

“Extending Social Educators Competences” ESEC Erasmus+ Project

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Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, in response to the large numbers of children with conduct disorders and the shortage of professional personnel, there has been an increasing emphasis on training parents as therapists for their own children.

Parents who have children with disabilities are often reported to have physical and psychological distress related to caring for their children. Children with behavioral disabilities may manifest a wide range of difficulties in social adjustment and/or social communication and social relationships. These difficulties may extend from aggressive behavior and acute psychomotor agitation to apathy. Disturbed families, poor parenting practices, poor social and economic live circumstances could be blaming factors for the onset of behavioral problems. Behavioral difficulties may be the secondary effect of the manifestation of intellectual, developmental or other disabilities. Behavioral disabilities may have significantly negative impacts on the individual, the family affecting their quality of life and all the society

The first parent-training programs have been based on individual therapy and have incorporated direct feedback techniques such as live modeling, role playing, and behavioral rehearsals.

However, these individualized programs are costly, time consuming, and incapable of meeting the increasing demands.

The situation of COVID 19 in 2020 changed the plans of the sessions and workgroups of the whole project. The Projected activities and communication with the course participants were limited to totally on-line ways of communication and distance learning. The project organizers had to changed and adjusted the prepared organizational settings and materials to unexpected conditions of pandemia, as well as conducting sessions and activities. Therefore one of the results of training activities of ESEC is the offer of training handbook.

The Handbook Report consists of description of chapters developed by each international partner to provide more detailed information about materials, considerations and suggestions based on its own and national experience in that field. Some parts of it also are based on the 2020 sessions of parent educators developed in each country, within the framework of the European project Erasmus + ESEC “Extending Social Educators Competences”.

The ESEC CONSORTIUM consists of five partners with complementary expertise in teaching and learning. It includes two Higher Education institutions, one foundation, and two non-governmental organizations.

JANUSZ KORCZAK PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY (PL)

Janusz Korczak Pedagogical University in Warsaw was established 1993 by the Polish Association for Adult Education as a non-public University according to the Polish law. The University has been growing dynamically since then and has become already one of the largest non-public universities in Poland. It has developed, since its establishing, a very strong regional structure which is its main feature. Pedagogical University has since its establishing a very strong internationally oriented policy and co-operates with other European Universities in accordance with the membership of

Poland in the European Union. The University has been Member of various networks and Projects within the Socrates Program: EUCEN, European University Continuing Education Network and EuLLearN. We contain contacts to several European Universities previous within numerous Socrates Projects in the field of University Continuing Education and currently within the Lifelong Learning Program.

REZEKNE ACADEMY OF TECHNOLOGIES (LV)

Rezekne Academy of Technologies (RTA) was established on July 1, 1993. RTA is a state funded higher education and science institution of the Republic of Latvia which implements the study programs as well as is engaged in scientific, research and artistic creative work. The aim of RTA is to provide academic and professional higher education in compliance with the science development level and cultural traditions of Latvia being competitive in the European education space; to develop culture, science and education in Latgale region and thus in the whole Latvia.

ECOISTITUTO (IT)

Ecoistituto is a private research institute established in 1989. Ecoistituto activity focuses on sustainable development and on education following a multidisciplinary approach finalized to promote effective and sustainable results (people livability). Ecoistituto collaborates with schools and governmental institutions organizing courses, seminars, and workshops on sustainable development, cooperative business, environmental education, and wellness and healthy behavior. For the last 14 years, Ecoistituto organized an annual international conference in collaboration with IPSAPA (Interregional Society for Participation in Agribusiness Landscape and Environmental Management) and the University of Udine about the themes of the “landscape mosaic”. In 2005, Ecoistituto created the series of publications “Living in places”, devoted to the local cultures and until now 15 issues have been published.

INCLUDE (GR)

The Interdisciplinary Network of Special and Inter-cultural Education, INCLUDE is a scientific association that was founded in 2011 to promote inclusive policy in formal and non formal education environments, in accordance with the principles of the UN Conventions against Discrimination in Education and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The ultimate goals of INCLUDE network are i) to improve the quality of the life of children and families facing the risk of exclusion from the educational system as a result of disabilities and xenophobia, ii) to promote changes in social attitudes and perceptions towards diversity, and iii) to contribute actively and effectively to the creation of a truly "school for all". INCLUDE views inclusive policy as a holistic possess where each system (social, physical, linguistic, chemical etc) is a set of interacting or interdependent components that work as a whole. Interventions in neighborhood that are designed to include children with special needs and /or different cultural background are at the heart of Include 's activity.

MANRA (ES)

Mancomunidad de la Ribera Alta is a local organisation that brings together all the municipalities in the region of Ribera Alta. It consists of 35 municipalities that group a population of more than 220,000 inhabitants, distributed over an area of 979.5 km².

The Mancomunidad manages different services of interest for the municipalities that comprise it, constituting a body of local scope where the debate those issues affecting the peoples of the region becomes possible. The Mancomunidad is responsible for: promoting effective services seeking the improvement of the entire population's welfare, promoting actions before institutions and public and private entities aimed at the improvement of services, participating, organising and collaborating at a regional level on events that aim to publicize our region, cooperating, participating and promoting the dissemination of study materials from our region which are written in our language. Ecoistituto has been created in 1989. Ecoistituto activity focuses on sustainable development and on education following a multidisciplinary approach finalized to promote effective and sustainable results (people livability). Ecoistituto collaborates with schools and governmental institutions organizing courses, seminars, and workshops on sustainable development, cooperative business, environmental education, and wellness and healthy behavior. The members of Ecoistituto are University professors (especially from the Udine University), professionals, experts, and researchers engaged in different scopes: youth and adult education, quality evaluation, agribusiness, ecology, sociology, psychology, social anthropology, architecture, geography, social pedagogy.

Chapter 1. JANUSZ KORCZAK PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER PARENTS

Abstract

This report contains a next part of the content with learning units prepared by By Janusz Korczak Pedagogical University in Warsaw (JKPU), which is a leader of the project ESEC, including the training course held mostly by then internet communicators in JKPU, where participants who wish to take part into come from all over Poland.

In this chapter there is presented material on “Communicating with other parents” with the aim of the completion of a training course organized by JKPU (Poland). In the context of COVID-pandemia even more there can be observed cases when the families with children of behavioral disabilities or children with special needs coping with all sorts of stressful situations of misunderstandings from the majority of society; they also deal with some sorts of breaks and disharmony in communication with other parents of classroom. Therefore enhancing cooperation and firstly communication among such group of parents is becoming very important. It should be stress that parents of the disabled children can benefit from the perspective of mutual cooperation under the condition that they preserve their freedom to exercise their own judgments. They need opportunities for experimentation, chances to experience failure and to learn from mistakes. One of the advantages of cooperation is thinking together, valuing and respecting each other's personal opinions and contributions for the purpose of new and creative solutions to problems.

