Safe ZONE

Rewriting the Story

Facilitator's Guide — Version 4.0

A cooperative board game on bullying, cyberbullying and mental health. For young people aged 12+, schools, youth groups and educators.



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Safe ZONE

PROMESAS · one · REWRITING THE STORY · Empowering Youth against Bullying · Root

1. Welcome, Facilitator

❝ *OPENING NARRATIVE — read aloud before starting*

> *"Every day, in schools and digital spaces, young people face invisible battles: rumours, isolation, mockery, rejection. Sometimes it starts with a comment. Other times, with silence. But it always deeply affects someone. In this game, you are part of a team of peers. Each of you brings a unique strength. Your mission is to keep your school as a Safe Zone. You will face real situations that other young people have lived through. Some are subtle. Others are painful. But all of them are real. You will use empathy, teamwork and strategy to respond before things get out of control. And at the end of the game, you will take a moment to reflect, because what you discover in this game could help someone in real life. It's not about being perfect. It's about being present. Let's begin."*

Safe Zone is a cooperative non-formal education tool. Based on over 60 real anonymous testimonies of bullying collected during the Rewriting the Story project, the game invites participants to explore, debate and respond together to bullying situations. As a facilitator, your role is not to give answers — it is to make the conversation happen.

What makes Safe Zone special

- Situations are based on real, anonymous stories from young people across Europe.
- The game is cooperative: the group wins or loses together. There is no competition.
- It combines strategy, empathy and team decision-making.
- The final reflection (debrief) is where the real learning happens.

2. What's new in Version 4.0

Safe Zone V4.0 is the simplified, classroom-ready edition. We have streamlined the deck, sharpened the round structure, and made the facilitator's job lighter, so the conversation around the table — not the rulebook — stays at the centre of the session.

The deck at a glance

11	Negative Event cards — challenges that destabilise the group
13	Positive Event cards — supportive moments that restore hearts and trust
9	Major Crisis cards — escalation events that test the network
17	Special Power cards — collective and individual abilities
6	Player Role cards — six characters with unique abilities and starting zones

Key simplifications

- One clear round structure with three timed phases (10 / 5 / 3 minutes) — no hidden sub-steps.
- Fewer card categories, clearer icons, and shorter rule text on every card.
- Support Network Hearts replace the older mixed token economy. One shared health bar, capped at 10 hearts. No more.
- Special Power cards are no longer dealt at the start. They are earned only when the group successfully resolves a Situation at the end of a round.
- Flexible group size: 3 to 6 individual players, or up to 24 students arranged in 6 teams of 4.
- The facilitator decides the number of rounds based on time available. There is no fixed game length.

3. Game Components

★ Cards

- 11 Negative Event cards (dark red)
- 13 Positive Event cards (green/teal)
- 9 Major Crisis cards (dark red)
- 17 Special Power cards (purple) — earned during play, not dealt at the start
- 6 Player Role cards
- Real Situation deck (brown) — the educational heart of the game

