



**Women's Initiative
for New Growth and Skills
Empowering Migrant Careers**

Project 2024-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000247718



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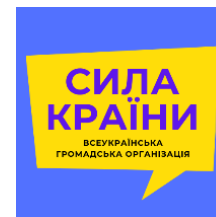
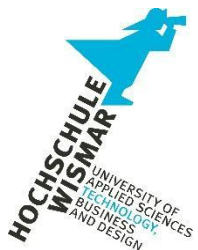
Comprehensive Integration Learning Program "Leap Forward: Women's Career Transformation" for Adult Women - Forced Migrants

Lesson 2:

Overcoming psychological barriers

WINGS: Women's Initiative for New Growth and Skills - Empowering Migrant Careers

01/09/2024 - 31/08/2026



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Lesson 2 – Overcoming Psychological Barriers

From Collapse to Renewal: Building Confidence and Emotional Resilience

“You are stronger than the challenges that brought you here.”



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Learning Objectives

- Recognize internal barriers that affect confidence and motivation
- Understand how migration impacts self-perception and identity
- Learn strategies to overcome fear, guilt, and imposter syndrome
- Practice supportive self-talk and positive reframing
- Strengthen resilience through group sharing and visualization



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The Invisible Walls (for participants)

Internal barriers can be more limiting than external ones.

They often come from emotions, past experiences, and fear of the unknown.

Common Barriers

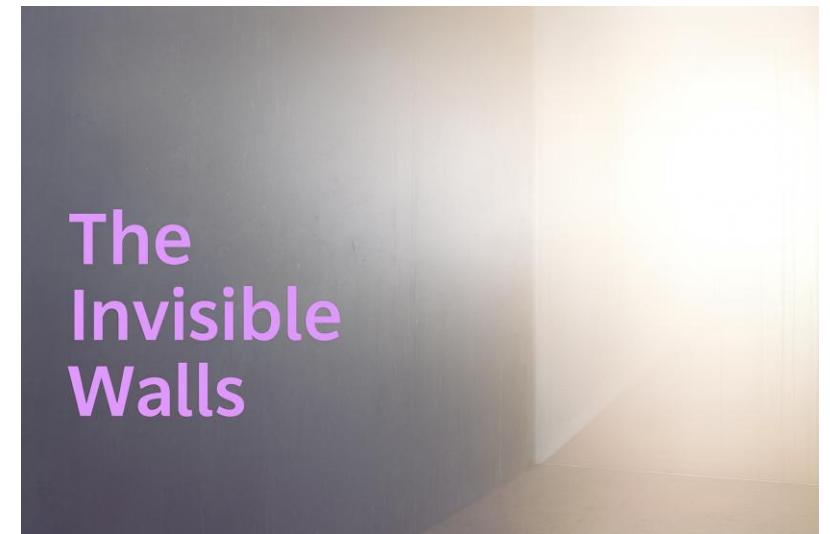
- **Fear of rejection:** “I won’t be accepted in this new system.”
- **Imposter syndrome:** “I’m not good enough.”
- **Guilt and shame:** “I left everything behind.”

Reflection Question:

Which of these feelings do you recognize in yourself?

Message:

You are not alone — every step toward awareness is a step toward freedom.





Facilitator Notes: The Invisible Walls

Objective: Help participants identify emotional and psychological barriers that block confidence and progress after migration.

Talking Points

- Internal barriers often appear as *self-doubt*, *fear*, or *guilt* rather than real limits.
- They may stem from past experiences of loss, failure, or cultural transition.
- Recognizing them is the first step to change — awareness brings choice.
- Normalize these feelings: they are a common response to displacement, not a personal flaw.

Facilitated Reflection (5–10 minutes)

- Invite participants to choose one barrier they identify with most.
- In pairs or small groups, discuss how it shows up in daily life (e.g., hesitation to apply for a job, avoidance of speaking in public).
- End by sharing one way to begin overcoming it — e.g., *asking for help*, *practicing self-kindness*, *joining a support group*.

Theoretical Context

Bandura's concept of self-efficacy: belief in one's ability to act is the key to breaking internal barriers.