Parents of young children with developmental delays demonstrate similar levels of parenting daily difficulties and hassles to parents of typically developing children. However, there can be noticed greater parenting stress, as regards the impact of the child on the family. In our proposed training topic of course “Communicating with other parents” we offered for participants the following structure of main needed content of which we focus on:

Parents as adult learners usually need to know why specific knowledge is necessary for them before they decide to learn something. In the first place, they look for the practical use and implementation of the teaching content. They very rarely choose unnecessary courses. Parents give a particular emphasis on their own decisions and on self-direction for which they feel responsible. As adult learners, they do not expect to be offered advice or any kind of hints that are provided by teachers to school learners. Parents' motivation to acquire a new knowledge leading to skills and competences is driven by a desirable goal of coping with real-life difficulties or problems. Their motivation can be also connected with a sense of self-esteem.

Introduction

The general objective of the course is to increase and improve the ability of participants, who face challenges when parenting children with disabilities, to cope with problems through communication and cooperation. But from the point of view educators and counselors the main

purpose is a transfer knowledge in order to understand the strength of communicating and cooperating for parenting with competence.

Proposed structure is reflecting the presented fields of training. In this regard, the first part is dedicated to the participants who wish to learn or improve their range and level of skills and competencies mostly which have to do with emotional communication skills. From among the above-listed skills, parents who up-bring, educate, protect and support their disabled children should particularly make use in their everyday work of those skills which are useful for emotional communication. It is desirable to focus more on soft skills than on the hard ones, because they open the way to effective involvement, cooperation and communication.

In the second part there are issues of social emotional learning and emotional intelligence for parenting with competence. There is no doubt that social and emotional skills obviously matter in raising children. Huge majorities of parents admit that they need a fair amount or a lot more support to learn social and emotional skills. In these days there is a higher awareness that parents of children with intellectual disabilities undoubtedly feel categories of emotions that are substantially different to those of parents of typically developing peers. Mother - child and father - child relationships due to the context of disorders or impairments are special, stressful, maybe rewarding, but still extremely challenging. The emotional wellbeing of parents of children with special needs is negatively affected, as there is probably no event more devastating to a family than a child born with a birth defect.

The last major part of the training consists of practical approaches for communicating and cooperating with other parents of children with disabilities. Children and adults have their basic psychological needs. Meeting them is important for personal wellbeing. Parents when working together, communicating and cooperating in a satisfactory way develop attitudes and behaviors that bring opportunities for the fulfillment of the child's psychological needs to a lesser or greater extent rather than to complete satisfaction. Fundamental psychological needs of individuals can be divided into at least three categories:

- The need for connection with important person/s in the environment, for love, acceptance, close relationships, a <safe base> and for security, predictability and stability of this connection.
- The need for autonomy, independence, appreciation, freedom of choice. It relates to experiencing self-initiative, freedom of choice, feeling that I am the one directing my own behavior and making decisions important for my life (rather than behaving under duress and extrinsic pressure).
- The need for competence, the ability to have an effect on the people and things that surround the child and to master knowledge and skills.

In general, parents of children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDDs) need good communication with and efficient support from various environments: other family members, siblings, teachers, professionals.

Parents' Cooperation in the light of mostly demanded skills

It often happens these days that three words are used in order to describe effective teamwork: collaboration, coordination, cooperation.

However, semantically those words are not the same or nearly the same. Thus, they should not be considered synonyms. When used interchangeably, their meaning dilutes and diminishes the potential of creating powerful, collaborative workplaces. Recently, collaboration has been a highly important word in the media thanks to Marissa Mayer's explanation of her decision to bring Yahoo employees back to the office:

"To become the absolute best place to work, communication and collaboration will be important, so we need to be working side-by-side" (Stoner, 2013, p. 2).

Mayer strongly believes that when people work together, they work better because they create real relationships the building of which is a lot easier when having face-to-face contact. Coordinative and cooperative efforts are crucial for effective and efficient work commitments and accomplishments. At least some face-to-face time spent together makes a huge difference. Examples of productive, valuable teamwork can be found in all types of environments. High performance teams, in particular, share common characteristics. Depending on their intentional objectives that are supposed to be achieved, they might rely more on cooperation or coordination than on collaboration. Cooperative work and undertaken efforts of parents of the disabled children serve as one of excellent examples.

Parents of the disabled children can benefit from the perspective of mutual cooperation under the condition that they preserve their freedom to exercise their own judgments. They need opportunities for experimentation, chances to experience failure and to learn from mistakes. One of the advantages of cooperation is thinking together, valuing and respecting each other's personal opinions and contributions for the purpose of new and creative solutions to problems.

Teaching parents' emotional communication skills

Significantly important soft skills understood in terms of necessary human qualities are: analytical thinking and innovation; creativity, originality and initiative; critical thinking and analysis; complex problem-solving; leadership and social influence; emotional intelligence; reasoning, idea-producing.

Parents who aim at a successful cooperation with other mothers and fathers of the disabled children need to acquire knowledge in the field of developing psychology, be aware of scientific explanations of disorders, get familiar with family role models and relationships. From among skills, they mostly require communication skills, accompanied with self-consciousness and the ability to properly diagnose and analyze the situation. From among desirable attitudes they need to express: patience, tolerance, acceptance, stress-resistance, responsibility, respect of differences.

Parents who take advantage of their soft skills are prepared to play a variety of roles in front of their children, no matter if they are disabled or within generally recognized norms of psychophysical development. A list of parents' roles can be immensely extensive and the selection of priorities should rather be left to the parents' themselves for the sake of the well-being of the

child. Suggested parent roles cover a broad spectrum of activities as: advisers, coaches, assistants, guides, mediators, protectors, managers, care-takers, enablers, leaders, instructors, supporters, initiators, companions, evaluators, listeners, models, teachers, assessors, coordinators, facilitators, story-tellers, partners, or trainers.

Conditions for parental successful communication with children

Understanding the importance of collaboration and interpersonal communication is a driving force of activities that are being undertaken. At the same time, the awareness that the communication process depends on many factors is necessary to be admitted. Verbal and non-verbal behaviour strongly interferes with communication and collaboration. On the one hand, if verbal signs are supposed to give directions for an effective communication, they need to be used in a very clear way, so that the message is explicit and unambiguous. On the other hand, non-verbal signs, like body language with facial expressions and gestures, sometimes play a more significant role in communication than the language itself. At the same time, one needs to recognize that if verbal and non-verbal signs do not coincide, the partners' communication process will be confused and the collaboration is damaged. Parents are expected to know that their perception of the real world is different than that of their children, because it is influenced by their socialization factors, in particular. Parents observe reality through a specific filter of individual experiences, thoughts and values. This does not mean that children who are involved in communication and collaboration do not apply their own filter, as well. Without keeping one's distance in respect of another person, the open-minded approach cannot be experienced.

A group of necessary conditions for a successful communication can be named as contextual situations that are shaped by time, place or environment. The communication partners receive mutual messages within two perspectives: the information-level expressing opinions, emotions, experiences, values, and the relationship-level immensely driven by emotional tensions between partners. Holding back one's own emotions may contribute to a rational communication and collaboration. Sometimes, the language of communication has to be simplified in favour of an easier and better understanding. Active listening to children or even putting oneself in their position, together with a high self-esteem, are a good prognostic for successful communication.

Social emotional Learning (sel) and Emotional Intelligence in Service of Parenting Skills

Definition of social and emotional learning and its five core competencies

According to CASEL (2017) "Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (*What is social emotional ...*, 2019, p. 1). The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a trusted source of knowledge about high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL).