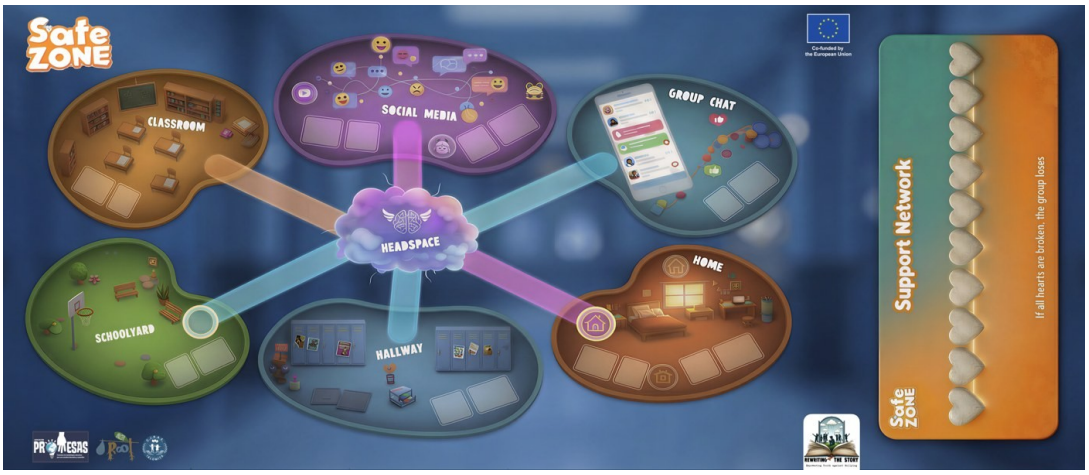
◆ Board and tokens

- 1 main board with 6 zones around Headspace (7 spaces in total)
- 1 Support Network board with a maximum of 10 hearts (cannot go higher — there is no space for more)
- Impact Tokens to mark active situations
- 6 player pawns (one per role)
- Visible timer for the 10 / 5 / 3-minute phases

▼ *DECK PREPARATION — Shuffle each deck separately and place each face-down within reach: Situations, Negative Events, Positive Events, Major Crises, Special Powers. The Special Power deck is the reward pile — do NOT deal it out at setup.*

4. The Game Board

The board has 6 zones around Headspace, the emotional centre. Players move through the zones to intervene. Headspace is connected to every other zone.



The Safe Zone game board — 6 zones around Headspace, with the Support Network of 10 hearts on the right.

Zone	Description and type of bullying
■ **Classroom**	In-person bullying, exclusion, mockery in class, intimidation in front of the group.
▣ **Hallway**	Shoving, insults on the way to class, encounters without witnesses.
● **Schoolyard**	Exclusion from games, physical bullying, closed social cliques.
▤ **Social Media**	Humiliating posts, photos without consent, viral harassment.
▥ **Group Chat**	Expulsions, rumour chains, leaked screenshots.
▦ **Home**	Isolation, night-time cyberbullying, impact on private life.

◆ *Headspace connects all zones and represents the group's emotional wellbeing. Protect it and you protect the team's ability to think clearly together.*

5. The 6 Player Roles

Each player (or team) receives a Role Card at the start. Roles are complementary and no single one can resolve a Situation alone. The key to Safe Zone is combining them.

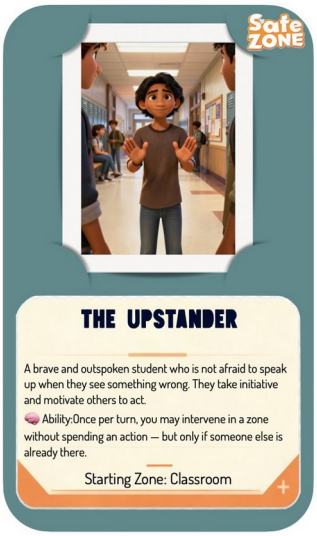
Role	Description and ability	Starting Zone
► **The Upstander**	Brave and visible. Acts in face-to-face situations. Inspires others. Ability: once per turn, may intervene in a zone without spending an action — only if another player is already there.	Classroom
♥ **The Empath**	Connects with emotions. Essential for isolation and sadness. Ability: when playing a Support card, may remove 1 extra Impact Token from your zone for free.	Home
◉ **The Quiet One**	Observes before speaking. Helps the team anticipate. Ability: once per round, look at the next Real Situation card and place it on top or at the bottom of the deck.	Headspace
◆ **The Connector**	Digital expert. Prevents online escalation. Ability: when a Situation affects a digital zone, may prevent 1 Impact Token from being added, once per turn.	Group Chat
✦ **The Artist**	Creativity as a tool for change. Turns pain into expression. Ability: once per game per player, may transform any Headspace card into a Support card.	Social Media
✦ **The Mediator**	Calms conflicts. Unites the team. Ability: once per turn, may move another player one connected zone for free.	Hallway

✦ *NOTE FOR THE FACILITATOR — With fewer than 6 players: use Upstander + Empath + Quiet One + Connector (4 players), or Upstander + Empath + Connector (3 players). Classroom play: form 6 teams of up to 4 and let each team decide its actions by consensus.*

How to read a role card

Example role card:

- Role name in large text (e.g. The Empath).
- Character profile: who they are and how they think.
- Special ability: the specific mechanical effect they can use.
- Starting zone: where their pawn is placed at the beginning of the game.
- Each player keeps their role card visible throughout the game so others know what they can do.