Cognitive-behavioral approach: naming negative thoughts helps reduce their power.





The Psychology of Displacement (for participants)

Objective: To help participants recognize emotional consequences of migration and understand how these feelings influence their motivation and confidence.

Talking Points

- Displacement often triggers a **temporary loss of identity**: old roles (parent, teacher, professional) may no longer define who you are in the new context.
- Emotional reactions like sadness, confusion, or guilt are **normal adaptation responses**.
- Encourage participants to see these emotions as **signs of change, not failure**.
- Introduce the concept of **“rebuilding from within”** – developing new identity layers that combine past experiences with new opportunities.

Suggested Activity (5–10 minutes)

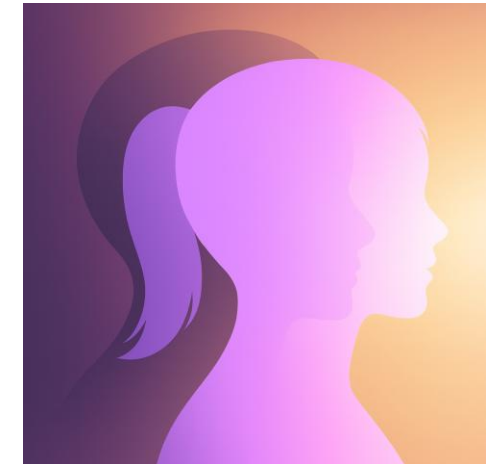
Ask participants:

- What part of yourself feels “left behind”?
- What new part of you is starting to grow?
Facilitator notes emerging themes (hope, curiosity, courage).

Theoretical Context

Acculturation theory (Berry, 1997): balancing one’s cultural identity while adapting to a new environment.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs: when safety and belonging are shaken, self-esteem must be rebuilt step by step.





Facilitator Notes: The Psychology of Displacement

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The Fear Cycle (for participants)

Fear → Avoidance → Low Confidence → Missed Opportunities → More Fear

This is the *fear loop* — when we let fear stop us, it grows stronger. But courage grows the same way — step by step.

Discussion:

- How can we interrupt this cycle?
- What small action could you take today to move forward?

Tip:

Start small — one brave step a day builds confidence.

“You don’t need to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.” — *Martin Luther King Jr.*





Facilitator Notes: The Fear Cycle

Objective: To help participants identify self-reinforcing fear patterns and learn small, practical ways to break them.

Talking Points

- Fear is a **normal response** to uncertainty; the problem begins when it turns into avoidance.
- Avoidance temporarily reduces discomfort but **weakens confidence** over time.
- Encourage participants to **take micro-actions** (e.g., send one email, attend one workshop).
- Link fear-breaking actions to real-life success stories (e.g., “I was afraid to apply, but I did, and it opened doors”).

Suggested Activity (5–10 minutes)

1. Draw the cycle on a flipchart.
2. Ask participants to name one situation where fear held them back.
3. Discuss what small step could interrupt the loop.
4. Record examples on the board (e.g., “asked for help,” “took a course,” “made a call”).

Theory Link

Behavioral activation (CBT): Action precedes motivation; small actions rebuild confidence.

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura): Belief in one’s capacity grows through repeated success.





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Imposter Syndrome Explained (for participants)

Imposter syndrome means feeling inadequate despite evidence of success.

It makes you believe you don't deserve recognition, even when you've earned it.

Common Thoughts

"They will find out I'm not qualified."

"I was just lucky."

"I don't deserve success."

Remember: Thoughts \neq Facts.

Your achievements are real, even if your mind sometimes doubts them.

Reframe:

Instead of saying "*I'm not ready,*" say "*I'm learning.*"

Instead of "*I don't belong,*" say "*I'm growing into this role.*"

"You are not a fraud. You are a work in progress — like everyone else."





Facilitator Notes: Imposter Syndrome

Objective: Help participants recognize imposter feelings and separate self-perception from facts.

