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How to Use the Motivation and Empowerment App

HANDBOOK for EDUCATORS



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INTRODUCTION: WHY USE THIS HANDBOOK?

This handbook is designed for educators working with unemployed adults in Active Labour Market Policy Programmes (ALMP-Ps), supporting them in helping participants address, reduce, and potentially overcome the psycho-social obstacles they may be experiencing.

To support educators in this role, the handbook explains what the **Motivation and Empowerment App (ME-App)** is, its purpose, and how it can be effectively used within classroom and training activities. It provides practical guidance on how to introduce and use the app, as well as how to identify appropriate situations in which the app can best support learners' development and self-management.

Additionally, the handbook outlines key general considerations for selecting and using mobile apps in educational settings, helping educators make informed decisions about integrating digital tools safely and effectively into their teaching practice.



GETTING STARTED

This section provides guidance on how to get started with the ME-App and offers practical suggestions on how educators can introduce and explain the app to their students and other potential users.

WHAT IS THE ME-APP?

The ME-App is a mobile app available on Android that was developed as part of the so-called ME-App project in the period between December 2023 and January 2026. The project was funded by the EU's Erasmus+ programme and was implemented by a consortium from adult education organisations and education technology organisations from Greece, The Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia and Germany.

The **"ME-App"** is short for **"Motivation and Empowerment App."** The app was developed in response to a recognised need for stronger and more continuous support structures for unemployed adults who face psycho-social obstacles that can hinder their well-being, employability, and long-term labour market integration. Research and practical experience from Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMP-Ps) across several European countries have shown that many individuals struggle with so-called interconnected **psycho-social obstacles** such as stress, mood, sleep, daily routine management, and self-confidence, and often lack sustained support once structured training programmes end. The ME-App was therefore designed as an accessible, digital one-stop tool that complements existing support services and helps users monitor and manage these challenges over time.

The ME-App aims to:

1. **Motivate** users by giving them motivating feedback and useful information about their psycho-social obstacles, habits and problems;
2. **Empower** users by enabling them to take control of their habits and well-being by tracking their psycho-social progress over time, gaining deeper self-awareness, and identifying opportunities for growth and positive change.

Through interactive tracking tools, personalised goal-setting, journaling features, and motivational feedback, the app supports users in recognising behavioural patterns, strengthening positive habits, and maintaining engagement with their personal development and employment-related goals.



Who is the ME-App for?

The primary target group of the ME-App consists of unemployed adults, including participants or graduates of ALMPs, particularly those experiencing multiple psycho-social barriers to employment. This includes individuals who may face additional challenges related to physical, mental, cognitive, or sensory impairments, as well as individuals from vulnerable or disadvantaged backgrounds. The app is designed with accessibility and inclusivity in mind to ensure it can support users with diverse needs and abilities. The ME-App is also suitable for a broader group of adults who wish to improve well-being, strengthen daily routines, or monitor personal habit. The ME-App also supports educators and trainers working with unemployed adults by providing a complementary digital tool that can extend learning, motivation, and self-management beyond classroom-based or coaching interventions.

Definition of psycho-social obstacles

In the context of the ME-App, *psycho-social obstacles* refer to barriers related to psychological well-being, social functioning, daily habits, and overall health that may negatively influence a person's quality of life, motivation, and ability to participate fully in employment or social activities. These obstacles can include areas such as stress, mood, sleep, self-esteem, and daily routines, which are often strongly influenced by behavioural habits and lifestyle patterns. For the purposes of this handbook, psycho-social obstacles will be referred to simply as **"obstacles."** These obstacles are frequently interconnected, meaning that challenges in one area can reinforce or worsen difficulties in another, while positive changes in one habit or behaviour can also lead to improvements across multiple areas of well-being. Addressing these obstacles through regular monitoring and reflection can therefore support long-term behavioural change and improved overall functioning.¹

As an educator, you might want to choose to use alternative, more strength-based terms such as *habits*, *well-being areas*, or *focus areas* when referring to the obstacles, in order to avoid negative connotations and support a positive, empowering framing for learners!

¹ More information about the ME-App project can be found the project's web platform: <https://meapp-platform.eu/>. On the platform there is a link to download the app, and access to further project resources such as:

- the **"Educators' Report on App Usage"**, which examines how educators in ALMP-Ps use apps to support unemployed adults with psycho-social obstacles, assessing their prevalence, benefits, challenges and providing recommendations for both app developers and educators.
- or the **"Report on App Usage Among Unemployed Adults"**, which identifies the specific needs, barriers and desired features that unemployed adults expect from a digital tool such as the ME-App.



REQUIRED LEVEL OF DIGITAL LITERACY

Users need basic digital literacy skills to effectively use the ME-App, covering several domains of digital competence.

Installing the ME-App

Fundamental technical and operational skills are required to download and install the app, including understanding how to access the Google Play Store (Android) and clicking on “Install”, opening the app and finding it again later one’s smartphone.

You can find the app on the Google Play Store.

The ME-App is available on Android only!

Other necessary skills

Users also need to be able to adjust app settings by navigating to the sidebar and settings menu, recognising and selecting their preferred language and enabling or disabling vibration, and night mode features. Effective use of the app requires basic touchscreen skills such as tapping, swiping, and dragging to interact with sliders, select obstacles, and choose answers, as well as basic hand-eye coordination. Using the journaling and some goal-setting features further requires basic typing skills on a touchscreen keyboard and an understanding of how to use text fields.

