  
I don't know  
how to choose.*



*In the future, I want to work with people. I don't know where to apply.*

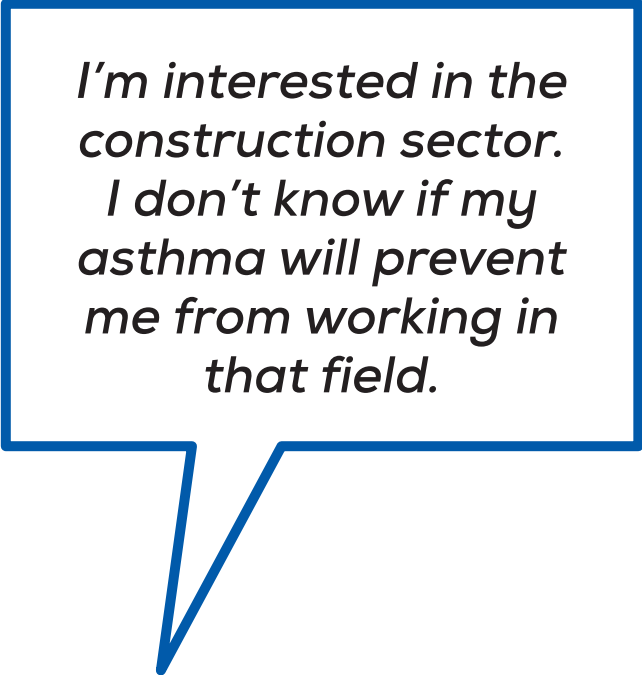
*I'd like to have a job where I can use my creativity. I don't know if I should apply to general upper secondary or vocational school.*

*All my friends will go to upper secondary school. I'm interested in technology and automobile studies in a vocational school. But then again, I'd like to be where my friends are.*

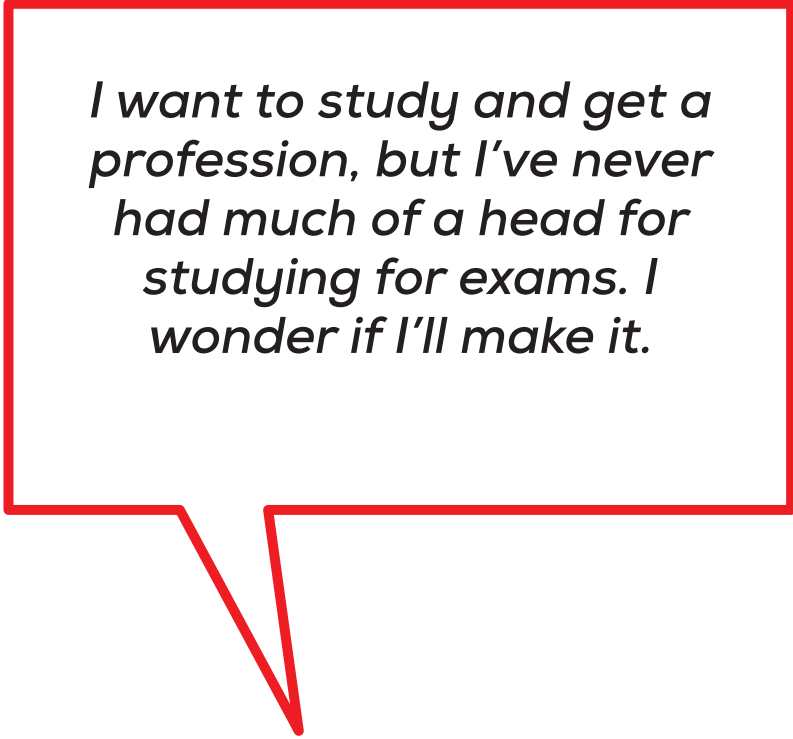
*My parents want me to get a profession right after comprehensive school. However, I'd like to go to upper secondary school.*

*The people who are dear to me will be disappointed if I make a decision against their wishes.*

*I've always been interested in technology and machinery. But I wonder why so few girls select these fields at vocational school.*

A blue-outlined speech bubble with a tail pointing downwards and to the left.


*I'm interested in the construction sector. I don't know if my asthma will prevent me from working in that field.*

A red-outlined speech bubble with a tail pointing downwards and to the left.

*I want to study and get a profession, but I've never had much of a head for studying for exams. I wonder if I'll make it.*

*I'm interested in the health sector, but I heard that practical nurses are expected to perform medicine calculations. I've always struggled with mathematics.*

*My grades are so poor that I don't think I'll apply anywhere after comprehensive school.*



*My Finnish skills  
are below average.  
I feel like my  
language skills are  
not good enough  
for studying.*



**WE WANT TO THANK EVERYONE WHO HAS  
PARTICIPATED IN DEVELOPING THE  
My Path PROGRAMME AND LEARNING MATERIALS**

**OMA**  
**LINJA**  
**PARAS**  
**LINJA**

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Työterveyslaitos

