



MINDSET MATTERS

REWRITING THE SCRIPT FOR SUCCESS

How youth workers can help young women overcome early conditioning and thrive in male-dominated fields, as STEM or business.

From an early age, girls are often rewarded for being perfect, polite, and risk-averse, while boys are encouraged to explore, fail, and try again. These early messages shape professional mindset – many women enter STEM or business believing they must prove rather than learn. As a youth worker, you can help rebalance that mindset before it limits potential.



1 | EXPECT EXCELLENCE EQUALLY

Set equal expectations for all learners.

- Rotate technical, analytical, and leadership tasks across all students – e.g., in a robotics project, alternate who codes, who designs, who presents.
- Replace protective language – “This might be too hard”, with growth cues – “You can build this step by step”.

Impact: High expectations signal trust and capability.



2 | FOCUS FEEDBACK ON EFFORT AND STRATEGY

Reinforce learning, not labels.

- Say “Your approach to this was clever” rather than “You’re smart.”
- When a participant struggles, say “Let’s think of another method” or “Let’s try other strategy” rather than “Maybe this isn’t your strength.”
- Use quick reflections: “What helped you improve today?”

Impact: Learners see ability as something that needs to be built and grows through practice.



3 | USE STORIES THAT INSPIRE

Use examples that break gender patterns.

- Use examples or cases with women and diverse leaders, not default male-centric ones. Avoid stereotypes as “male CEO / female assistant”.
- In class discussions, highlight both male and female inventors and entrepreneurs.
- Review visuals you use. Ensure women are shown doing science, leading, and deciding, not just “helping.”

Impact: Representation becomes normal, not symbolic.



4 | MAKE STRUGGLE VISIBLE AND SAFE

Normalize difficulty.

- Begin sessions by asking: “What’s something you found hard recently – and how did you work through it?”
- Share your own professional learning challenges (e.g., “I did struggle with learning to use computers at first, but I kept trying.”)
- When a student hesitates, remind them: “Struggle means you’re learning, not failing.”

Impact: Fear of failure turns into motivation to learn.



SCAN ME



Check more at: 4equality.erasmus.site

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5 | DESIGN CHALLENGES FOR LEARNING, NOT TESTING

Encourage exploration, not performance anxiety.

- Present STEM/business tasks as experiments: “Let’s find three ways to solve this,” instead of “Show me the right answer.”
- Include low-stakes group challenges like designing a mock product pitch or creating a mini prototype.
- Encourage reflection. Ask: “What did you discover by trying this?”

Impact: Confidence comes from discovery, not judgment.



6 | CHECK YOUR OWN BIASES

Build self-awareness as an educator.

- After sessions, reflect on who received the most space or your support.
- Occasionally record group discussions (with consent) to observe participation balance.
- Ask colleagues for feedback about your patterns or potentially biased behaviors.

Impact: Awareness helps you distribute opportunities fairly.



7 | CELEBRATE COLLABORATION OVER COMPETITION

Value collective intelligence.

- After projects, have participants reflect on “What did our team do well together?”
- Give group awards like “Best Collaboration” or “Creative Problem-Solvers.”
- Create mentoring pairs where more confident learners help others.

Impact: Fosters teamwork and shared confidence rather than unproductive comparison.



9 | ENCOURAGE CONFIDENT COMMUNICATION

Support assertive, clear expression.

- Teach girls to use first person statements in discussion (“I think...” or “I propose” instead of “Maybe we could...”).
- Use role-play debates to practice confident speaking and negotiation.
- Acknowledge contributions publicly: “That’s an insightful idea, thank you for leading that.”

Impact: Builds assertiveness and self-advocacy for future workplace settings.



8 | USE FEEDBACK LOOPS, NOT LABELS

Keep growth continuous.

- After each activity, discuss: “What did we do well?” and “What can we try differently next time?”
- Encourage peer feedback using positive language: “I liked how you explained that – maybe next time add more detail.”
- Avoid static labels like “You’re the best at math” or “You’re not a leader type.”

Impact: Encourages persistence and reflection over identity-based thinking.



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