With the support of teachers and parents, pupils/students are supposed to gain skills in five competences that are agreed to be essential to success in school and life: social awareness, self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

- Social awareness is understood as the ability to take the perspective of and feel empathy towards the others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It also means the ability to comprehend social and ethical norms for behaviour and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Social awareness includes four aspects: perspective-taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, and respect for others.

- Self-awareness is associated with the ability to accurately identify one's own emotions, thoughts and values, and to properly recognize how they influence behaviour. It also helps to assess one's own strengths and limitations, to get a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and mind-set. Self-awareness consists of five factors: identifying emotions, accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, self-confidence, and self-efficacy.

- Self-management means the ability to successfully control one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in a variety of situations, to effectively cope with stress, manage impulses, and motivate oneself. It also helps to set and work toward personal and educational goals.

- Relationship skills demonstrate the ability to build and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. They are beneficial to a clear communication and cooperation with others, as well as to a good listening. They are required when resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflicts constructively, seeking and offering help. Relationship skills are based on four elements: communication, social engagement, relationship-building and teamwork.

- Responsible decision-making expresses the ability to make constructive choices about one's personal behaviour and social interactions with respect of ethical standards, safety concerns and social norms. The concept itself asks for a realistic evaluation of consequences of several different actions, and an accurate consideration of the well-being of oneself and others. Responsible decision-making is related to six aspects: identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, evaluating, reflecting, ethical responsibility (*What is social emotional ...*, 2019).

Parenting with competence

Studies show that parents who have at their disposal a broad spectrum of parenting strategies feel more comfortable and competent in their roles and have more positive mental health. Patience and understanding are usually ranked as the most required skills for successful parenting practices. However, social and communication skills are considered the most critical skills to learn. Six key factors are commonly examined in order to understand parenting practices, including "[...] warmth and emotional support, monitoring, communication, psychological control, behavioural control, and parent efficacy, all of which can involve the use of social and emotional skills" (Miller, Wanless, Weissberg, 2018, p. 11-12). It often happens that parenting practices are in a trap of repeated patterns from parents' own childhood experiences while not coordinating with their currently accepted values, beliefs or authentic feelings towards their children.

The conceptual model of the connections between parenting and social and emotional learning (SEL) can be put into action when taking into account the following factors that are characteristic of: parent background, family and child. These factors remain strongly interrelated:

"Parent background - parent influences: parent upbringing, parenting practices, family climate, parent access to resources and education about SEL and parenting, friends, teachers, trusted others, culture.

Parent SEL skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making;

Parent outcomes: wellbeing, stress and burnout, depression, physical health and longevity. Family parenting practices: love, modeling, intentional teaching, discipline.

Family climate: collective sense of belonging, trusting relationships, psychological safety, norms for emotion management.

Child SEL skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making.

Child outcomes: positive social interactions, age appropriate risk taking, emotional resilience and mental wellbeing, academic success, healthy relationships" (Miller, Wanless, Weissberg, 2018, p. 13).

Emotional intelligence of parents of children with special needs.

The term of emotional intelligence, as a psychological category, was developed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1997. They agreed that:

"Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (*Goleman's ET*, 2009, p. 1).

Further steps towards descriptive approaches in the field of this psychological theory were successfully undertaken in the late nineties by Daniel Goleman, a prominent science journalist and researcher, who brought emotional intelligence on the internationally recognized bestseller lists. Goleman has authored a number of books on the subject, including *Emotional Intelligence*, *Working with emotional intelligence*, *Social intelligence: the new science of human relationships*, to mention just a few.

After Goleman, attention should be focused on five principal components of emotional intelligence:

- Self-awareness - perceived as the ability to recognize and understand personal moods, emotions and their driving forces, as well as their impact on others. Self-awareness is interrelated with self-confidence, realistic self-assessment, and a self-disapproving sense of humor. It enables to monitor one's own emotion state and to properly identify and name one's emotions.

- Self-regulation - meaning the ability to keep disruptive impulses and moods under control, as well as to change their direction and, thus, to suspend premature judgments and to reflect before acting.

- Internal motivation - relating to a passion to work for internal reasons that aren't associated with money or status (as external rewards). Actions and efforts are grounded on an inner vision of

what really matters in life, brings joy in doing something, pushes to learning for curiosity. A strong driving force is to achieve a goal, to express optimistic attitudes, also when facing a failure.

- Empathy - explained as the ability to comprehend the emotional makeup of other people and as a necessary skill in demonstrating attitudes towards people in accordance with their emotional reactions. Empathy, by its nature, asks for cross-cultural sensitivity. Meanwhile, in an educational perspective, empathy is often understood as a step leading to sympathy with its implications of concern, care or a desire for diminishing the intensity of negative emotions and individual experiences in others. It's worth stressing that empathy does not necessarily mean a feeling of pity for the suffering or misfortune of others, in other words it does not engage compassion.

- Social skills - meaning a great facility in managing relationships, cooperation and building efficient networks. They involve effectiveness of actions and joint initiatives, as well as they have the power to persuade.

Parents' emotions

Studies dedicated to families with children suffering from ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder), autistic disorder, Down syndrome, mental retardation and learning disabilities demonstrate that "[...] higher care giving demands are associated with poorer psychological and physical health states for parents and other family members. [...] Parents are known to get impacted in many ways because of having a special child. These include feeling sad, depression at various stages of life and experiencing other emotional reactions. Their social life may get affected, recreational and leisure activities get reduced, interpersonal relationships with the family members also get affected, financial problems may arise, parents' own physical and mental health also tend to be at a greater risk" (Vidhya Ravindranadan, Raju, 2008, p. 34-35).

It is justified that parents of the disabled children should possess higher levels of emotional intelligence competences in order to better cope with unprecedented mental tensions. Parents who competently manage their emotional intelligence usually experience a better quality of life, subjective wellbeing and a higher sense of life satisfaction. There can be observed a reciprocal influence - the more professional management of parental emotional intelligence, the more satisfactory understanding of the child's emotions, and in addition to that, the more promising communication with other family members.

Working on and improving the emotional intelligence of parents with the disabled children brings as a result an increased quality of their lives. Emotional intelligence scale used to measure individual scores takes into account major qualities of self-awareness, mood management, self-motivation, impulse control and people skills. The scale of the quality of life measures three main aspects of physical, psychological and social circumstances of the life of individuals. The quality of life determinants include: gender, marital status, age, family and friends, household, income, employments status, community and environment. A proper insight into parents' emotional intelligence constitutes an important implication of their psychological, social, physical and emotional wellbeing.

The majority of parents recognize that social and emotional communication skills are a high priority for the success of their disabled children. On the other hand, most cannot readily articulate how they

are utilizing, promoting or directly implementing these skills in their own families. Even professionals in the field of social and emotional learning (SEL) may strenuously fight in making the translation between their professional knowledge and their personal and individual parenting practices.

Good Practices in Communicating and Cooperating with other Parents

There is evidence that "[...] many parents find it helpful to become members of a parent-to-parent support group. Parents meet regularly in one another's houses, not only talk about their children or the problem they present, but as a means of mutual support and building up self-confidence through being able to help others. Sometimes, such groups provide individual support to a new parent" (Mittler, Mittler, McConachie, 1986, p. 23).