Talking Points

- Imposter feelings are common among high-achieving women, especially after migration when status and context change.
- These feelings are not a sign of incompetence but of high personal standards.
- Encourage participants to speak about these thoughts openly — sharing reduces shame.
- Remind them: everyone starts somewhere, and learning in a new culture or language is itself an achievement.

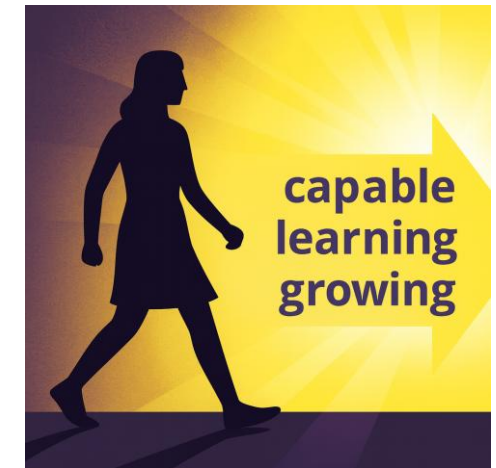
Suggested Activity (5–10 minutes)

1. Ask participants to write one “imposter thought” they have.
2. Then write the factual truth next to it (e.g., “I’m not experienced enough” → “I’ve completed training and helped others succeed”).
3. Optional sharing in pairs.

Theory Link

Dr. Pauline Clance & Suzanne Imes (1978): introduced the Imposter Phenomenon in high-performing women.

Cognitive reframing (Beck): shifting from self-criticism to evidence-based self-evaluation builds confidence.





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Group Discussion: Changing the Inner Voice (for participants)

We all have an inner voice — the way we speak to ourselves.

Sometimes, that voice becomes our biggest critic.

Question:

What internal messages do you tell yourself most often?

Task:

Identify one negative belief and reframe it positively.

Example:

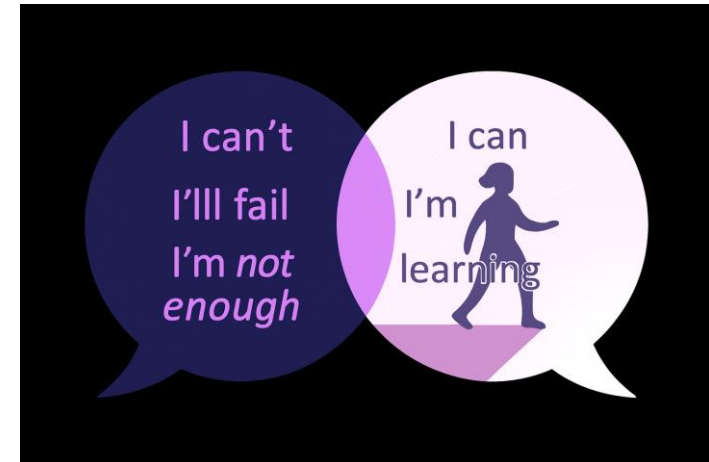
“I failed once.”

“I learned something valuable.”

Reflection:

How would your life change if your inner voice became your best supporter?

“The words you say to yourself can either limit or lift you.”





Facilitator Notes: Changing the Inner Voice

Objective: To help participants become aware of negative self-talk and practice positive reframing that supports confidence and resilience.

Talking Points

- Everyone has self-talk; it shapes **emotions, motivation, and behavior**.
- After migration, this voice often becomes more self-critical (“I can’t speak well,” “I’m behind”).
- The goal is not to silence it, but to **transform it into an ally**.
- Encourage compassion — speak to yourself as you would to a friend.

Suggested Activity (10–15 minutes)

1. Write one recurring negative thought on a sticky note.
2. Underneath, write a new, positive version of the same message.
3. Volunteers can read theirs aloud if comfortable.
4. Discuss how language affects confidence and daily energy.

Theory Link

Cognitive-behavioral approach: changing self-talk changes behavior and self-perception.

Positive psychology: self-compassion improves emotional resilience and career engagement.





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Exercise 1 – Mirror Talk (for participants)

Activity:

Look in a mirror — or imagine one — and say three supportive sentences aloud:

I am capable.

I am learning and growing.

I have already overcome much.

Purpose:

To build **kindness and confidence** toward yourself.

Self-encouragement is a habit that strengthens your inner voice and resilience.

“The way you speak to yourself becomes the way you live your life.”





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The Growth Mindset (Carol Dweck) (for participants)

Belief:

Our abilities can develop through effort and learning.

Fixed Mindset

“I can’t do this.”

“I failed.”

“I’m not talented.”

Growth Mindset

“I can’t do this **yet**.”

“I learned something new.”

“I can improve with practice.”

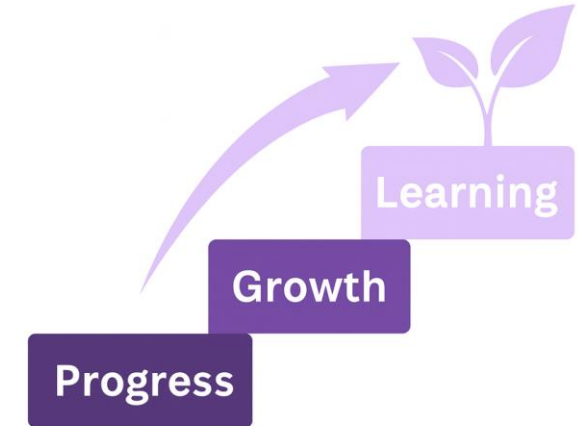
Key Idea:

Failure is not the end — it’s **feedback**, helping us grow stronger.

Tip:

Surround yourself with people who encourage growth, not perfection.

“It’s not about being the best. It’s about being better than you were yesterday.”





Facilitator Notes: The Growth Mindset

Objective: To introduce the concept of **Growth Mindset** as a way to rebuild confidence, motivation, and resilience after migration.

Talking Points

- Developed by psychologist **Carol Dweck (2006)**, Growth Mindset teaches that intelligence and abilities are not fixed.
- Forced migrants often face situations where previous competence feels “lost.” The Growth Mindset helps redefine success as continuous improvement.
- Encourage participants to replace self-judgment (“I’m not good at this”) with curiosity (“What can I learn from this?”).
- Reinforce that progress, not perfection, builds long-term success.

Suggested Activity (5–10 minutes)

1. Present examples of fixed vs. growth phrases.
2. Ask participants to share which type of self-talk they use more often.
3. In pairs, practice transforming fixed statements into growth ones.

Theory Link

Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2006)

Adult learning (Knowles): self-reflection and intrinsic motivation drive personal growth.

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Exercise 2 – Visualization of Strength (for participants)

Activity:

Close your eyes and imagine a moment when you were proud of something you did — **even though you were afraid.**

Feel that **confidence**, that sense of “I did it.”
Hold it as a **resource** for future challenges.

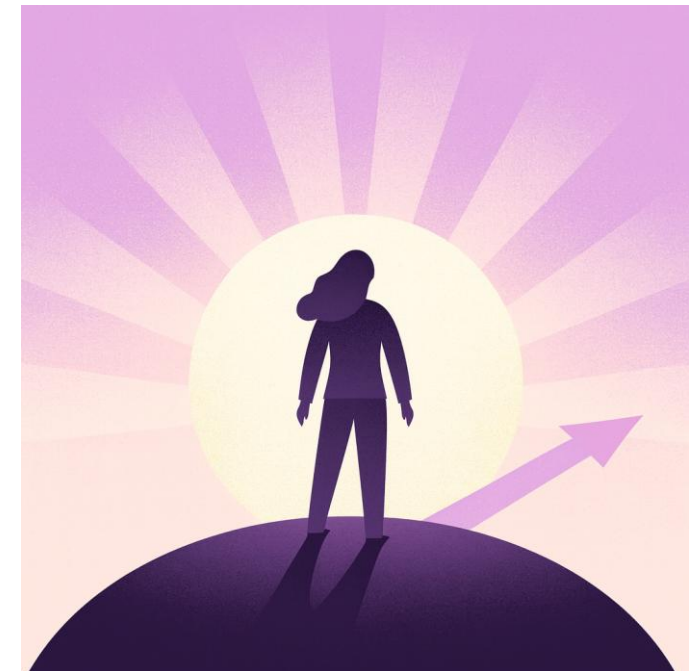
Reflect:

- What helped you act despite fear?
- How did you feel afterward?