Information and data literacy skills are needed to select which obstacles to monitor by understanding and recognising the symbols representing the different obstacles and deciding which tracking features to use. Users also require the ability to input numeric goals for certain obstacles and to review progress through the “History” feature by selecting date ranges using a calendar or date picker, and by interpreting basic graphs.

Digital safety and security literacy is important for understanding the privacy policy and providing informed consent, which involves sufficient reading comprehension to grasp key points of the policy, awareness of personal data handling and user rights, and the ability to give consent by clicking checkboxes or buttons such as “accept.” Registration-related skills include having a valid email account and creating a password.

Finally, basic problem-solving and troubleshooting skills are needed, such as recognising common app issues including connectivity problems.

APP FEATURES, FUNCTIONALITIES & SETTINGS

Internet connection

A stable internet connection is required for full functionality, as the app operates live and interacts with a real-time database. When used offline, some features remain accessible; however, data such as responses to tracking questions cannot be saved or updated until an internet connection is restored.



Setting up an account

Account registration has been designed to be as simple and accessible as possible to minimise barriers to using the app. To register, users click the “Register” button and enter their email address along with a new password. No email verification is required, allowing users to access the app quickly and easily.

Data protection

- Data protection is a fundamental priority for this app because it processes highly sensitive personal information, including users’ habits, health-related behaviours, mood patterns, and personal goals, all of which require strict safeguarding to ensure privacy, trust, and responsible use of data.
- The app’s compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is guaranteed. Every user profile is anonymous; only the email of the user is collected and this information is not provided / shared with any third party.
- Before accessing the app, users can review the Privacy Policy in their preferred language, provide consent for the processing of personal data, and request the deletion of their account along with all associated data. Users can also revisit the Privacy Policy at any time via the sidebar menu.
- The app is stored on the Google Play Store and its database is set up on Google Firebase.

Audio message and accessibility issues

Users can listen to an introductory audio message explaining the purpose of the app and how to use it. If they prefer, they can skip the audio by selecting the dedicated “Skip” button and proceed directly to the main landing page of the ME-App. Providing audio guidance supports accessibility, particularly for users with visual impairments or reading difficulties, and helps create a more user-friendly, engaging, and inclusive app experience.

The app incorporates strong accessibility features throughout its design. Colours, fonts, and visual elements have been carefully selected in line with WCAG 2.2 standards to ensure sufficient colour contrast and readability, following the ME-App design manual. Blue was chosen as the primary project colour because it provides clear contrast against white backgrounds while also reflecting the app’s evidence-based, scientifically grounded approach.

Users can use the magnifier icon located at the top of each page to increase or decrease the display size using the plus (+) and minus (–) controls, making the content easier to read, particularly for users with visual impairments.

The app also supports accessibility by incorporating engaging images in the project colours (primarily a strong blue and uplifting yellow), a clear and intuitive layout, and easy-to-understand instructions using simple language and short sentences, which supports users who may have language barriers or cognitive difficulties. Features are clearly organised using grey background tiles to separate functions, and each page consistently provides a “back” arrow and the name of the obstacle currently being addressed at the top of the screen to support orientation and ease of navigation.



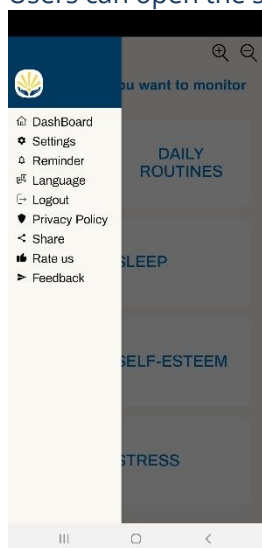
Main Recurring Features

The ME-App includes several recurring features designed to maintain user engagement, strengthen motivation, and support long-term behavioural change. One key feature is the use of personalised motivational messages. These messages are dynamically tailored to users' responses to reflection questions and tracking inputs, ensuring that feedback remains relevant and meaningful over time. More than 100 motivational messages have been developed and categorised according to the different obstacles addressed in the app. They are further matched to different response ranges (e.g., positive, neutral, or more challenging results). While the messages aim to encourage positive progress, they also sensitively acknowledge when users may be experiencing difficulties, ensuring that feedback remains supportive, realistic, and empathetic rather than reinforcing negative outcomes.

Another core recurring feature is the daily quiz, which is available for each obstacle. These short, interactive quizzes ask simple, topic-related questions designed to build knowledge and encourage reflection. Users receive immediate feedback indicating whether their answer was correct, and they are then presented with a concise scientific fact related to the obstacle. These facts are based on empirically validated research and are intended to strengthen users' understanding of behaviour, health, and well-being. 100 research-based facts have been integrated into the app to provide users with reliable, accessible knowledge.

Using the side menu

Users can open the side menu by clicking the three-line menu icon located next to the ME-App title in the top left-hand corner. The side menu allows users to customise their experience, revisit important information (privacy policy), manage reminders and provide feedback or rate the app.



Language: Users can select their preferred language from the following options: English, German, Dutch, Polish, Slovenian, or Greek.

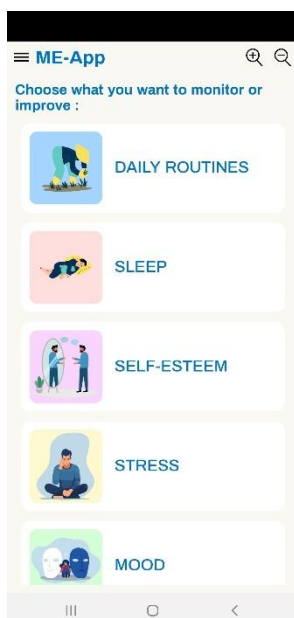
Settings: Users can activate features such as *Vibration Mode* and *Night Mode* to personalise their app experience and improve usability.