Some of such groups of parent support may give wonderful example of good practices such as: Family Network on Disabilities (FND) in Florida, USA

Family Network on Disabilities (FND) was established in 1985 by a group of parents of the disabled children who came together for two basic reasons: for mutual support and information-sharing. This body is a grass roots organization for individuals with disabilities and their families. FND is, in the first place family-centered and family-driven. It operates as a national network of persons without any age limit who might be at risk, who have disabilities, or who have special needs and their families, professionals and citizens who are concerned about their situation and their wellbeing. On the one hand, the principal mission of FND is focused on the complete integration and equal opportunities of the disabled in a society without barriers. On the other hand, the organization makes great efforts to serve families of children with the full range of disabilities from the very birth through the age when they turn 26 years of life.

Family Network on Disabilities (FND) strives for a broad range of goals to be achieved. Let us have a closer look into three types of activities through the operation of the following programs:

- Parent Education Network (PEN), Parents of the Panhandle Information Network (POPIN) and Parents Educating Parents in the Community (PEP) constitute programs designed to guarantee that parents of children with the full spectrum of disabilities have access to training and information they need in order to get their children, firstly, ready for school and, secondly, to enable them productive, independent lives that they can experience to the fullest extent possible. The program is addressed to the whole territory of Florida, including isolated, rural areas.

- Family STAR (Support, Training, Assistance, Resources) is Florida's Family to Family Health Information Center. It is a highly professional Center that provides information and support to families of children and youth with special health care demands.

- The Jan La Belle Scholarship Program (in operation since 2009) offers a financial resource to the disabled individuals who desire to pursue their personal goals and professional career through attendance at a postsecondary educational institution. The school they are going to choose may be either academic or vocational, depending on personal abilities and interests. This Scholarship Program awards from 16 to 24 individuals who are following higher education.

- The Youth Advocacy & Action Project (for people aged 14-22). Activities are free of charge to families. The final goal of the Project is to leave in place a well trained and confident group of youngsters who later on will be in the position to advocate for themselves. They will be able to improve their own lives, as well as their communities. The Project activities focus on actions that lead to more effective participation of individuals with disabilities and their families in meeting the vocational, independent living. They also give emphasis to specific rehabilitation needs of the disabled (*FND USA About Us*, 2019).

Family to Family Network in Houston, USA

The crucial message for Family to Family Network activities is striving for success of children and young adults with disabilities by strengthening and empowering their families as they navigate the complex education, health care and social service systems. The organization, through guidance and training helps families to discover potential where others see just only barriers. The driving force of all actions aims at changing stereotypical attitudes and mindsets about disabilities and, by doing that, making sure that every individual gets to live his/her best life.

Family to Family Network offers families of children with disabilities the opportunity to communicate and cooperate with other families in similar situations, in order to learn from one another and help each other. The body in question operates by providing: education and training events on the special education process, developmental disabilities diagnosis information, referrals to community resources. Commonly adopted tools consist of: annual conferences, a website dedicated to trustworthy information about the special education procedures, a monthly e-mail newsletter on family and community activities, a leadership and advocacy training program.

One of the mothers caring of and bringing up her disabled child gives the best testimony of the need to take part in Family to Family Network: "It is very easy to become overwhelmed and frustrated when trying to find help raising a child with disabilities. The best part about Family to Family Network, for the family, is being able to speak with other parents who have walked in our shoes. Their own personal experiences and advice they shared with us have been so valuable. We have learned the importance of planning ahead and visualizing what the future will look like for our son and then showing us steps it takes to get there" (*Family to Family Network*, 2017).

Parents very much appreciate to have experienced every kind of opportunity to know both their children and each other. They claim to be very fortunate to have learned the true meaning and importance of the community belonging. Mutual cooperation opens to individuals with disabilities better chances in the fields of education and employment, and it builds a stronger consciousness of independence.

Growing up Together Plus Program of Workshops with Parents, Croatia

The Program is addressed to parents of preschool (up to eight years of age) children with disabilities, including children with developmental delays and additional specific educational need and developmental risks. It is justified that the age range of children with disabilities is extended up to eight because, usually, the demands and developmental characteristics of older children are not consistent with the chronological age. Moreover that their enrolment to primary school is frequently postponed even up to several years. The advantage of grouping parents of children of different ages

comes out from the fact that they have acquired more varied levels of personal experience, awareness of their difficult situations, as well as an uncommon intensity of stress. The Program is intended for parents of children with similar and/or different disabilities. Evidence shows that this approach of a joint participation enables to receive information and acquire knowledge from different parental perspectives, which does not at all mean a barrier to mutual understanding.

Practical issues for parents. Training

Group work with parents

Parents of children with disabilities express specific needs and expectations - when accurately recognized, the accomplishment of particular goals might be possible. Those goals are directly related with emotional and social support, and then with encouraging parents' self-esteem and self-efficacy. Parents expect to be empowered in order to take over the control of challenging situations, understand and anticipate problems with parenting a disabled child. What really matters is training them in successful communication with and support to the child, as it leads to increased and improved parental roles.

A mother of a child who suffers from cerebral palsy discloses her opinion about the advantages of working together:

"Little did I know that these workshops would affect me so much. I normally don't talk that much with people about what is going on in our lives, because they don't understand, so why waste words and time... I just say: Verica has cerebral palsy, and that's it. [...] At the workshop, when you meet <fellow soldiers> WHO KNOW HOW MUCH IT HURTS, this is something else entirely... Thank you, thank you, I am charging my batteries, which is the most important thing" (Grubić, 2014, p. 38).

The benefits and values of group work can be connected with the fact that this kind of experience is an entirely natural human experience. Thus, by its nature, it gives to individuals who are involved in it a strong sense of reality. Right after, the participants are able to feel a sense of predictability and emotional stability. The next crucially important step is hope and a sense of optimism. A commonly shared benefit of working together is the opportunity to achieve emotional relief by expressing one's feelings.

Values of group work can be divided into the following categories:

- sharing - people feel less alone when they see that others feel the same;
- identification - people are willing to identify with others in a similar situation;
- accepting help from <similar people> - people accept help more easily from those who are in a situation similar to theirs, who understand them;
- checking - people in a group can be checked, tested in a variety of important roles;
- mutual assistance - people are often able to provide assistance to others who are experiencing the same or similar situations, which raises their self-esteem;
- social exchange and acceptance - people need a sense of belonging and acceptance, which is possible to gain in a group of people with the same experience (Grubić, 2014, p. 39).

The Growing up Together Plus Program of Workshops with Parents follows a routine of eleven broadly formulated topics that are consecutively addressed during workshops. They consist of such issues, as:

- The idea that every child is special, as well as every parent asks for a special attention;
- Parents' and children's expectations versus adaptation to particular situations;
- Most significant pillars of parenting to be agreed while working together;
- Psychological needs of disabled children versus parental objectives;
- All children are our children and they deserve to be loved;
- Listening as a basic parental skill;
- How a disabled child learns about the surrounding world;
- Why and how the boundaries exist?
- Parental responsibilities - what really counts?
- What does it really mean to be a parent? Influences and choices
- The end and new beginning - what parents should avoid and what kind of approaches to adopt?