Key Message:

You already have strength — you just need to see it.

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but the decision to move forward anyway.”





Facilitator Notes: Visualization of Strength

Objective: To help participants recall and reconnect with moments of self-efficacy and courage, reinforcing emotional resilience.

Talking Points

- Visualization is a psychological tool to strengthen self-belief and prepare for future challenges.
- It activates the same brain areas as real experiences, making positive memories emotionally “alive.”
- Encourage participants to focus on *feelings* — confidence, pride, warmth — rather than specific results.
- Remind them: strength is often quiet and personal, not only visible achievements.

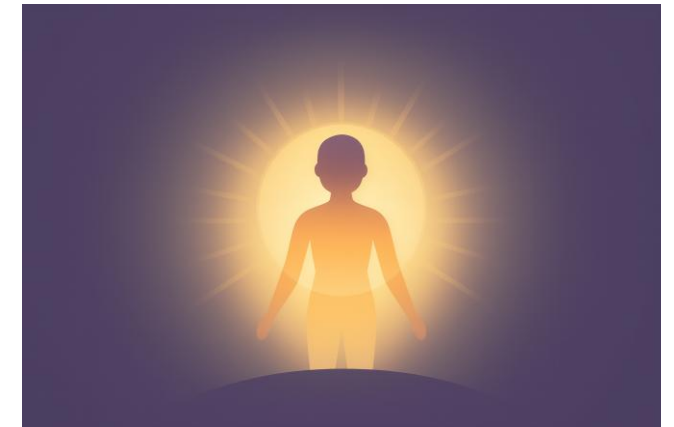
Suggested Guided Practice (5 minutes)

1. Ask participants to close their eyes and take 3 deep breaths.
2. Guide them with calm voice: “Think of a time you succeeded despite doubt or fear.”
3. After 1–2 minutes, invite volunteers to share — if they wish — what they remembered or felt.

Theory Link

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory: recalling mastery experiences boosts belief in one's own abilities.

Positive Psychology (Seligman): focusing on personal strengths increases motivation and emotional wellbeing.





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Building Emotional Resilience (for participants)

Resilience is the ability to recover from difficulties and keep moving forward.

It grows through:

Small wins – noticing everyday progress

Supportive people – asking for and accepting help

Hope – believing that change is possible

“Resilience is not being unbreakable – it’s rebuilding stronger.”

Reflection:

Think of one moment when you faced a challenge and found a way through.

What helped you recover?





Facilitator Notes: Building Emotional Resilience

Objective: To strengthen participants' understanding of resilience as a dynamic process that combines mindset, support, and perseverance.

Talking Points

- Resilience doesn't mean never struggling; it means learning to bounce back.
- Migrant women often rebuild multiple aspects of life — identity, work, community — requiring deep emotional strength.
- Encourage participants to celebrate micro-successes and recognize the support they give and receive.
- Emphasize that resilience develops through practice and reflection, not by suppressing emotions.

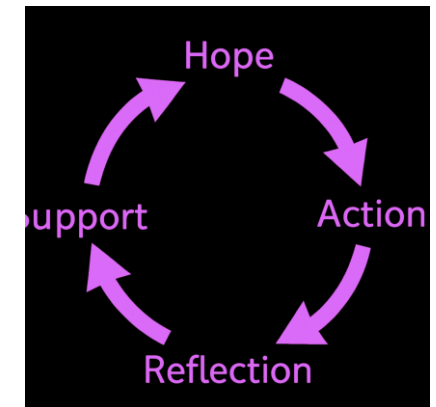
Suggested Activity (10 minutes)

1. Ask participants to recall a difficult period and identify:
 - What helped them move forward?
 - Who or what gave them strength?
2. Optional: use journaling or short sharing circle.
3. Collect common “sources of resilience” (family, faith, learning, purpose).