6. The Support Network

The Support Network represents the collective emotional health of the group. The board shows a maximum of 10 hearts (plus 1 you wear). If all are broken, the group loses.

> ♥ *MAXIMUM 10 HEARTS — The Support Network cannot grow above 10 hearts at any moment. There is no space on the board for more. If a card would push the total above 10, the extra hearts are simply not gained.*

How the network gains hearts

- Some Positive Events restore 1 heart when drawn or played.
- Specific Special Powers (e.g. Camp, Dose of Positivity, Volunteering, Educational Game) restore 1–3 hearts.
- Always respect the cap of 10. Excess hearts are lost — use them on the team's mood, not on the tracker.

How the network loses hearts

- −1 heart for each failed Situation (Impact Tokens not removed before time runs out).
- −1 or −2 hearts from some Negative Events.
- Up to −5 hearts from a Major Crisis (e.g. Spiral).

Victory threshold

The group wins together if at least 1 heart remains at the end of the session AND it has resolved the agreed number of Situations.

7. The Cards — with examples

The four card types create the game's tension and cooperation. Each type has its own colour aesthetic for easy identification.

7.1 Negative Event cards (dark red) (11)

Activated immediately when drawn at the end of a round. They add pressure to the board, block actions, or reduce Support Network hearts.



NEGATIVE EVENT — example

Rumor Storm

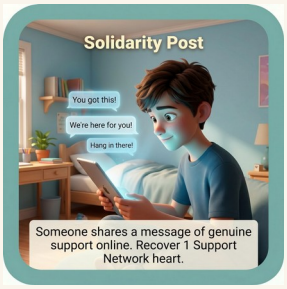
A damaging rumor spreads both in-person and online, escalating fast before anyone can react.

All cards in this deck:

- Backfired Message — a well-intentioned message is misunderstood or reposted mockingly.
- Bystander Freeze — no player may combine or coordinate actions this round.
- Fire Drill Chaos — a surprise drill disrupts routines and reduces coordination.
- Locked Out — a student is excluded from a group chat or activity.
- Power Cut — a collective low-energy moment; nobody feels capable of stepping up.
- Rumor Storm — a damaging rumor spreads both in-person and online.
- The Teacher Laughed — an adult made an ironic comment; trust in adults drops.
- They Told Everyone It Was a Joke — minimisation by peers and adults.
- Trigger Video Circulates — a traumatic video resurfaces and worsens open wounds.
- Viral Rumor — a false rumor spreads rapidly through social media.
- Weekend Escalation — the situation continued over the weekend; the group starts at a disadvantage.

7.2 Positive Event cards (green / teal) (13)

Activated immediately when drawn at the end of a round. They ease the board, recover hearts and give temporary advantages.



POSITIVE EVENT — example

Solidarity Post

Someone shares a message of genuine support online. Recover 1 Support Network heart (up to the max of 10).

All cards in this deck:

- Art Festival — the school hosts an art exhibition where students express themselves safely.
- Community Support — a group of students trains to recognise and respond to bullying.
- Community Workshop — the counsellor organises a workshop on empathy and communication.
- Group Reflection Circle — students share their experience in a guided circle.

- Lunchtime Move — someone sits next to the person who is always alone. Recover 1 heart.
- Mental Health Workshop — an external facilitator leads a workshop on stress and asking for help.
- The Day When No One Eats Alone — a themed day encouraging students to sit with someone new.
- Peer Support Training — students complete a training programme on responding to bullying.
- Public Apology — a student apologises publicly after a digital bullying incident.
- School Assembly — the school holds an assembly on empathy and respect.
- Solidarity Post — a public message of genuine support. Recover 1 heart.
- That One Message — an unexpected person sends a private message of support. Recover 1 heart.
- Unexpected Ally — a usually quiet student steps up to defend someone.

7.3 Major Crisis cards (dark red) (9)

Heavier escalation events. Drawn from the Crisis pile when triggered by the facilitator or by certain Situations. Resolve them immediately, before ending the round.



MAJOR CRISIS — example

Spiral (Global Crisis)

Stress and conflicts spread uncontrollably across digital and physical spaces. Lose 5 Support Network hearts.

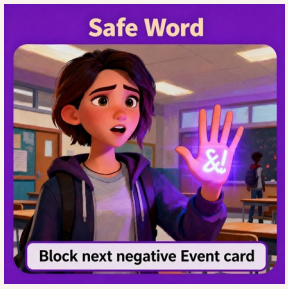
All cards in this deck:

- Burnout — you are too exhausted to attend school for a few days; all players discard 1 Special Power card.
- Can't Get Out of Bed — you fake illness and stay home; lose all your Special Power cards except online-action ones.
- Gone Viral — a contained situation has spread beyond the school. Lose 2 hearts.
- Hopelessness — the Support Network is losing faith. Lose 4 hearts.
- Nobody Gets It — misunderstandings multiply online. Lose 2 hearts and each player discards 1 Special Power card.
- Parents Are Screaming — no player may use any card referencing adult support this round. Lose 1 heart.
- Shutdown Mode — a wave of emotional overload freezes reflection; nobody can share.
- Spiral (Global Crisis) — stress spreads across digital and physical spaces. Lose 5 hearts.
- Transfer Threat — someone is threatening to leave the school; the group has only this round to resolve the active Situation, or lose 2 hearts instead of 1.

7.4 Special Power cards (purple) (17)

The strategic tools of the team — acts of care, creativity and coordination. They are kept in hand and played at the moment the team chooses.

★ *HOW SPECIAL POWERS ARE EARNED — At the end of each round, only if the group has successfully resolved the Situation, each player draws ONE Special Power card from the deck. If the Situation is failed, no Special Powers are awarded that round. Special Powers are not dealt at setup.*



SPECIAL POWER — example

Safe Word

Block the next Negative Event card revealed this round.

All cards in this deck:

- Camp — organise a weekend trip where everyone opens up. Recover 3 hearts (respect the 10-heart cap).
- Chain of Care — choose a player who may act again immediately after your turn.

- Connections — find expert support (psychologists, therapists, anti-bullying educators) through a family contact.
- Crisis Shield — play immediately when a Major Crisis card is drawn; reduce its impact significantly.
- Dose of Positivity — start a campaign to thank and praise everyone. Gain 1 heart.
- Double Down — take 5 actions instead of 4 this turn.
- Educational Game — organise a conflict-resolution game called Mission Z. Gain 2 hearts.
- Everyone Tells the Truth — learn a persuasion technique that gets everyone to tell the truth.
- First Step — if no player has acted yet this turn, any role may take one free action.
- Online Flood — create supportive memes that lift everyone's mood. Gain 1 heart.
- Safe Message — send a private message of support without moving.
- Safe Word — block the next Negative Event card revealed this round.
- Team Shift — shift the team's focus and energy to a new zone.
- Trade Roles — two players swap their Role cards for one full round.
- Volunteering — a local volunteer campaign builds camaraderie. Gain 1 heart.
- Witness — declare that your character observed the situation; activate one other player's role ability for free.
- Zero Gravity — ignore all movement rules this turn.