In the light of the above-listed topics, parents stated that after having participated in the workshop events they have learned to talk about their feelings, they have appreciated a value of exchanging experiences and acquiring knowledge that other parents are facing similar problems and challenges. They became conscious of the fact that contact with other parents who have children with different, but too much extent parallel circumstances, opens chances for new ways and standards of communication and direction towards the child's mostly expected needs and abilities.

Playing together

Group work activities do not neglect the aspect of playing together. Parents feel like to inform other mothers and fathers, how their children react to different games. At the same time, they expect to play themselves having in mind the purpose of bringing about relaxation and relief. A question "what are we playing today?" is often asked. One of the examples is the activity whose name is "Three wise thoughts" during which parents receive three sentences cut into pieces that need to be connected. When searching the right solution, they communicate, cooperate and start to know each other better and better. Those sentences are, as follows:

- What do / good gardeners do? / They help / a rose become / a rose. / Mothers and / fathers are / like good / gardeners.
- Those / who / conquer / fear / can / scare / even / a tiger.
- There are no / hopeless / situations; / there are / only people / who / feel / helpless / in certain / situations.

Reading activities

Activity 1:

Read the article: Vidhya Ravindranadan, Raju, S., *Emotional intelligence and quality of life of parents of children with special needs*, Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology, 2008, vol. 34, p. 34-39. medind.nic.in/jak/t08/s1/jakt08s1p34.pdf

Aim of the activity:

- Understand the importance of emotional intelligence for the quality of life and the wellbeing of parents of children with disabilities.

Task to carry on:

- Discuss what parents of a disabled child can do in order to improve the level of their emotional intelligence.

Activity 2:

Read the article: Roya Koochak Entezar, Nooraini Othman, Azlina Binti Mohd Kosnin, Afsaneh Ghanbaripناه, *The influence of emotional intelligence on mental health among Iranian mothers of mild intellectually disabled children*, International Journal of Fundamental Psychology & Social Sciences, 2013, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 12-15. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org>

Aim of the activity:

- Understand the impact of emotional intelligence on mental health among mothers of mild intellectually disabled children.

Task to carry on:

- Discuss if mental health or mental wellbeing can be of a better quality thanks to increasing emotional intelligence of individuals.

Advices to practice:

The message for parents, as regards playing with their children, reflects the idea that mothers and fathers are children's best and most valuable toys. That is why they should play together. A set of tips for parents that encourage them to get involved in games give important advices to be followed, such as:

- Take time to play with your child every day and focus solely on him/her.
- Let the child choose the game to play.
- Draw your attention to positive feelings and good communication, in the mood of having fun together.
- Get involved as many family members as possible.
- Let playing become a routine family activity.
- Stress the child's skills and virtues, encourage initiative and the sense of competence.
- Teach your child to accept victory and defeat, as both need to be taken for granted.
- Respect the rule that time comes for the game to stop.



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Chapter 2. ECOINSTITUTO THEORETICAL CONCEPTS UNDERLYING PARENT-TRAINING

Abstract

This chapter presents the main theoretical concepts underlying parent-training.

Parent-training has, essentially, four components:

1. Parenting problems are assessed;
2. parents are taught new skills;
3. they apply the skills with their children;
4. they receive feedback about that application.

Some of the above interventions have broader goals and activities and include elements that transcend parent training, e.g., Multisystemic Therapy (Burchard, Bruns, & Burchard, 2002; Henggeler et al., 2003), Mindfulness Parenting (Duncan, Coatsworth, & Greenberg, 2009; Meppelink, R., de Bruin, E. I., Wanders-Mulder, FVennik, & Bögels, 2016), whereas other programs do not include all primary components.

In the last decades, in response to the large numbers of children with conduct disorders and the shortage of professional personnel, there has been an increasing emphasis on training parents as therapists for their own children.

The first parent-training programs have been based on individual therapy and have incorporated direct feedback techniques such as live modeling, role playing, and behavioral rehearsals.

However, these individualized programs are costly, time consuming, and incapable of meeting the increasing demands.

Recently, many parent-training programs are based on a participatory approach. Moreover, online technology has been applied to support parent-training interventions (Breitenstein, Gross, & Christophersen, 2014).

In the following paragraphs we will focus on the educational approaches that can be adopted for building parent-training programs.

Indeed, appropriate educational approaches are necessary to realize effective parent-training interventions.

In this perspective, one has to relive that, although the educative usually consists of teaching on one hand and learning on the other, teaching and learning are actually interrelated activities. Learners are not passive recipients of what teachers provide and teachers are not neutral repeaters (Seufert, 2003).

The modern education theories are learner-centered theories. They share two basic assumptions. The first is that teaching-learning is grounded on the principle that learners are at the center of the educational process, while the second is that individuals are not perfectly alike and, accordingly, may need different teaching-learning approaches and techniques.

The majority of contemporary educators, regardless of whether they follow behaviorism, cognitivism, connectivism, or constructionism, contend that teaching is not only about giving and checking knowledge, but encompasses many other non-secondary activities, such as guiding, mentoring, stimulating, and motivating learners. Teachers should support and reinforce positive attitudes of learners in a triangular process that comprises teachers, learners, and the subject matter being taught/learned.

In the last two decades, the teaching-learning process has been influenced by the increasing spread of the internet. Interactive content sources, such as blogs, wikis, and social networks in general, are influencing education. Nowadays, advanced collaborative virtual learning environments are available and in the near future will be operative semantic agents able to parse the global knowledge accessible on the Web.

In the following paragraphs, the principal educational approaches that are at the basis of the most popular parent-training intervention programs will be briefly illustrated and discussed. Knowledge of the theoretical roots of these programs could suggest their better adaptation to the operative contexts and perhaps the integration of their components.

Educational psychologies

All educational theories, models, and practices have an underlying psychological theory.

Figure 1 shows the learning perspective based on the psychological theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and connectivism.

<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drill and practice - Rote learning - Exams and tests 	<p>Behaviorism Learners are passive and learning is an external process</p>	<p>Cognitivism Learning is an internal process</p>	<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active participation - Using thinking to learn - Computer metaphor
<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self directed learning - Group content-sharing - Network metaphor 	<p>Constructivism Learning occurs experiencing things and reflecting on experiences</p>	<p>Connectivism Learning is both an internal and a networking process</p>	<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self directed learning - Group content-sharing - Network metaphor

Figure 1. The four learning perspectives based on behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and connectivism

Over the last few decades, although variously re-modulated, the dominant psychological approaches in education have been behaviorism and humanism.

Behaviorism

The Behavioristic approach has had a great influence in education. The antecedents of behaviorism can be traced back to Ivan Pavlov's research on conditioning and involuntary reflex actions. Pavlov is well known for the experiment with dogs in which, after continued pairings of food with the sound of a bell, the dog salivated at the sound of the bell alone.

An important contribution to behaviorism came from John Broadus Watson and Eduard L. Thorndike. Watson's article *Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It* (1913) is considered to be the behaviorist manifesto. In this article, Watson outlined the major features of behaviorism, e.g. that psychology is a purely objective experimental branch of natural sciences:

Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior. Introspection forms no essential part of its methods, nor is the scientific value of its data dependent upon the readiness with which they lend themselves to interpretation in terms of consciousness. The behaviorist, in his efforts to get a unitary scheme of animal response, recognizes no dividing line between man and brute. The behavior of man, with all of its refinement and complexity, forms only a part of the behaviorist's total scheme of investigation (Watson, 1913, 248).