Reminders: Users can set reminders to receive pop-up notifications on their smartphone. To create a reminder, users click the dark blue plus (+) icon in the bottom right-hand corner, choose the preferred notification time, and select the days on which the reminder should recur. Existing reminders can be modified or removed by selecting the bin icon, after which new reminders can be created if desired.

Navigating the main page / dashboard

The app is designed to give users full freedom to decide what they want to focus on, monitor, and work on. Because everyone has different needs, challenges, interests, and goals, and these can change over time, users can flexibly choose which areas are most relevant to them at any given moment. Users always begin on the main landing page (Dashboard), which serves as the central access point for selecting and managing personal focus areas. From the Dashboard, users can choose which of the available five obstacles they wish to track and work on by selecting them.





These are:

- 1) Daily Routines (with sub-categories: homecare, leisure and social activities, exercise, and nutrition)
- 2) Sleep
- 3) Self-Esteem
- 4) Stress
- 5) Mood

These five obstacles were identified through extensive surveys conducted among unemployed adults in four countries (Germany, Austria, Poland, and Slovenia), as well as among educators delivering Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) for unemployed adults. Both groups identified these areas as key psycho-social challenges and highlighted their relevance for monitoring and support.

In particular, stress and mood - while closely connected -, represent distinct psychological processes, which is why the app addresses them in separate sections to support more precise self-awareness and tracking.

The selected obstacles therefore reflect the most commonly reported needs and are intended to complement existing support services by providing users with a single, accessible place to monitor progress, build awareness, and actively work on overcoming barriers to well-being and labour market integration.

WORKING WITH THE FIVE OBSTACLES

OBSTACLE 1: DAILY ROUTINES

This section of the ME-App allows users to select and track activities related to homecare, leisure and social activities, exercise, and nutrition, helping them focus on what is most relevant and meaningful to them personally in terms of daily routines. Activities can be added, changed, paused, or restarted at any time, offering full flexibility and user control. Monitoring these activities or “habits” over time is encouraged, as it helps reveal patterns and differences between perceived and actual routines. This section supports habit formation through structured daily behaviours, which is why the daily quiz provides brief, research-informed insights into how habits are formed and sustained.

Homecare

Regular engagement in homecare activities supports functional independence, environmental stability, and routine formation. In this section, users can:

- 1) Personal journaling: Users can write journal entries and securely save them for future reflection, helping them track personal growth and progress over time.
- 2) Guided reflection: Users can respond to research-informed reflection questions that support self-discovery. Based on their responses, they will receive a personalised motivational message tailored to their insights.



- 3) Daily quiz: Users can participate in a short, interactive daily question. By completing the quiz, they unlock an “Interesting Fact” — a brief, engaging insight based on the latest scientific research on habit formation.

Leisure and social activities

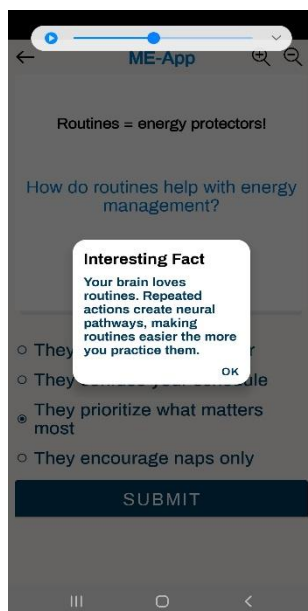
Participation in leisure and social activities contributes to emotional regulation, stress reduction, and the maintenance of social functioning. In this section, users can:

- 1) Personal journaling: Users can record journal entries reflecting on their social activities and planning hobbies and leisure pursuits, and securely save them for future reflection, helping them track personal growth and progress over time.
- 2) Guided reflection: Users can respond to research-informed reflection questions that support self-discovery. Based on their responses, they will receive a personalised motivational message tailored to their insights.
- 3) Daily quiz: Users can participate in a short, interactive daily question. By completing the quiz, they unlock an “Interesting Fact” — a brief, engaging insight based on the latest scientific research on habit formation.

Exercise

Regular physical activity is associated with improved mood regulation, increased energy levels, and reduced risk of physical and mental health disorders. In this section, users can:

- 1) Personal journaling: Users can write journal entries about their exercise activities and plans and securely save them for future reflection, helping them track personal growth and progress over time.
- 2) Set exercise goal: Users can set a *weekly* exercise goal by entering the number of hours they plan or aim to exercise. A weekly exercise goal – instead of a daily one – is used to allow flexibility across days, acknowledging that physical activity levels naturally vary and



that a weekly timeframe supports more realistic, sustainable habit formation within daily routines. Under “New Data,” users can record the actual number of hours completed. The app then generates a pie chart displaying the percentage of the goal achieved, helping users monitor progress and maintain a clear overview of how close they are to reaching their exercise target.

When users select “History of Results,” they can choose a date range to view past goal entries, showing when exercise data was recorded and the total number of hours completed toward their exercise goals.

- 3) Guided reflection: Users can respond to research-informed reflection questions that support self-discovery. Based on their responses, they will receive a personalised motivational message tailored to their insights.