Theory Link

Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi): focusing on growth and gratitude enhances resilience.

Antonovsky's “Sense of Coherence” model: people thrive when they perceive life as meaningful, manageable, and understandable.





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Peer Exchange – Sharing Strength (for Participants)

Activity: Mini-group sharing (3–4 people)

Share one personal story of **overcoming a challenge**.

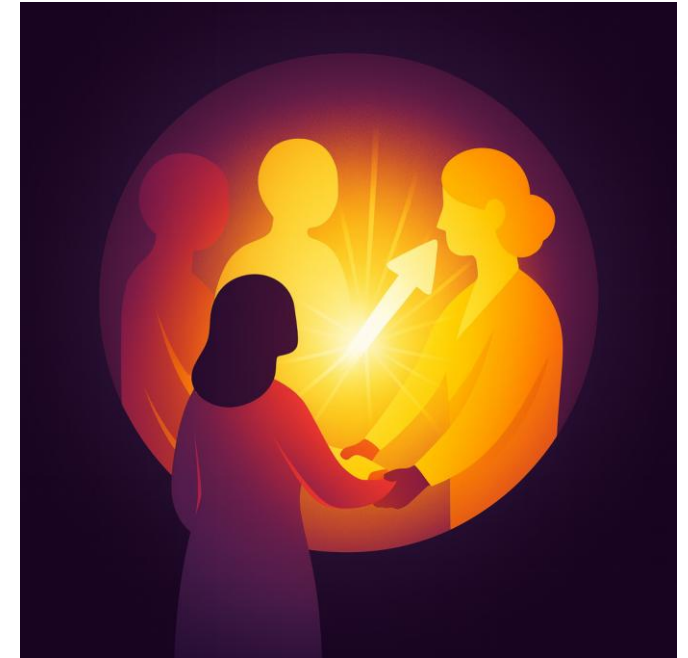
Reflect and discuss together:

What helped you move forward?

What strength did you discover in yourself?

Write down one or two key words that describe your inner strength.

“When we share our stories, we share our strength.”





Facilitator Notes: Peer Exchange – Sharing Strength

Objective: To help participants recognize common strengths, build peer trust, and see resilience as a shared experience.

Talking Points

- Emphasize that **every story matters**, no matter how small or personal.
- Encourage active listening — remind participants not to judge or compare.
- As facilitator, write on a visible board or shared screen the recurring strengths participants mention (e.g., **courage, adaptability, patience, creativity, empathy**).
- Conclude that **migrant women's collective stories** reveal a powerful pattern of persistence and growth.

Suggested Activity (15–20 minutes)

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Each shares one short story (2–3 minutes).
3. Groups reflect together on *what inner strength or skill* helped them.
4. Back in plenary, collect keywords for a “Strength Wall” (poster or digital board).

Theory Link

Narrative Psychology (McAdams, 2001): sharing personal stories creates meaning and strengthens identity.

Social Learning Theory (Bandura): hearing peers' success stories reinforces confidence through modeling.





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Practical Tools to Build Confidence (for participants)

Confidence grows through action and self-compassion.

Try these simple, effective practices:

Use positive affirmations — “I am learning every day.”

Journal your progress — note even small steps forward.

Practice calm breathing during stress — inhale hope, exhale tension.

Talk to mentors or peers — ask for feedback and support.

Set small, achievable goals and celebrate each one.

“Confidence is not about being perfect. It’s about trusting yourself enough to try.”





Facilitator Notes: Practical Tools to Build Confidence

Objective

To introduce everyday strategies participants can use to strengthen confidence and manage self-doubt.

Talking Points

- Confidence is built through repetition, not born overnight.
- Encourage participants to pick one tool and practice it daily for a week.
- Reinforce the idea that progress is personal and non-linear.
- Positive self-talk and breathing exercises can interrupt negative thought cycles.
- Journaling helps visualize growth and strengthens internal motivation.