In 1932, Thorndike was the first to propose that rewards were better reinforcers than punishments, because they strengthened the connection between the stimulus and the desired response: one can catch more flies with a spoon of honey than with a gallon of vinegar.

For behaviorists, human beings are biological organisms existing in a socio-cultural environment which determines their nature and essence. Individuals and cultures are influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Values are expressions of (or preferences for) those forms of behavior which have been reinforced. As a consequence, behaviorists reject the view that humans are innately inclined to evil or good. Note that for a long time the Western world was dominated by the idea that man is a very imperfect being and, consequently, must be strictly educated and guided otherwise they will choose evil rather than good. This view posits that children are inclined to misbehave and should be constantly held in check to control their inherent bad instincts and be educated to maintain a right conduct.

The most remarkable exponent of behaviorism was the American psychologist and social philosopher Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904 – 1990). The theoretical position of Skinner was closely related to that of Logical Empiricists. He rejected the platonic dualism of mind-body (spirit-matter) as well as the attribution of certain human traits to human nature or instinct:

An organism which has received a painful shock will also, if possible, act to gain access to another organism towards which it can act aggressively. The extent to which human aggression exemplifies innate tendencies is not clear, and many of the ways in which people attack and thus weaken or destroy the power of intentional controllers are quite obviously learned. (Skinner, 1976, 34)

The "hunter or warrior instinct" is a meaningless expression since what is claimed to be instinct is an attitude due to external conditioning (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010, 22):

Similarly, moral values are derived by experience and are retained because of positive reinforcements. Aesthetic values, just as moral values, may be held individually, socially, or culturally.

Behaviorists claim that educational objectives should be expressed in a measurable way. Indeed, every educational program should contain behavioral objectives and means for the objective evaluation of student success in achieving those stated objectives.

Skinner is especially critical of useless goals of education such as excellence or creativity since these terms are not carefully specified. In response to those who claim that discovery is the best means of learning, Skinner responds that:

Working through a program is really a process of discovery, but not in the sense in which that word is currently used in education. We discover many things in the world around us, and that is usually better than being told about them, but as individuals we can discover only a very small part of the world. Mathematics has been discovered very slowly and painfully over thousands of years. Students discover it as they go through a program, but not in the sense of doing something for the first time in history (Skinner, 1984, 951).

A fundamental behaviorist belief is that learning encompasses the entire range of the human life. Their idea is that what serves the needs of an individual, society, or the culture of today may be completely different for people in the future centuries. For this reason, continuous guidance is necessary for curriculum designers to update programs in order to meet changing needs.

Humanism

Humanism is a psychological and philosophical approach which is the diametric opposite of behaviorism.

Humanists don't share common agreement on any theoretical principles, except one. They sustain only that human beings are free and that freedom is the expression of humanity. As a consequence, all humanists are apt to insist that they don't wish to be restricted by any system.

For humanists, the subjective human situation is the real subject matter of psychology.

They claim that the major concerns of human existence cannot be examined by the empirical methods of the sciences: my experience is not the same as yours.

The interest of humanists focuses on relationships among human beings as well as on death, alienation, anxiety, fear, value choices, and so on. Humanists claim that behavioral sciences are of little help in providing knowledge on such subjective matters. They consider that the most important kind of truth is personal experience.

Furthermore, in his book *Personal Knowledge*, published in 1959, Polanyi attests that our personal experiences and ways of sharing knowledge have a profound effect on scientific discovery. He objects to the stereotype of the wholly objective and dispassionate researcher, pointing out that *knowing* is still an art, and that not only logical reasoning but also personal beliefs and passions are necessary parts of research. Polanyi argues that the objectivity of science is rooted "in the very depths of our culture":

Yet the prevailing conception of science, based on the disjunction of subjectivity and objectivity, seeks—and must seek at all costs—to eliminate from science such passionate, personal, human appraisals of theories, or at least to minimize their function to that of a negligible by-play. For modern man has set up as the ideal of knowledge the conception of natural science as a set of statements which is 'objective' in the sense that its substance is

entirely determined by observation, even while its presentation may be shaped by convention.

[...] That is why scientific theory is represented as a mere economical description of facts; or as embodying a conventional policy for drawing empirical inferences; or as a working hypothesis, suited to man's practical convenience—interpretations that all deliberately overlook the rational core of science (Polanyi, 2012, 16).

The biggest contribution of humanism to education comes from the American psychologist Carl R. Rogers (1902-1987) who was among the founders of the person-centered approach to psychology. This approach is based on techniques that allow a client to engage their own resources to act in their world with others and overcome their problems:

When I am at my best, as a group facilitator or a therapist, I discover another characteristic. I find that when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then simply my presence is releasing and helpful. There is nothing I can do to force this experience, but when I can relax and be close to the transcendental core of me, then I may behave in strange and impulsive ways in the relationship, ways which I cannot justify rationally, which have nothing to do with my thought processes. But these strange behaviors turn out to be right, in some odd way. At those moments, it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself, and has become a part of something larger. Profound growth and healing and energy are present. (Rogers, 1979, 102).

In the 1960s, the computer program Eliza was created by Joseph Weizenbaum (1966). It was a tongue-in-cheek application which emulated the responses of a Rogerian non-directional psychotherapist in an initial psychiatric interview. The Weizenbaum program demonstrates how simple it is to simulate the Rogerian psychotherapist paradigm.

However, the person-centered approach has borne a wide range of application in various domains, such as psychotherapy and counseling (client-centered therapy), education (student-centered learning), organizations, and other group settings.

In regards to education, Rogers claims that conditioning plays the major role in determining value preferences among infants, but that later the child moves beyond the stage of self-satisfaction and tries to please others. He argues that, stage by stage, an individual develops values based on their life experiences and arrives at a synthesis of all these experiences. Finally, he states that the broadest aim of education is the facilitation of learning in an ever-changing world.

Participatory learning approach

In the 1990s, participation was a popular buzzword, and the concept of participation was also extended into the field of education.

Since the 2000s, participatory learning has been seen as an increasingly appealing educational approach that can positively affect learners since it engages them as active participants in the full educational program, including homework and exercises.

Participatory learning is grounded in John Dewey's idea that learners achieve better results if the learning process "reproduces, or runs parallel to, some form of work carried on in social life" (Dewey & Boydston, 1983, 93).

From a philosophical point of view, participatory learning can be seen as the natural consequence of two Deweyan concepts: that learning is a problem-solving process, and that there isn't any dualism between the subject matter and the method (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010).

Participatory learning has often been experimented to support sustainable development, above all in regards to the agriculture of developing countries (Coldevin, 2002), and has been seen as a means to aid the democratic progress of emerging countries, since participatory learning is, by its very nature, collaborative and so directly fosters democracy.

Certain adult participatory learning techniques are also very popular and widely used in management training (especially for project managers and supervisors), such as brainstorming, problem-solving, project work, and critical incident response. Most of them have their theoretical basis in behaviorism as well as in constructivism (Rodrigues, 2014). Indeed, constructivist theories of learning argue that knowledge is constructed by learners who better learn by actively applying their know-how to meaningful problems (Brown & Palincsar, 1989).

Participatory learning methods comprise a wide range of activities, which share a student-centered view aimed at enabling learners to play an active and influential part in their learning process. This means that learners are not merely listened to, but also actively collaborate to acquire knowledge and skills: in other words, participatory learning focuses on student participation.

An element that characterizes participatory learning is the necessity of facilitators. Indeed, every participatory process needs the presence of skilled facilitators (Kaner, 2014) who help participants to interact together.

In the educational context, facilitators provide learners with discussion subjects, present case studies, organize tasks that call for participants to work together in small groups, and so on. Their task is to support the active involvement of learners in the learning process, stimulating them to think through their mindset and share with others their experience and knowledge, as well as collaborate to accomplish the expected achievements.

It has to be noted that, although facilitators and coaches have many overlapping skills and functions, their role is different: a coach provides individual attention and addresses personal development with an emphasis on a specific task, whereas a facilitator provides a group with meaningful dialogue and broadens personal perspectives, encouraging the entire group to participate collectively so as to increase their ability to operate effectively on their own.

Participatory learning strategies are considered effective in adult learning since they can reduce the difficulties due to the inhomogeneity of trainees that can affect adult educational programs. In this regard, the Participatory Adult Learning Strategy (PALS) is a proven model that can be adopted in parent training educational programs. PALS is an evidence-based approach by Dust and Trivette, which results from over 20 years of research and practice and, more recently, from the findings of the meta-analyses of adult learning methods and the synthesis of research studies into the most effective adult learning practices (Trivette, Dunst, Hamby, & O'herin, 2009; Dunst & Trivette, 2009; Dunst, Trivette, & Hamby, 2010).

PALS authors analyzed and measured the positive effect of four adult learning methods: accelerated learning (Meier, 2000), coaching (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990), guided design (Hancock, Coscarelli, & White, 1983), and just-in-time training (Hew & Brush, 2007; Novak, 2011). From their research, the relative importance of active learner participation in learning new knowledge or practices emerged, and from this result, a procedure was designed for using evidence-based practices in adult learning. The PALS model encompasses a 4-phase process that includes:

1. Introduction – the learning topic and related information is preliminarily provided to learners, as well as in-class/workshop warmup exercises and illustrations/demonstrations.
2. Application – trainees apply information learned; the instructor/facilitator observes their activity, giving feedback and evaluating their use of knowledge.
3. Informed Understanding – trainees are engaged in self-assessment, reflection, and group discussions.
4. Repeat Learning Process – the next steps in the learning process are planned in order to provide further learner understanding, knowledge use, and mastery.

However, nowadays, because of the increasing growth of digital technology, a topical question arises about participatory learning. How do participatory practices work in an online learning environment?

This question is a part of a more general issue that concerns the portability of participatory approaches and techniques to online web-based learning contexts.

Indeed, Web 2.0 tools suggest new forms of learning at a lower cost, such as learning through blogs (Downes, 2004; Farmer & Bartlett-Bragg, 2005) or through podcasts and videocasts (Ractham & Zhang, 2006).

Regarding participatory e-learning, there are some assumptions that are generally agreed upon. One of these is that the success of participatory e-learning depends on the interaction of learners, since they are bringers of knowledge and skills (Kok, 2015).

Another important aspect is that active learning is fundamental for participatory e-learning: learners are involved in practices that require them to actively construct new knowledge and understanding.

Peer education

Peer education is an umbrella term used to describe interventions in which trainers and trainees cooperate between themselves (Shiner, 1999). Nowadays, it is a topical buzzword in every sector of education.

Three theoretical roots are usually associated with peer education: Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), the social inoculation theory (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961; McGuire 1964) and the differential association theory (Sutherland and Cressey, 1974). However, Miller and Dollard are considered the precursors of learning by imitation (Grusec, 1992). In their book *Social learning and imitation* (1941), that was based on experiments on rats and children, they argued that

imitation can greatly hasten the process of independent learning since it enables the subject to perform the first correct response sooner than they otherwise would.

Social Cognitive theory

Bandura's Social Cognitive theory has influenced many disciplines, such as education, health sciences, social policy, and psychotherapy. This theory is based on the idea that an individual learns from their interactions with other individuals in a social context (Bandura, 1977). For example, by observing the behavior of others, people develop similar behavior, especially if their observational experiences are positive ones or include rewards related to the observed behavior (Nabavi, 2012).

In the 1960s, Albert Bandura, Dorothea Ross, and Sheila A. Ross conducted an experiment in order to test imitative learning (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961). This test, known as the Bobo doll experiment, involved 36 boys and 36 girls enrolled in the Stanford University Nursery School. They ranged in age from 37 to 69 months, with a mean age of 52 months.

Two adults, a male and a female, served in the role of model, and one female experimenter conducted the study for all 72 children. Bandura reports that:

Subjects were divided into eight experimental groups of six subjects each and a control group consisting of 24 subjects. Half the experimental subjects were exposed to aggressive models and half were exposed to models that were subdued and nonaggressive in their behavior. These groups were further subdivided into male and female subjects. Half the subjects in the aggressive and nonaggressive conditions observed same-sex models, while the remaining subjects in each group viewed models of the opposite sex. The control group had no prior exposure to the adult models and was tested only in the generalization situation (Bandura, 22-23).

Figure 2 show the attacks against Bobo Doll.



Figure 2. Images from the Bobo Doll experiment (source: Albert Bandura, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmBqwWlJg8U>)

The findings of Bandura's experiment were that children learn social behavior such as aggression through the process of observation learning - through watching the behavior of another person. More specifically:

- Children who observed the aggressive models made far more imitative aggressive responses than those who were in the non-aggressive or control groups.
- There was more partial and non-imitative aggression among those children who have observed aggressive behavior, although the difference for non-imitative aggression was small.
- Girls also showed more physical aggressive responses if the model was male but more verbal aggressive responses if the model was female;
- Boys were more likely to imitate same-sex models than girls. The evidence for girls imitating same-sex models is not strong.
- Boys imitated more physically aggressive acts than girls. There was little difference in the verbal aggression between boys and girls.

Continuing the illustration of Social Cognitive Theory, according to Muro and Jeffrey (2008), one can claim that it combines elements of behaviorist learning theories and cognitive

learning theories. Social Cognitive Theory encompasses attention, memory, and motivation, and posits that people learn from one another, via:

- Observation;
- Imitation; and
- Modeling

Based on these general principles, learning can occur without a change in behavior. In other words, behaviorists say that learning has to be represented by a permanent change in behavior; while, in contrast, social learning theorists say that because people can learn through observation alone, their learning may not necessarily be shown in their performance (Bandura, 1965). Learning may or may not result in a behavior change (Bandura, 2006).

What emerged from a recent research was the topicality of Bandura's learning concepts in internet-based learning approaches. In fact, the concept that "learning is a social activity" where individuals achieve their learning goals by interacting with each other is shared by many researchers engaged in internet social learning and online collaborative learning (Hamid, Waycott, Kurnia, & Chang, 2015; Liao, Huang, Chen, & Huang, 2015).