- 4) Daily quiz: Users can participate in a short, interactive daily question. By completing the quiz, they unlock an “Interesting Fact” — a brief, engaging insight based on the latest scientific research on habit formation.

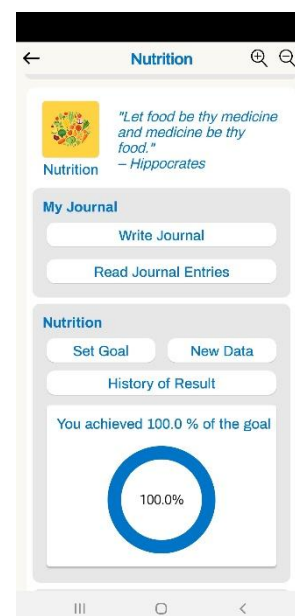


Nutrition

Consistent, balanced nutrition supports physiological regulation, cognitive performance, and overall mental health.

In this section, users can:

- 1) Personal journaling: Users can write journal entries and securely save them for future reflection, helping them track personal growth and progress over time.
- 2) Nutrition goal: Users can use a rating slider to indicate how satisfied they expect to be with achieving their daily nutrition goals. Rating how satisfied one can expect to be with one's nutrition goal can reflect how achievable, balanced, enjoyable, or sustainable one anticipates one's eating habits to feel for that day. Because perceptions of satisfaction differ between individuals, this rating is intentionally left open to personal interpretation and individual experience. Under "New Data," users can then record how satisfied they were with their adherence to their nutrition goal for that day, also using the rating slider. The app generates a pie chart displaying the percentage of the goal achieved, helping users monitor their progress and maintain a clear overview of how close they are to reaching their nutrition target. When users select "History of Results," they can choose a date range to review previous entries, including when data was recorded and their reported level of satisfaction with achieving their nutrition goals during a specific day or time period.
- 3) Guided reflection: Users can respond to research-informed reflection questions that support self-discovery. Based on their responses, they will receive a personalised motivational message tailored to their insights.
- 4) Daily quiz: Users can participate in a short, interactive daily question. By completing the quiz, they unlock an "Interesting Fact" — a brief, engaging insight based on the latest scientific research on habit formation.



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OBSTACLE 2 – SLEEP

This section allows users to track both the duration and perceived quality of their sleep, as well as record reflections in a personal sleep journal. Users are encouraged to monitor their sleep daily, as regular tracking helps build awareness of sleep patterns and habits over time. Sleep plays a fundamental role in overall well-being, supporting physical health, emotional regulation, cognitive functioning, and energy levels. It is one of the most widely monitored health-related behaviours because of its strong link to mental and physical health outcomes. However, the sleep tracking in this app is designed to support – but not pressure! - users; it does not impose fixed targets for hours slept. Instead, it provides a clear, motivating overview of personal sleep patterns, helping users better understand their current situation, recognise trends, and identify areas where improvements may be helpful.

In this section, users can:

- 1) Personal journaling: Users can write journal entries and securely save them for future reflection, helping them track personal growth and progress over time.



2) Sleep goals:

a) Sleep Duration Goal

Users can set a sleep duration goal by entering the number of hours they would like to sleep each night. Under “New Data,” users can then record the actual number of hours slept using a rating slider. The app generates a pie chart displaying the percentage of the goal achieved, helping users monitor their progress and maintain a clear overview of their sleep duration. When users select “History of Results,” they can choose a date range to review previous entries, including when data was recorded and the number of hours slept on a specific day or over a selected period.

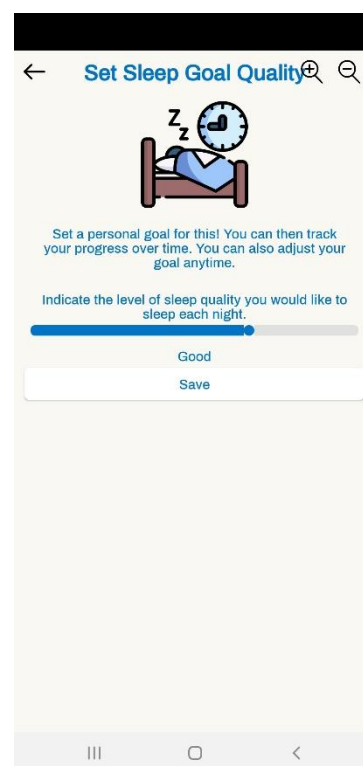
b) Sleep Quality Goal

Users can also set a sleep quality goal using a rating slider to indicate the level of sleep quality they would ideally like to achieve each night. Sleep quality is intentionally left open to personal interpretation, as it may refer to factors such as feeling rested, sleeping without interruptions, falling asleep easily, or waking up refreshed. Under “New Data,” users can record the perceived quality of their sleep from the previous night using the same rating slider. When users select “History of Results,” they can choose a date range to review past entries, including when data was recorded and their reported sleep quality on a specific day or across a longer period.

Together, these two goals provide a comprehensive overview of sleep patterns, as both duration and perceived quality contribute to overall restfulness, recovery, and daytime functioning.

3) Guided reflection: Users can respond to research-informed reflection questions about sleep that support self-discovery. Based on their responses, they will receive a personalised motivational message tailored to their insights.

4) Daily quiz: Users can participate in a short, interactive daily question about sleep. By completing the quiz, they unlock an “Interesting Fact” — a brief, engaging insight based on the latest scientific research on sleep.