8. Session Preparation

Before participants arrive

- Place the board in the centre of the table, accessible to all.
- Shuffle the Situation Cards face-down and place them within reach.
- Shuffle the Special Power deck and keep it as a face-down reward pile — do not deal it out.
- Shuffle Positive Events + Negative Events together as the Event deck for the end of each round.
- Keep the Major Crisis deck separate. It is drawn from when a Crisis is triggered.
- Place the Support Network Board with the tracker at 10 hearts.
- Distribute Role Cards (or select appropriate ones based on the number of participants) and place each pawn on its starting zone.
- Have the 10 / 5 / 3-minute timer visible to everyone.
- Read all Situation Cards before the session: some may be emotionally intense.

Number of players and adaptations

Players / teams	Recommended roles	Adaptation
3 players	Upstander · Empath · Connector	Start each Situation with 1 fewer Impact Token.
4 players	Upstander · Empath · Quiet One · Connector	Balanced game. No adjustment.
5 players	Upstander · Empath · Quiet One · Connector · Artist	No adjustments needed.
6 players	All roles	Full experience.
Classroom (up to 24)	6 teams of up to 4. Each team holds one role.	Each team decides by consensus inside its 5-minute Decide phase.

9. How to Play

Safe Zone V4.0 has one clear rhythm. Every round follows the same three timed phases, then a resolution and a draw.

The 10 / 5 / 3 rhythm

PHASE 1 — READ & DEBATE	PHASE 2 — DECIDE	PHASE 3 — ACT
10 minutes Read the Situation aloud. Discuss what is happening, who is affected, and which zones are at risk. No decisions yet.	**5 minutes** Agree, as a team, which roles will act, which Special Powers to play, and in what order.	**3 minutes** Execute the plan. Resolve actions, then reveal any Event/Crisis card. Update hearts out loud.

⍰ Step-by-step

1. Reveal the Situation

The facilitator draws the top Situation card and reads it aloud. Place the card in the matching zone on the board and add the indicated Impact Tokens. Then start the 10-minute timer for Phase 1.

2. Read & Debate (10 min)

The group reflects together:

- What is happening, in plain words?
- Who is involved, who is affected, who is invisible?
- What would each role notice or feel?
- What values and risks are at stake?

3. Decide (5 min)

The group plans, out loud:

- Who moves where, and in what order.
- Which Special Powers will be played and by whom.
- How to combine role abilities to remove tokens faster.

4. Act (3 min)

- Start the 3-minute timer.
- Execute the agreed actions; play cards; use role abilities.
- If a Major Crisis is triggered, resolve it immediately.
- Reveal one card from the Event deck (Positive or Negative) and apply it.

5. Resolve & Reward

> ★ *REWARD RULE — Special Powers are earned only by success. If the group resolved the Situation in time, each player draws ONE Special Power card from the deck and keeps it in hand. If the group failed, the network loses 1 heart and no Special Powers are awarded.*

Update the Support Network tracker out loud (remembering the cap of 10 hearts). Reshuffle the Event deck if needed. Then begin Phase 1 of the next round.

► *ROUND SUMMARY — REVEAL → PHASE 1 READ & DEBATE (10') → PHASE 2 DECIDE (5') → PHASE 3 ACT (3') → RESOLVE / FAIL → DRAW SPECIAL POWER (only if success)*

10. Actions per Turn

In Phase 3 (Act), each player has 4 actions on their turn (5 if Double Down is used). The available actions are:

Action	Description
► **Move**	Move to any zone connected on the board. Costs 1 action.
■ **Reduce Impact**	Remove 1 Impact Token from your current zone. Costs 1 action.
► **Use role ability**	Activate the special ability on your role card. Cost varies (often free).
★ **Play a Special Power**	Use a card from your hand for a special effect. Costs 1 action unless the card says otherwise.
◆ **Intervene together**	If you share a zone with another player, combine actions to remove more tokens together.

11. Victory and Defeat

★ VICTORY

The group wins if it resolves the agreed number of Situation cards while keeping at least 1 heart in the Support Network at the end of the session.

✖ DEFEAT

The group loses if the Support Network reaches 0 hearts at any moment, regardless of how many Situations have been resolved.

✦ *DEFEAT IS ALSO LEARNING — If the group loses, it is not a failure. It is the perfect trigger for reflection. Ask: "What could have changed the outcome? Were there moments when cooperation failed?" The debrief is where the game gains its full value.*

12. Why It Is Hard to Act — The Support Network in Real Life

> *"I knew it was wrong. But if I said something, I would be left alone."*

This sentence, collected in the project testimonies, sums up one of the biggest obstacles to acting on bullying: not indifference, but fear.

The bystander effect

Fear	The inner voice
▲ **Fear of becoming the target**	"If I get involved, I'll be next."
▼ **Fear of group rejection**	"If I defend that person, I'll be left out of the group."
◇ **Fear of being wrong**	"Maybe I'm overreacting. Maybe it's not that bad. Maybe I'll make it worse."
◆ **Fear of others' silence**	"Nobody else says anything. Maybe it's normal and I'm the weird one."
▽ **Fear of not knowing what to do**	"What if I make it worse? I don't know how to act."

Research on prosocial behaviour shows that the probability of intervention multiplies when at least one other person also acts. The first step is the hardest, but if someone takes it, others follow. The key is not waiting to be brave — it is not being alone when you decide to act.

Use this in facilitation

- Was there a moment in the game when someone wanted to act but waited for someone else to move first?
- What would have happened if a single role had tried to solve everything without asking for help?
- In real life, do you know situations where someone did not intervene out of fear of being left alone?
- What small gesture (a look, a message, sitting next to someone) can already be a form of support?

13. Debrief — the 4F Model

The debrief is the most important part of the session. Allow at least 20–30 minutes. Form a circle where everyone can see each other's faces. The facilitator guides the conversation with questions and does not give answers.

Phase	Main question	Support questions
♥ **FEELINGS**	How did you feel during the game?	Was there a particularly tense or difficult moment? How did you feel working as a team?
◎ **FACTS**	What happened in the game?	Which Situations were hardest to resolve? What strategies did the team use?
✦ **FINDINGS**	What did you learn or discover?	Did you recognise any game situations in real life? What surprised you about the group's reactions?
► **FUTURE**	What would you do differently in real life?	What small action could you take this week? How could you be an Upstander in your real environment?

14. Tips for the Facilitator

Before the session

- Play a full game before facilitating, even alone or with a colleague.
- Read all Situation Cards: some may resonate personally with certain participants.
- Agree on a session-opening ground rule: “What is said here stays here. What is learned here, leaves with us.”
- Prepare the physical space in advance. A circular layout helps the debrief.
- Have local helpline numbers ready and visible.

During the game

- Do not intervene in the group's decisions. Your role is to manage time and clarify rules.
- Keep the 10 / 5 / 3 timer visible and honour it. The rhythm is part of the design.
- Redirect blame. If a player attacks another player, bring the discussion back to the card.
- Watch for the quietest participant. Invite them in with low-stakes questions (“What did your role notice?”).
- If a Situation stirs strong emotions, pause the game and create space for those who need to speak.

During the debrief

- Silence is valid and powerful. Do not fill every pause.
- There are no right answers. Your role is to ask, not to evaluate.
- If someone shares something personal: thank their courage and keep the safe space without pushing further than they want to go.
- Always end with a concrete next step, not a moral. The most powerful question in the 4F model is the last: “What would you do differently in real life?”

Time management — full session

- Preparation + opening narrative + role presentation: 15–20 min
- Game (4–6 Situations): 90–120 min (each round ≈ 18 min)
- Break between game and debrief: 5–10 min
- Debrief (4F Model): 25–35 min
- TOTAL: approximately 2.5 to 3 hours

✦ *FACILITATOR'S PROMISE — “We are not here to win or to lose. We are here to practise — together — what we would do if this story were real. And to remember that, in a real story, you are not alone.”*

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