

# MONIKA NOVOSADOVA

Trainer

**Country:** Czech Republic

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**Education:** Social work

**Fields/topics you work in:** Project management, NGO management, soft skills (and more generally competence development), methodological support and non-formal education (including training of trainers and youth workers on how to do educational activities), youth policy

**Experience as a trainer:** Very diverse and a bit long. Lately I work on long-term trainings for youth workers on improving the quality of their educational activities



## WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRAINER?

I was working as a volunteer for an international youth organisation (International Young Naturefriends) and participated in a seminar, when a member of the team of trainers told me that he saw that I have a potential in becoming an educator. As I have already been involved in different leisure time activities with learning aspects before, I thought “why not?”

Becoming a full-time trainer was a similar story – I was recommended to the Czech National Agency who was looking for trainers and, as I had already been doing educational activities as a part of my job for 3 years and was looking for something else in my life, I decided to take the opportunity up.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TRAINER?

Supporting people in finding their AHA moments and to be able to look at who they are, where they are and what it means to them.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TRAINER?

Yes, even though, as I am freelancing, it is not always easy to keep up with my own expectations. The minimum that I try to do when working for someone else (which is

most of my work) is to always concentrate on several things:

- using as little resources as possible that cannot be re-used: printing out only the things that need to be printed, re-using flipcharts, papers, any other material that is possible;
- creating a possibility to divide trash to be recycled (even if it sometimes means that we have to take the trash with us and place it to the bins somewhere else);
- use as little plastic as possible (get drinking water in a jar rather than bottled water in plastic bottles, get normal glasses and cups instead of plastic ones, etc.);
- travel (and motivate participants to travel) the most sustainable way possible;
- taking care of materials that can be re-used to use at as many trainings as possible.

And when I run activities when I can do more I also try to:

- look for places that use local products as much as possible;
- buy local products for snacks, etc.;
- give time and space in the programme to do some environmental or awareness-raising activity (we already did fair trade breakfasts, volunteering to clean up environment around, volunteered at a local organisation doing some environmental stuff...)





## DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BECOME TRAINERS?

First of all, think about the reasons, why you want to do it – it might look fun but there is a lot of responsibility that you take on yourself, even if you are not aware. There are many other ways to work with people and support them and this is not the easiest one. :-)

Next one for me would be to think about the areas in which I have some practical experience – it is easier to start from something that you already know from your own experience and it also gives it more credibility towards the group.

Then a big thing for me is – what kind of trainer do I want to be? What values do I stand up for? What kind of place in the group and relationship to them I would like to have – do I rather want to be an expert, a supporter, an entertainer or a friend? And how can I incorporate the other aspects that are not so natural or so important to me? In my experience none of the four is the most important, it is important to have a bit of each and choose which role to take depending on the situation.

And last but not least – how not to take myself too seriously and still be realistic and honest with myself is the last tip I find important not only for people who want to start working as trainers. There is a lot of attention given to us as trainers due to our role and it is easy to start believing we are fabulous, fantastic people, who are endlessly smart, funny and so on and so forth. And yes, we are. Just like anybody else... and to keep an ability to laugh at oneself as a trainer and to realise that we are just humans like everybody else keeps the job and our role more real.

## WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEBODY TOLD YOU WHEN YOU WERE STARTING AS A TRAINER?

It is a lot of responsibility and it is a very roller-coaster-like life – so learning how to differentiate what is work and what is personal is very important as much as what I need as a person and what are the needs of the group and how to find a solution that can fit both. And keeping the balance between time to rest and time to work and finding things to do to keep oneself in a good shape helps a lot, especially when the training course is very interesting. For that I do, for example, yoga every morning for at least 10 minutes, go at least once a day outside for a walk (as short as it gets sometimes), drink less coffee and more water :- ) - you will find your own “things” that keep you not only alive, that keep you in a good shape and good mood.

And for me, it is also important to work on the topics that I care about and enjoy – the more it is like that the more I am also curious and ready to learn new things from the others (including participants, of course). In my experience it helps to create an atmosphere, where people are ready to share and in the same time to try new things – if they see me trying out they get more confidence to do so, too. This took me a long time to learn.





## HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR FACILITATING A TRAINING COURSE?

Interestingly enough it feels like I spend more time preparing nowadays than I did some years ago. As I prefer to create a programme that is based on what the participants need and where they are, it is not always easy to prepare just one fixed programme. So I take a lot of time to:

- find out what the participants need (not so much what they expect);
- find out where participants are (what experiences they have, what reality they live in, etc.);
- create different scenarios – I usually have plan A and plan B depending on where the group might be;
- share what I prepared with my colleagues and ask them for feedback. Sometimes we prepare the programme parts in pairs, that helps a lot to already have different views from the start;
- think of different scenarios that can happen when the group goes through the programme as I have planned it – what are the risks, what are the challenges for the group, what support can I offer that they can manage;
- look at the programme from a perspective of different learning styles – is there something for everyone? Is the programme balanced in terms of input, trying things out, sharing in the group, connecting it to one's reality?
- look at the time frame and cut out half of the programme – through experience I have realised that I tend to put more activities into the programme than the group can do and still feel that it is not a TGV ride, so more

and more I try to do less activities and give more time for participants to dive into them.

Yes, it looks like a lot of preparation. I realised that it helps me a lot to really spend time preparing the course beforehand because, when I feel that I have different balls I can juggle with prepared in my pockets, it is then easier to be at the training with the group and for the group and really react on what is happening on the spot. And with practice it gets a bit easier, yet it is always important to give it enough (and it means a lot of) time beforehand.

And for resources – more and more I create or re-create exercises depending on what is needed during the training courses. I also often use activities that I have experienced myself. Then the next solution is that I ask my colleagues for recommendations. Then I look for videos (so I can see a bit what the activity looks like) and then I look on-line. I start with SALTO Toolbox, even though often I keep on searching elsewhere. Based on Google Searches.

Yes, it is not the easiest way. In the same time sometimes I discover things I would have not, if I did not let myself float around searching for a while. Well, often a longer while I shall say.



*The project “Meet your Trainer” was created by Youth and Environment Europe for young people who would like to become trainers in non-formal educational field.*



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Funders:

