

IBBY-Yamada Fund

Project reports 2025

IBBY Ukraine

Library as a Space of Psychological Support for Children



Every child has the right to become a reader

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The final narrative report – mandatory content

Library as a space of psychological support for children. Trainings and activities to promote knowledge about mental health for children and their parents

Project overview project goals, target groups, and context.

The National Section of IBBY Ukraine, in collaboration with the National Library of Ukraine for Children, despite challenging conditions—Kiev is currently under constant bombardment from ballistic missiles, with disruptions in electricity (Internet), heating, and more—has nevertheless implemented the project “Library as a space of psychological support for children.” Trainings and activities to promote knowledge about mental health for children and their parents, kindly supported by the IBBY Secretariat with sponsorship from Mr. Hideo Yamada and his company, have been conducted, and the results we planned for and achieved have exceeded our expectations. We continue to promote books, foster a reading culture among Ukrainian children, conduct practical activities dedicated to the topic of mental health for children and parents, and shape a positive image of Ukrainian children's books and libraries in the world.

The project's goal within library practice is to raise awareness of children's and parents' mental health, promote a reading culture and psychological support, and conduct trainings, events, and seminars using bibliotherapy and art therapy, which are particularly relevant for children in wartime.

Our project has not only expanded the library space for reading and obtaining necessary information but has also provided knowledge about mental health through books and art therapeutic activities, fostering empathy, social awareness among children, and helping them better understand and interact with the world. Against the backdrop of full-scale war, caring for mental health may seem less important. Most matters require constant focus: caring for children, work, and taking care of loved ones serving in the armed forces.

Despite challenging conditions, we continue to promote books, foster a reading culture among Ukrainian children, conduct practical activities dedicated to the topic of mental health for children and parents, and shape a positive image of Ukrainian children's books and libraries in the world. The National Section of IBBY and the National Library of Ukraine for Children have significant experience working on this topic in various directions.

Children gained knowledge about their mental health, learned to avoid stressful situations, learned to see the positives in elements of the surrounding world that they had not previously focused on, and acquired knowledge and skills, as well as motivation to read. Specialists used book therapy, recreational bibliotherapy, and educational work with children to help them achieve a sense of inner harmony and confidence, promote integration into sociocultural life, and foster a love for books and cultural achievements.

At the same time, it is important to cultivate resilience during times of testing.

Objectives and Results: rephrasing the approved objectives and describing the achieved results for each, with an emphasis on improvements or changes.

The main goal of our project was to raise awareness among the younger generation about the features of mental health, help adults cope with anxiety, stress, and burnout, and assist children in learning to care not only for their bodies and environment but also for their well-being and mental health, fostering a love of reading. Creating a space for "unloading" — where no one is disturbed — helps to calm down and focus.

The project was realized through a cycle of applied activities: workshops, training sessions, practical classes, competitions, and discussions using bibliotherapeutic activities on relevant topics.

To tackle this complex task, we achieved the following goals:

- Cohesion among the staff of specialized children's libraries around the idea of improving the mental health of youth;
- Librarians gained knowledge and skills about methods and technologies for supporting and improving the mental health of children and adults;
- We involved 7 specialists related to mental health issues as lecturers for the project: psychologists, educators, relevant researchers, authors writing for children and youth, and publishers printing literature on the subject.
- Modern informational-recreational spaces were created at children's libraries, providing theoretical and practical information on mental health issues for children and their families, thus fulfilling bibliotherapeutic functions of healing through books, reading, and oral expression.

The informational wave of mental health support through bibliotherapeutic activities has covered not only children but also their parents, guardians, educators, and others.

Activities and Methods: a description of the conducted activities, how they were implemented, and their contribution to achieving the goals. Main difficulties and measures taken to overcome them. Any deviations from the initial plan should be explained.

The project was implemented through a series of applied activities: master classes, training sessions, workshops, competitions, and discussions using the latest forms of bibliotherapeutic activities relevant to the theme, such as book therapy and art therapy. The project's activities took place both offline and online and aimed to teach the principles of psychological support in everyday life while fostering a caring attitude toward mental health in children by setting a positive example.

On May 29, 2025, a practical training seminar on spreading knowledge about the mental health of children and their parents took place at the National Library of Ukraine for Children as part of the project.

The aim of the event is to draw attention to the importance of preserving and supporting children's mental health in the context of war, and to enhance the competence of librarians, educators, and parents in matters of psychological assistance to children.

Participants of the seminar-training included librarians from specialized regional children's libraries, youth libraries, central city public libraries from 20 regions of Ukraine and Kyiv, and the Odesa National Scientific Library.

Representatives of state authorities (the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine), teachers from higher educational institutions, and representatives of public organizations working in the field of support for children and families participated in the seminar.

The speakers of the training were practical psychologists, art therapists, crisis consultants, and gestalt therapists who conducted practical sessions on self-restoration and the use of art therapeutic techniques. In the theoretical part of the seminar, the specialists shared practices and work experience, in particular: the formation of a culture of care for one's own internal state; the role of primary assistance to children in crisis situations; the implementation of modern approaches and methods of psychological support; educational initiatives aimed at creating a safe environment for children.

Experts participated in the practical panel "Focusing on Mental Health Preservation," where they had the opportunity to go through a series of interactive training sessions and workshops: "Care that Heals: Mental Health of

Parents and Children in the Modern World" (conducted by practical psychologist Yulia Panchuk); "The Secret of My Soul" – a self-recovery training (conducted by Olena Lutsenko, "Support at Arm's Length" – art therapist, board member of the NGO "Art-Therapeutic Association"); "The Matrix of My Security: Survival Mode According to Age Characteristics" (conducted by psychologists of the National Library of Ukraine for Children, Lada Tsybul'ska and Daria Shkudun); "My Contribution to the Nation's Health" – a training workshop for children and parents (conducted by psychologist Lada Tsybul'ska); Support session for oneself and colleagues: practical cases conducted by Yuliya Hrytsenko, a training specialist from the psychosocial support department of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, and Yelizaveta Stolyarova, a leading specialist in training and educational activities of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society; Lectures: "Support Groups as a Place of Strength" – Yulia Kovalenko, psychologist, art therapist, crisis consultant of the hot line NGO "Public Movement "Women's Power of Ukraine"; Emotional Intelligence as a Resource for Mental Health – Oksana Virchenko, psychological training instructor at the Medical-Psychological Rehabilitation Department of the National Guard of Ukraine Medical Center, soldier; Practical Training – Olena Datsun, "The Role of Family in a Child's Experience of War: Family Scenarios and Reactions"; – Senior lecturer of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology of Vocational Education at the Faculty of Psychology, Communication and Translation of the State University "Kyiv Aviation Institute".

The master class "A Lantern for a Child: How a Librarian Can Support in the Darkness of Emotions" (using metaphorical associative images) was conducted by Svitlana Kolomiiets, the head of the Center for the Care and Support of Preschool Children at Skovoroda University in Peryaslav.

All participants received certificates of qualification enhancement. (*photo in Appendix 1*).

Participants gained new theoretical knowledge and practical tools for preserving and restoring mental health. Thanks to the implementation of the project, a professional network of librarians, educators, and psychologists working in the field of psycho-emotional support for children has been expanded. The groundwork for further cooperation with state and public institutions has been established.

Conclusions: The event proved its relevance and significance in modern conditions. The knowledge and skills acquired will contribute to increasing the resilience of children and parents to psychological challenges and affirming the library as a safe space for psychological support.

More details: National Library of Ukraine for Children – news about the event <https://chl.kiev.ua/Default.aspx?id=11644> (*photo in Appendix 2*).

The library space not only provides free access to books and reading but also continues to conduct bibliotherapeutic events for children who today need support and attention. Within the framework of the project, a series of events and training sessions for children aimed at supporting children's mental health and their parents, as well as using the library as a space for psychological safety, creativity, and communication, were organized. Throughout the project, children happily visited the library and training sessions, read, participated in interactive games, and even joined tournaments. They received positive emotions and had the opportunity to distract themselves, even if just for a while, from the horrors of war. During the events—specifically sessions on fairy tale therapy and art therapy—psychologists provided consultations to children and parents, actively utilizing modern materials, technical means, and innovative methodologies for working with books.

Among the events for children, the following stand out: for the training session with primary school children, specialists chose play therapy—one of the effective methods in psychology. At one such event, the symbol of the meeting was a toy monkey—immediate, energetic, unpredictable, and flexible. The magician from Africa, who embodies the essence of survival, is used as a transitional object in overcoming childhood depression.

And the event incorporating elements of art therapy "Joyful Zoo" not only helped our readers gain an exciting experience, but also provided positive emotions from the creative result achieved.

For the relax-reading program "BOOKtrips," the children, along with Paddington the bear, set off to London. The little ones, who are just learning to read, picked up English words necessary for greetings and other polite forms of address and thanks. The children were delighted to listen to the witty stories that happened to Paddington in the capital of Great Britain.

To conclude, children relieved tension through creativity—performing special exercises and creating a "Country of Emotions" with modeling clay. Clay art therapy helps reduce anxiety, restore inner balance, learn to feel "here and now," and freely fantasize while interacting with color (color therapy).

As part of the "Workshop of Good Mood," children and teenagers aged 4-17 participated in master classes: a wonderful opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of creativity, gain new knowledge and skills, and possibly create something unique.

A cycle of animated events titled "I Play – Therefore I Live" for children aged 10-15 took place, during which they drew, sculpted, communicated, and learned to organize joint activities among peers.

(Photo in Appendix 3).

Target groups and outreach: the number of children (direct beneficiaries) and involved secondary groups (teachers, librarians, youth leaders, parents) with relevant contextual information as needed.

Children of various age categories participated in themed activities: literary battles, music therapy sessions, art therapy (ages 4-10, 11-14, 10-15, 15-17).

Participant outreach:

More than 300 children participated in events and special training sessions. Over 120 children engaged in reading activities, psychological counseling (both individual and group), drawing, handicrafts, and discussions about mental health. Among them, more than 33 children aged 8-12 participated in public readings.

Approximately 400 children participated in master classes on making angels, cloth dolls, and more.

A targeted indirect group also included the parents of participants in project activities; librarians, psychologists (70 people), teachers, publishers, and writers who participated in the training (10 people), as well as librarians from the National Library of Ukraine for Children serving as volunteers and mentors.

Quality results and indicators of changes: a description of observed changes (skills, attitudes, behavior), ways to observe or measure them, and at least two specific examples of impact.

Speaking of quality results, these include: acquiring new knowledge, learning new computer skills, deepening understanding of how to choose good books for a group or an individual. Children gained new life skills, took steps to develop their motor skills aimed at strengthening cooperation within the group, and expressed their willingness to share thoughts and opinions. Communicative meetings and master classes involving volunteers, writers, and parents were aimed at developing both play therapy and fairy tale therapy, music therapy, and reviewing specially selected videos. Trusting conversations with psychologists occurred, where thoughts on important life topics were shared, books were read together, and crafts were made for their loved ones.

1. Feedback from psychologist Vladyslava after the event in June 2025:

“At the relax-reading session under the "BOOKjourneys" program and within the project, more children than usual attended. Together with Paddington Bear, we set off to London. Before that, we checked our English knowledge (it should be noted that with such knowledge, we can expect a large number of tourists and translators in the future). And the little ones who are still learning to read picked up the English words necessary for greetings and other polite forms of address and thanks. Our mini English club prepared the readers for the journey. The

children enjoyed listening to the funny stories that happened to Paddington in the capital of Great Britain. To conclude, we transitioned to our usual activity in this space – relieving tension through various exercises and creativity, such as molding from plasticine the Country of Emotions where our hero found himself. The children made emotion houses. There was a yellow house of Joy, a green house of Relaxation, a blue one for Sadness, a red one for Anger, and a fifth house unique to each child. This encompassed fun, dreams, fairy-tale elements, and therapy.”

2. Feedback from a mother (Olena, mother of 7-year-old Mariyka):

“After such a hard night, I thought my daughter would stay home to rest. But she reminded me herself that today was 'BOOKjourneys.' She returned from the library inspired, talking about London and greeting me in English. She especially enjoyed making 'emotion houses' — she said her dream house was pink and purple. Thank you for the warm and supportive atmosphere for the children!”

3. Feedback from a grandmother (Ms. Halyna):

“I have been bringing my granddaughter to the 'Cozy World of Childhood' space many times. It's always sincere and kind here. Today, the kids seemed to have truly experienced Great Britain, and then they enthusiastically molded their emotions! It is very valuable to have a place during such difficult times where a child can switch gears, feel joy and peace. I liked that the children not only listened to the story but also worked through their emotions via creativity. It's clear that this is not just reading, but thoughtful therapeutic work.”

4. Feedback from a child (Artem, 9 years old):

“I liked how Paddington went to London and got into funny adventures. I made a red house for anger and a green one for relaxation. And now I also know how to say 'hello' and 'thank you'. I want another trip like that!”

In the midst of changes. This involves creating a safe environment and developing social-emotional skills such as empathy, discussing stories and situations; working with anxiety-provoking thoughts, group exercises, situation modeling, and learning phrases like “I need support”; skills to ask for help. Thanks to the method of plasticine graphic arts, we alleviated anxiety and restlessness, shifted focus to controlling our feelings here and now, indulged in imagination, and immersed ourselves in the world of color therapy. This method of creative activity involves creating images or collages, and instead of traditional modeling of three-dimensional figures, plasticine is used as paint. We gained skills in emotional support, such as active listening; children learned to separate emotion from behavior; validation of feelings (feelings are allowed, aggression is not); they learned to recognize emotions, practiced self-regulation exercises, such as breathing exercises (“square breathing”) for muscle relaxation, and exercises for preventing anxiety and stress.

The monitoring of the project's results was conducted throughout its entire implementation period.

Quality results for children. As a result of participating in the project, children gained both theoretical knowledge and practical exercises to monitor their mental health and engage in preventive actions to maintain it. They learned how the war affects the health of the Ukrainian people as a whole and each Ukrainian in particular, as well as the negative consequences awaiting those who neglect their health. Together with their parents, they acquired skills in adhering to the requirements of maintaining their own mental health and assisting others. Project participants received knowledge about mental etiquette, behavioral rules regarding family members, peers, teachers, and other people in their social circles. Through the project, they learned to be attentive not only to their own mental health but also to the mental health of those they contact and interact with in their daily lives.

Among the quality results for adults — new programs of activities/events were introduced to prevent issues related to mental health

- We learned to speak openly about our mental health, about well-being, psychology, and how to teach children to take care not only of their bodies and the environment but also of themselves;
- Helped make the library space a safe place for physical and psychological "unloading" of children and families.
- Supported families who are already experiencing difficulties with mental health
- Participation in the project allowed specialists and parents to immerse themselves in the process of interacting with children on the topic of mental health and prevention, and to gain new knowledge to share within their communities.

A list of participants is attached, along with photos showcasing activities, children's emotional reactions to events, books they are reading, and their interactions with volunteers and authors. (Appendix 4)

After the project was completed, research and analysis were conducted, along with conclusions regarding its effectiveness through a survey.

Participants of the training aimed at spreading knowledge about children's mental health and that of their parents within the framework of the grant project "Library as a Space for Psychological Support for Children" had the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the event. ("Feedback Survey" is included in (Appendix 5)).

The purpose of the survey was to determine the effectiveness of the work carried out by the organizers of the event. The "survey" consisted of 5 questions and comments, which allowed participants' attitudes towards the organization of the process to be maximally revealed. A total of 75 respondents answered the survey questions. All respondents (100%) confirmed that the event was consistent with the stated topic and fully met their professional needs. The participating specialists gained new ideas regarding the practical application of the acquired knowledge and skills in supporting children's mental health and that of their parents. In response to the question "Do you plan to use the knowledge gained during the event in practice?", all respondents said "yes" (100%). Comments on the responses to this question included: "I have new ideas regarding the creation of a psychological space," "I will definitely use it in my work," "I will use the experience of organizing the event and locations," "many interesting cases will be used in preparing for club activities," "I gained many interesting forms and contacts that can be used in my work," "I will practice with IDPs," "very simple exercises that I will use," and more. The organization and conditions of the event were rated by participants on a 5-point scale. Thus, the organization and conduct of the training with its theoretical and practical components received the highest ratings from respondents: 5 points – 97%, 4 points – 3%. Respondents expressed genuine emotions regarding the high level of execution and the richness of the event with new relevant information on the problems of children's psychological health in the context of war in Ukraine. Based on the positive responses from the respondents of the "Feedback Survey," it can be concluded that the objectives set before the organizers of the training to spread knowledge about children's mental health and that of their parents within the framework of the project "Library as a Space for Psychological Support for Children" were successfully achieved. Participants gained new theoretical knowledge on the restoration and preservation of mental health and acquired practical skills in providing primary psychological assistance to children in crisis situations, which they will definitely apply in their work. Volunteers and specialists involved in the project actively used new technologies, email, Instagram, Skype, and Viber to inform the community, children, and their parents about the events. Information about the project was highlighted on websites and social media.

Quantitative indicators: planned and actual results achieved, as well as criteria for determining success.

The project reached over 1,000 children. Various formats of psychological support were implemented, ranging from group training to individual consultations. The cultural and educational influence of the library as a space for

safety, communication, and development has been expanded. Collaboration among librarians, psychologists, writers, and parents has been strengthened. 67 people participated in the seminar-training.

During the project, over 40 events and activities for children and adults were held in total.

The cultural and educational influence of the library as a space for safety, communication, and development has been expanded. Human resources and acquired materials were utilized to conduct quality activities and events. Nine specialists related to mental health issues were involved as lecturers: psychologists, educators, relevant scientists, authors writing for children and youth, and publishers producing literature on the relevant topic (10 specialists) as well as 10 volunteer librarians.

Approximately 15,000 people participated online. During this period, 600 new visitors received information and consultations. Positive changes occurred after the project's implementation.

Sustainability and Continuation: Explanation of how activities or results will continue after the project's completion and how the Section plans to develop the achievements.

Our project is long-term, with its implementation continuing through activities such as seminars, training sessions, and workshops on mental health, bibliotherapy, and art therapy for both children and parents. Attendance at events is free, and children and adolescents aged 0 to 18 are our potential users. The library's collaboration with publishers, writers, and partners to promote the mental health program and reading culture is a priority for the library. Once a year, the National Section of IBBY conducts seminars and training for publishers and specialists on mental health, ecology, reading, and the development of children's books in Ukraine and worldwide. Training will be conducted regularly at the National Library of Ukraine for Children, which houses the national section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), and will include previously acquired experience. Children gain knowledge and skills through creative activities and psychological consultations (over 20 per year), while parents, librarians, and other visitors participate in training sessions and lectures monthly.

The project is sustainable. Approximately 500 new visitors from the city and across the country will be involved in programs and events. The number of volunteers will increase to 15, and psychologists, writers, and illustrators will use book narratives in their meetings, both offline and online, monthly. Positive changes have occurred due to the project. Indicators of change include children's level of awareness regarding mental health issues. New interests have emerged,

and engagement in learning and community life has increased. Children have made new friends, strengthened their sense of unity and empathy, and developed a desire to contribute to their country. An important outcome of the project has been a change and correction of value orientations towards a positive attitude towards people. Children have begun to read more, communicate more, participate in recreational, educational, and animation activities, and have shifted their attitudes towards their place and role in society. During the project's implementation, the promotion of reading increased, and interest in promoting children's books on mental health, self-care, social environment, and ecology grew. 70% of boys and girls among the participants gained knowledge about mental health, and 30% of children, including displaced children, children with disabilities, and those in difficult life circumstances, were able to adapt to the psychological environment, find new friends among participants, acquire new knowledge and skills, and learn to use the latest technologies, games, and educational websites in a convenient format. This created a wide range of additional opportunities and resources. New users who had not previously visited the library were engaged in reading and books. The practical skills and techniques acquired to reduce the risks of panic attacks or stress are already being applied in their lives. The new experience gained by librarians and specialists through the project on innovative forms and methods of working with children to promote children's reading and establish new partnerships has been disseminated in other libraries with the support of the Ukrainian section of IBBY.

Moreover, the project facilitated the acquisition of new publications on mental health and the opportunity to read books from leading Ukrainian and foreign publishers on the relevant topics.

Documentation and Ethical Standards

With the support of the IBBY-Yamada 2025 program "The Right of the Child to Become a Reader," methodological materials have been prepared for children:

1. "Secrets of Setting: About Emotions Simply." For preschoolers and younger school-aged children;
2. "How to Help Yourself When There's a Lot of Stress and Fatigue";
3. "How to Talk to a Child About Loss";
4. "Psychological Recommendations for Reducing Stress and Filling with Inner Energy"

Information from social media and websites:

<https://www.facebook.com/rivneodb/posts/pfbid033VL3ATgGq6uZAs8FQutKJKTpQxqAxV8ybYp34sef6PbLvXo3sYk1jkdpRN5dc1pyl>

<https://www.facebook.com/ooubim/posts/pfbid02V1nMNHQP5Y13HoqPkpCpunFx8srouMFA2DhNW8oFNQTssPXK2iE5PsmktG32GksTl>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile/100066466491485/search/?q=трєнїнг>

<https://www.facebook.com/nbukids/posts/pfbid0HgZFgcfjk9hvkrhbhy9dUhenkSf8Ah7QtdaH6gmYuFE2U34x5D62Uhx8TnQv5BCml>

<https://www.facebook.com/ooubim/posts/pfbid02V1nMNHQP5Y13HoqPkpCpunFx8srouMFA2DhNW8oFNQTssPXK2iE5PsmktG32GksTl>

<https://www.facebook.com/bibliotekadlyaditei/posts/pfbid0SPes9xKPTJfKxLWLvEC1v1tN6UafNAwExUxJ6XQDR4aqeKorN1NlyheHBXHfc8Rul>

<https://fond.chl.kiev.ua/proekty/130-biblioteka-yak-prostir-psikhologichnoji-pidtrimki-ditej>

<https://www.facebook.com/fabellarina/posts/pfbid0qeBQ2VnUxpMdLP4PcM8s2vGFXDixepqSJYYwZxcUQ4rm3sSczVToAkp2RFg73kcil>

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