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OBSTACLE 3 – SELF-ESTEEM

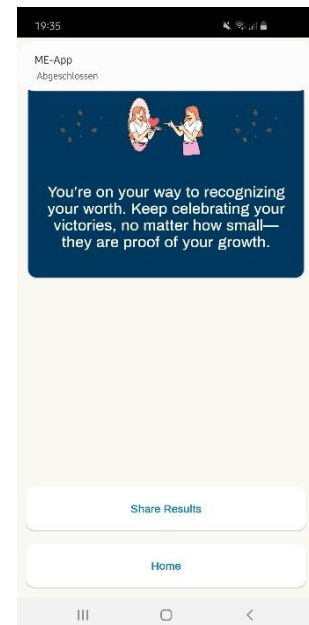
Within this section, users can answer guided reflection questions, participate in a short daily quiz, and record thoughts and experiences in a self-esteem journal. These tools are designed to encourage positive self-reflection, help users recognise personal strengths, and support the development of a more balanced and constructive self-image.

Self-esteem plays a central role in overcoming psycho-social obstacles, particularly for unemployed adults. Periods of unemployment can significantly affect how individuals perceive their abilities, usefulness, and value within society, often reducing confidence and motivation. Strengthening self-esteem is therefore essential, as it supports resilience, enhances belief in one's own capabilities, improves engagement with support services and training opportunities, and increases readiness to pursue employment and personal development goals.



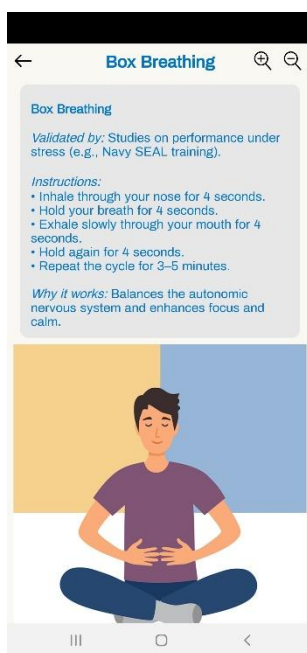
In this section, users can:

- 1) Personal journaling: Users can write journal entries and securely save them for future reflection, helping them track personal growth and progress over time.
- 2) Guided reflection: Users can respond to research-informed reflection questions about self-esteem that support self-discovery. Based on their responses, they will receive a personalised **motivational message** tailored to their insights.
- 3) Daily quiz: Users can participate in a short, interactive daily question about self-esteem. By completing the quiz, they unlock an “Interesting Fact” — a brief, engaging insight based on the latest scientific research on self-esteem and self-perception.



OBSTACLE 4 – STRESS

This section helps users build awareness of their stress levels and reactions, as recognising stress is the first step toward managing it effectively. Users can complete a short daily stress quiz, reflect on their current stress situation through guided reflection questions, or record their experiences in a stress journal. It is recommended that users engage with at least one of these tools once per week, as regular reflection helps identify patterns, triggers, and coping strategies over time. Users can also access four guided breathing exercises. Controlled breathing is a quick, evidence-based method for reducing stress, as it helps regulate the nervous system, slow the heart rate, and promote relaxation.



Stress is a normal part of life, and reflecting on it is valuable because stress itself is not necessarily harmful, it is often how individuals respond to it that matters. Monitoring stress can therefore provide users with an important tool to better understand their reactions and feel more in control of their well-being.

In this section, users can:

- 1) Personal journaling: Users can write journal entries and securely save them for future reflection, helping them track personal growth and progress over time.
- 2) Guided reflection: Users can respond to research-informed reflection questions about stress that support self-discovery. Based on their responses, they will receive a personalised motivational message tailored to their insights.
- 3) Daily quiz: Users can participate in a short, interactive daily question about stress. By completing the quiz, they unlock an “Interesting Fact” — a brief, engaging insight based on the latest scientific research on stress.
- 4) Breathing exercises: Users can choose from four guided breathing techniques: box breathing, 4-7-8 breathing, resonance frequency breathing, and diaphragmatic

breathing, and follow clear, step-by-step instructions to perform each exercise effectively.

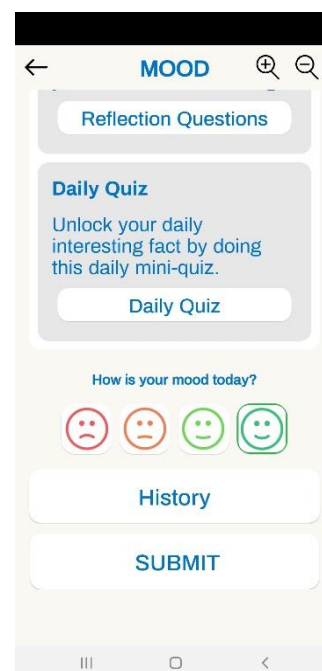
OBSTACLE 5 - MOOD

This section helps users monitor and better understand their emotional patterns over time. Users can rate their mood, complete a short mood quiz, answer guided reflection questions, and for quick and easy use, they can also select from a range of smiley icons that best represent their immediate mood.

They can also write in a gratitude journal by listing three things they felt grateful for each day. The gratitude journal is based on well-established psychological research showing that consciously recognising positive experiences can strengthen positive thinking patterns, improve emotional resilience, and reduce symptoms of stress and low mood. Regular gratitude practice has been shown to help shift attention toward positive aspects of daily life, supporting long-term well-being. This mood section of the app is designed to support emotional awareness and provide insights that help users take better care of their mental well-being. Users interested in their mood, are encouraged to engage with this section daily, as regular monitoring helps identify emotional trends and potential influences on mood. Mood is naturally changeable and can fluctuate throughout the day; however, tracking mood over time even once a day can provide valuable insights into emotional triggers and behavioural patterns.

Under this part, users can do the following:

- 1) Personal journaling: Users can write entries into their gratitude journal and securely save them for future reflection, helping them track personal growth and progress over time.
- 2) Guided reflection: Users can respond to research-informed reflection questions about mood that support self-discovery. Based on their responses, they will receive a personalised motivational message tailored to their insights.
- 3) Daily quiz: Users can participate in a short, interactive daily question about mood. By completing the quiz, they unlock an "Interesting Fact" — a brief, engaging insight based on the latest scientific research on mood.
- 4) Mood tracker: This feature allows users to quickly indicate their current emotional state by selecting one of four smiley icons that best reflects how they are feeling in the moment. After submitting their selection, users receive a short, uplifting motivational message tailored to their current mood, offering encouragement or reassurance appropriate to their emotional state. By selecting "History", users can review past mood check-ins over a chosen date range, allowing them to track emotional patterns over time and revisit the daily mood entries they recorded.



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INTEGRATING THE ME-APP INTO CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Integrating the ME-App into Active Labour Market Policy Programmes (ALMP-Ps) enhances classroom activities by providing a comprehensive digital tool that supports unemployed adults in monitoring, addressing and improving the psycho-social barriers affecting their well-being and, ultimately, their employability. Designed to complement all aspects of learning, the ME-App enables participants to track and develop critical areas such as stress management, mood regulation, self-esteem, daily routines, motivation and sleep quality. By incorporating the app into structured lessons and reflective exercises, educators can create deeper learning experiences, making interventions more meaningful and impactful because rather than just offering theoretical concepts, the ME-App allows participants to actively apply strategies in real-time, fostering a stronger likelihood of long-term behavioural change.

To fully use the app's potential, educators should guide participants in selecting the specific obstacles they wish to track and support them in setting realistic, personalised goals that align with their well-being journey. By seamlessly integrating the ME-App into classroom activities, educators can enhance engagement, strengthen motivation and cultivate self-awareness, reinforcing positive behavioural patterns in a way that extends beyond the classroom. The app encourages ongoing self-reflection and habit formation, and given that unemployed adults often experience interconnected challenges, such as mental health issues, low self-esteem and lack of daily structure, the ME-App can serve as a personalised support system during and after their training.

One of the biggest challenges in ALMP-Ps is restoring confidence and motivation among long-term unemployed adults, many of whom feel discouraged or disheartened by repeated rejections. Educators can use the ME-App's goal-setting feature to help participants set small, achievable objectives related to various, interlinked aspects of their personal growth. For instance, in a confidence-building workshop, educators can ask participants to track their self-esteem and mood using the app. While data from the participants' app usage remains private, educators can then provide opportunities for group discussions to generally talk about the psychological impact of small achievements and provide uplifting, activating information.

The app's motivational messages can be linked to classroom discussions, reinforcing growth-oriented mindsets by celebrating milestones and encouraging persistence. This structured approach helps participants see tangible progress, reinforcing self-efficacy and motivation.

Another critical aspect of ALMP-Ps is teaching stress management and resilience to prevent burnout and other health-related issues. Many unemployed adults struggle with anxiety, disrupted sleep patterns, or difficulty managing stress. Educators can integrate the ME-App into a stress management workshop by having participants track their stress levels and sleep patterns daily. Over time, this helps them recognise stress triggers and assess how their coping strategies influence their well-being. For instance, after a mock job interview session, educators can encourage students to log their stress levels before and after, then reflect on what techniques helped them stay calm. The app's interactive motivational features and informative content can also provide personalised stress-reduction techniques, such as positive reinforcement messages, which educators can complement with classroom mindfulness or breathing exercises.



METHODOLOGY OF THE ME-APP

Scientific protocols are essential in apps that monitor mental and physical health or other related habits because they are validated, research-based tools that ensure the information provided is accurate, reliable and meaningful. Many mental health apps that you might have encountered lack empirical backing, making them potentially misleading or ineffective, but the ME-App is built on solid medical and psychological research. By using these protocols as a foundation, the ME-App ensures that users receive scientifically guided self-assessments rather than arbitrary or unverified feedback. The following gives you a quick overview of the scientific protocols underlying the ME-App:

The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) was developed by Dr. Aaron T. Beck as a self-report measure of depressive symptoms. It is based on cognitive theory and extensive clinical research, providing a structured way to assess the severity of depression through a 21-item questionnaire that has been widely validated in both clinical and non-clinical populations.

The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) was created by Drs. Robert L. Spitzer, Janet B.W. Williams and Kurt Kroenke as part of the PRIME-MD diagnostic tool. It is based on diagnostic criteria and is used globally to screen for and monitor depression severity in medical and community settings.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) was developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg and is one of the most widely used instruments for measuring self-esteem. Based on extensive research in social psychology, it provides a 10-item scale that evaluates an individual's global self-worth and self-acceptance.

The Stress Symptom Scale is derived from stress research, including works such as Elkin's "Stress Management for Dummies" (1999), and evaluates the frequency of various physical, emotional and behavioural stress symptoms. It is used to help individuals assess their stress levels based on everyday experiences and physiological responses.

These scientific protocols have played a key role in shaping the way we monitor psycho-social obstacles like stress, sleep or self-esteem within the ME-App. These validated tools are widely used in clinical and research settings to assess mental well-being, but because our app is not a medical tool, we have adapted them to suit a more general, user-friendly approach. The monitoring features in the app are designed to help users gain insight into their well-being rather than provide clinical diagnoses. For instance, while the Stress Symptom Scale includes a comprehensive list of symptoms associated with stress, we selected only a few key indicators that users can easily reflect on without feeling overwhelmed.

Instead of including all the questions from these scientific inventories, we streamlined them to maintain user engagement and accessibility. The goal is to provide users with a practical sense of their well-being without turning the process into a tedious or clinical evaluation. By limiting the number of questions, we ensure that users do not lose enthusiasm due to lengthy assessments while still benefiting from structured self-reflection. Rather than giving a strict diagnostic output, the app therefore uses these protocols as a guideline for structuring questions and feedback,



allowing users to track trends in their mood, stress and sleep patterns, their self-esteem and their daily routines in a non-intimidating way. This approach aligns with the motivational and empowerment goals of the ME-App, supporting users in self-awareness and personal growth without imposing rigid medical frameworks.

The ME-App is fundamentally built on principles from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Positive Psychology, ensuring that its motivational messages, informative content and customisable monitoring features are rooted in scientifically validated psychological methodologies. CBT, a widely used therapeutic approach, focuses on identifying and changing negative thought patterns and behaviours, and this principle is directly applied to the app's structured self-monitoring. By allowing users to choose which obstacles they want to track, the ME-App encourages active self-reflection and awareness, a core CBT technique. The app also incorporates personalised scale zones and individual goal setting, mirroring CBT's behavioural activation strategy, which helps individuals set realistic, step-by-step goals to foster positive behaviour change. Through habit tracking, daily journaling, and structured mood evaluations, the app empowers users to identify cognitive distortions, recognise behavioural patterns, and gradually implement more constructive habits - all key components of CBT.

The ME-App is also deeply influenced by Positive Psychology, which emphasises strengths, resilience and well-being rather than just treating psychological distress. This approach is reflected in the app's motivational messages, informative content, and personalised encouragement, which aim to reinforce positive behaviours and enhance overall well-being. The use of short, uplifting messages and coping strategies is grounded in research showing that positive reinforcement enhances motivation and engagement. The ability to set personal goals and receive tailored feedback aligns with self-determination theory, a Positive Psychology framework that highlights the importance of autonomy, competence and relatedness in fostering well-being. Unlike traditional clinical apps that focus solely on symptom reduction, the ME-App incorporates elements of gratitude, self-compassion, and strengths-based interventions, ensuring that users are not only tracking their progress but are also building resilience and developing long-term positive habits. By merging CBT's structured approach to behavioural change with Positive Psychology's emphasis on well-being and motivation, the ME-App provides a scientifically backed, user-friendly and empowering experience.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF USING APPS

This section provides essential guidance on how to select, evaluate, and use apps in the classroom, helping educators make informed and responsible choices when navigating the wide range of digital tools available.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING APPS

1) Tailored to the Target Group

When selecting a mobile app for classroom use, it is of course crucial that the app is tailored to the specific needs, concerns and abilities of the students. This means it should be user-friendly, intuitive and require an appropriate level of digital literacy that aligns with students' technological skills to ensure accessibility for all learners. If the app is designed for students with impairments or disabilities, it should follow accessibility guidelines such as WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines), including screen reader compatibility, high-contrast modes, alternative input options and perhaps even adjustable text sizes. Language availability is another key factor—if students are non-native speakers or require multilingual support, you should ensure the app provides translations or localised versions. Also, financial accessibility is important; free or low-cost apps are preferable, ensuring that all students, regardless of economic background, have equal access.

2) Grounded in Scientific Evidence

Educators should prioritise apps that are based on scientific research and validated methodologies such as those outlined above for the ME-App, particularly when selecting mental health, well-being or self-monitoring apps. Many apps claim to provide emotional support, stress management or cognitive training, but without empirical backing, their effectiveness remains questionable. Apps that incorporate valid methodologies such as for example Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Positive Psychology or evidence-based mindfulness techniques should be preferred, ensuring that the interventions they provide are clinically effective and beneficial for students' mental and emotional well-being. Moreover, apps designed for physical health tracking or self-monitoring should rely on established health assessment scales rather than arbitrary or unverified metrics. Choosing scientifically validated apps ensures that students are using tools that truly support their well-being and development, rather than engaging with digital resources that lack credibility or could even be harmful due to misleading information, potentially leading to increased anxiety, misdiagnosis, reliance on incorrect coping strategies or avoidance of professional help when needed.

3) Highest Level of Data Privacy and Security (GDPR Compliance)

Given the increasing concerns around student data privacy, any app used in an educational setting must adhere to the highest standards of data protection, particularly compliance with General Data



Protection Regulation (GDPR). This is a European Union law that sets strict guidelines on how personal data is collected, processed and stored, ensuring that individuals have control over their own information. For app users, GDPR is crucial because it guarantees transparency, security and the right to access, correct or delete their data, protecting them from unauthorised use, data breaches and exploitation of personal information.

This means the app you select must have explicit consent mechanisms and data minimisation principles (collecting only necessary information). It should clearly outline how data is stored, used and shared, ensuring no unauthorised third-party access. Furthermore, students should have the right to access, correct and delete personal data, as outlined in GDPR regulations. Transparency is key - apps should provide a clear privacy policy that is easy to understand, avoiding hidden data collection practices. Ensuring a high level of data security and compliance not only protects students' personal information but also builds trust and ensures a safe digital learning environment.