Suggested Activity (10–15 minutes)

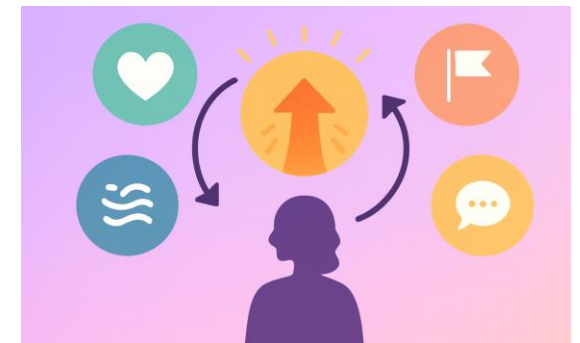
1. Ask participants to choose one tool they already use and one new one to try.
2. In pairs, discuss: “Which confidence tool could support me most this month?”
3. Close with a collective affirmation:

“We are capable, growing, and ready to take new steps.”

Theory Link

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Beck):
Reframing self-talk supports realistic confidence.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan):
Confidence grows from autonomy, mastery, and connection





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Reflection Activity: Letting Go & Moving Forward

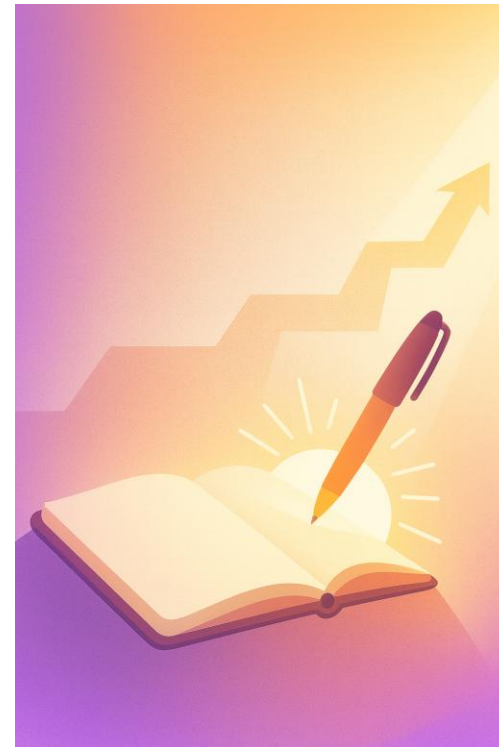
Take 5 minutes to reflect in your notebook:

- What **barrier** are you ready to leave behind?
- What **strength** did you rediscover today?
- Who can **support your next step**?

Optional sharing:

If you wish, share one reflection with the group — your insight may inspire others.

“Change begins the moment you decide to believe in your own strength.”





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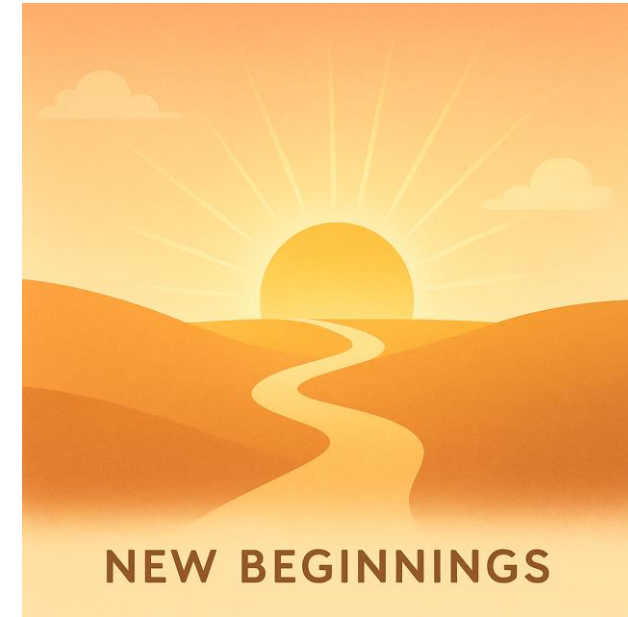
Summary & Takeaways

You can rebuild confidence step by step.

Growth mindset transforms self-doubt into learning.

Emotional resilience is your strongest career skill.

Next Lesson: Learning to Learn – Reskilling and Upskilling for New Careers.





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