Educators' Checklist for App Privacy Settings

- ☐ The app provides a transparent, easy-to-understand privacy policy outlining what data is collected, how it is used and who has access.
- ☐ The app requires clear, informed and freely given consent before collecting personal data - it has no automatic opt-ins!
- ☐ The app collects only necessary data relevant to its function and does not request excessive personal information.
- ☐ Users (or in rare cases, educators on behalf of students) can view, edit or request deletion of their personal data at any time.
- ☐ The app does not sell or share data with advertisers or third parties without clear consent.
- ☐ The app uses secure storage and strong authentication to protect data.
- ☐ The app does not engage in unnecessary tracking, profiling or behavioural analysis without consent.
- ☐ If the app is used by children under 16 (or the country-specific GDPR age limit), explicit parental consent is required.
- ☐ The app is regularly updated to meet GDPR and data security standards, ensuring ongoing protection.

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CRITERIA FOR USING APPS

1) Ensuring User Engagement and Retention

To maximise user engagement and long-term retention when using a mobile app in the classroom, educators should first familiarise their students with the app's key features, such as goal setting, personalising language and privacy settings, and ensuring that the app aligns with their cultural, linguistic needs and financial constraints. A structured onboarding process is essential, where students receive clear instructions on how to set up their profiles, customise notifications and tailor the app's functions to their learning or well-being objectives.

To maintain engagement, educators should regularly integrate the app into classroom activities, encouraging students to track progress, participate in challenges and reflect on their app data. If the app supports social or collaborative features, educators can foster a sense of community by



creating group challenges, discussions or shared progress tracking (provided data privacy is respected), reinforcing peer motivation. Also, offering positive reinforcement through recognition of student progress, such as badges, milestones or personalised feedback, helps sustain interest, if the students agree to this. It is also important to monitor user feedback and periodically adjust how the app is used to ensure it remains relevant to students' evolving needs and concerns.

2) Providing Technological Support for Students Unfamiliar with Apps

When introducing an app to students who may not be tech-savvy, educators should provide step-by-step guidance, beginning with a walkthrough of the app's interface, basic functions and settings. Creating a short tutorial session, whether through live demonstrations, instructional videos or printed guides, helps students become comfortable with navigation. For students who may struggle with digital literacy, educators can pair them with more experienced peers for support or offer hands-on troubleshooting sessions where common problems are addressed. Encouraging questions and providing immediate assistance prevents frustration and promotes confidence in using the app. If the app has a support or help section, educators should show students how to access FAQs, chatbots or customer support. For apps that require account setup or privacy settings adjustments, educators should assist students in ensuring they configure their settings correctly, emphasising data privacy and security as an essential aspect of responsible app usage.

3) Challenges and Opportunities of Mental and Well-Being Apps versus Traditional Approaches

Using mental health and well-being apps in the classroom presents both opportunities and challenges when compared to traditional approaches such as in-person counselling, printed self-assessment tools or paper diaries. A key advantage of apps is their accessibility and scalability - students can engage with them anytime, receiving instant feedback and tailored insights based on their input. Apps also allow for continuous tracking of well-being, mood and habits, offering real-time progress visualisation, which traditional approaches often lack.

However, a challenge is ensuring the app is evidence-based and does not replace professional support; while apps can guide users in self-awareness and coping strategies, they should not be seen as a substitute for qualified health and care professionals. Also, some students may struggle with digital fatigue, engagement drop-off or resistance to using technology for personal well-being matters. In addition, educators must be mindful of privacy concerns, ensuring students are aware of data security settings and that any personal information shared within the app remains confidential. Balancing digital and traditional methods, such as integrating app insights into reflective classroom discussions or pairing app use with teacher-facilitated mindfulness or self-reflection activities, can, however, create a holistic and supportive learning environment.

4) Interoperability and Integration with Other Healthcare Apps

When selecting an app, educators should consider its interoperability, meaning how well it integrates with other apps or platforms used for health, wellness or learning. Some well-being and self-monitoring apps, for example, can sync with wearable devices, school-based health tracking systems, or other mental health platforms, allowing for a more comprehensive and continuous assessment of progress. For example, a fitness app with interoperability might integrate seamlessly with various health platforms, including electronic health records (EHRs) in some national health systems, allowing users to share fitness, heart rate and activity data directly with their healthcare providers.



However, many educational institutions face challenges in app integration, as some apps operate in closed systems that do not communicate with external platforms, limiting their ability to share meaningful insights across different tools. Before introducing an app, educators should verify whether it can export reports, integrate with external systems, or allow for easy data sharing with counsellors, medical professionals or support staff (if consent is given by users). If students are already using existing wellness or learning management apps, ensuring that the new app complements rather than duplicates their functionalities prevents redundancy.

It is very important that educators be aware of data security risks when integrating multiple platforms, ensuring that any data transfer between systems remains GDPR-compliant and does not compromise user privacy!



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CONTRIBUTORS

We would like to acknowledge the contributions to this Handbook for Educators made by the ME-App partners:

DATEY Eyrich GmbH (Germany) – Author

ANONIMI ETAIREIA EREUNAS KAI ANAPTIKSIS SISTIMATON KAI IPIRESION (Greece)

Lidi Smart Solutions (Netherlands)

INSTITUTE ADN (Poland)

ipcenter.at GmbH (Austria)

OZARA STORITVENO IN INVALIDSKO PODJETJE DOO (Slovenia)

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