Social inoculation theory

The inoculation theory was developed in the 1960s by the social psychologist William J. McGuire for inducing resistance to persuasion (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961). Social inoculation theory studies means of protection against attempts at persuasion, either through direct attack or indirect pressures. In a similar way to how inoculation and vaccination are used to immunize the body against specific diseases by artificially stimulating the body's immune system, social inoculation theorizes that persuading people not to be persuaded is possible, by inoculating an individual with certain arguments and at the same time giving them counter-arguments to refute those arguments. Indeed, it is possible to make heuristic use of the inoculation analogy in deriving hypotheses about producing resistance to persuasion, choosing:

[...] to deal as far as possible with beliefs that had been maintained in a "germ-free" ideological environment, that is, beliefs that the person has seldom, if ever, heard attacked. Nearly all beliefs should be of this sort, according to the selective-avoidance postulate, which implies that a person avoids dissonant information wherever possible (McGuire, 1964, 200).

In McGuire's view, cognitions can be strengthened by exposing an audience to mild attacking arguments and then providing the same audience with arguments with which to counter those negative attacks.

The application of social inoculation to peer education has been motivated as follows:

- peers are a credible source of information and advice;
- peers can exercise a positive influence;
- arguments presented by peers may be more acceptable.

There are applications of social inoculation in many scopes, especially in health care prevention and marketing.

A meta-analysis conducted by Banas and Rains (2010) shows that inoculation is an effective method for instilling resistance to attitude change, but more work is needed to clarify the various nuances of the process of inoculation.

In the 1980s, Evans first used social inoculation to prevent young people taking up smoking (Evans, 1984), and his success led to the use of social inoculation in drug prevention (Donaldson, Graham, Piccinin, & Hansen, 1995; Donaldson et al. 1996; Donohew, Sypher, & Bukoski, 2012).

It is interesting to note Regis's criticism of peer-led health education, in which the author expresses his doubts about approaches aimed at resisting peer pressure:

Isn't there something a little odd about trying to use young people's *susceptibility* to peer influence in these programs, when resistance to social influence from peers is at least part of the message?

[...] This is a type of homeopathy, where a little of the poison of peer influence is used to attempt the cure.

[...] I know that until we know a little more about how and why they work, peer-led programs may still need still handling with care (Regis, 1996, 78).

Differential association theory

Differential Association Theory is one of the theories that come under the umbrella of the Chicago School. It was formulated by the sociologist Edwin Sutherland in 1939 and revised in 1947 in order to explain deviance and juvenile delinquency. Differential Association Theory views criminality as social interaction, and posits criminal acts as learned behaviors. Sutherland's theory was broadly agreed by criminologist circles and it has had a great impact on modern criminology and on how people reflect on crime (Regoli, Hewitt, & DeLisi, 2010).

According to Sutherland, criminal behavior results from a learning process in which bad values are transmitted. As in the case of law-abiding values, criminal values are learned in order to interact and socialize with others who agree to those values.

The differential association theory consists of nine principles:

1. Criminal behavior is learned; it is not inherited. This means that a person who is not already trained in criminal acts does not invent such acts, just as a child does not make courteous remarks unless they have had training or socialized to that effect.
2. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others through communication. This communication is verbal in many respects but also includes the gestures often described as non-verbal communication
3. The learning occurs in intimate groups: Sutherland claimed that only small, face-to-face gatherings influence behavior.
4. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes (a) Techniques for committing it, which are sometimes complicated, and sometimes very simple; (b) the specific direction of motives and drives, rationalizations and attitude.
5. The specific direction of motives and drives are learned from definitions of legal codes as favorable or unfavorable. This means that, when one's associates define the legal

codes as things to be observed, the learning of criminal acts may be impeded. The reverse is also true.

6. A person becomes criminal because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of the law. This is the core principle of differential association theory. It reinforces the belief that the definitions favorable to the violation of the law can be learned from both criminal and non-criminal people. This principle is loaded with counteracting forces of favorable and unfavorable definitions to the violation of the law.
7. Differential association (tendency towards criminality) varies in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. This means the longer the time, the earlier in one's life, the more intensely and more frequently people are exposed to a set of attitudes about criminality, the more likely it is that they will become caught up in the fray.
8. The process of learning criminal behavior involves the same mechanisms involved in any other learning. This implies that the mechanisms for learning criminal behaviors are the same as those for law-abiding values and other socially relevant skills.
9. Both criminal and non-criminal behaviors are expressions of the same needs and values. Put differently, the goals of criminals and non-criminals are usually the same. What is different is the means they adopt to pursue this same goal. For instance, thieves generally steal in order to secure money. Honest laborers likewise work with monetary gain in mind.

Parent training

The importance of training parents is widely emphasized by researchers and practitioners (Wang, Lam, Kim, Singer, & Dodds, 2016). For example, parents of children with autism or Down Syndrome have been successfully taught to improve the parent-child relationship, increase communication skills, and decrease inappropriate behaviors.

However, despite the numerous examples and variations of parent training courses (see the multifarious social coaching offers), evidence-based guidelines for designing, implementing, running, and evaluating parent training programs are not available. Moreover, parent training techniques are not widely studied by students in social pedagogy and social worker study programs. Addressing parental training, some aspects should be considered. For instance, although one talks about parent training, usually only one parent, the mother, is involved in the activities. The involvement of the father is broadly recommended, but there is a lack of data regarding this point, even though their involvement increases the effectiveness of interventions (Peacock & Collett, 2011).

Most parent training models are based on the social learning theory approach, and foresee the following steps:

1. didactic instruction
2. trainees' skill modeling
3. parental training of the skills and exercise with the trainer

4. parental training of the skills at home

Learning 2.0 and 3.0.

Many e-learning systems offer collaborative functions that allow cooperation and facilitate communication among learners, teachers, mentors, tutors, and administrators. These collaborative functions result from the Web 2.0 revolution that in the last few years has swept away the old paradigm of digital communication.

Web 2.0 encompasses a variety of websites and applications that allow anyone to create and share online information and materials they have created. The key difference between Web 2.0 and the traditional types of websites is that it does not require any web design or publishing skills to create and publish materials on the Web.

There are a variety of Web 2.0 applications including wikis, blogs, social networking, folksonomies, podcasting, and so on. Many of the most popular websites are Web 2.0 sites, such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram. The Web 2.0 revolution has also influenced the educational field with e-learning 2.0 that has expanded the concept of the learning community, focusing on supporting the development and solving of educational problems through online collaboration.

The principal aims of e-learning Web 2.0 are:

- to make learning collaborative, easy, and simple;
- to allow learning materials to be used on a global level;
- to allow a real interactivity between teachers and learners, and among learners;
- to encourage developing practices through the sharing of educational content and teaching methods.

Recently, the advances in semantic web found application in education and e-learning 3.0 was born. Fundamentally, this opens a whole new dimension of learning going beyond traditional e-learning that is based on video lectures and multiple-choice assessments. IE-learning 3.0 is an evolution of the learner-centered approach. It leverages advances in scientific learning and tools to make learning faster, more effective, more enjoyable, and applicable to a larger set of learning areas. It's the end of systems, where course production considerations trump learner experience.

Online learning 3.0 has a few fundamentals aspects:

- Modern user experience design, similar to what folks are seeing in the consumer web.
- Visually engaging overview, e.g. what am I going to learn, how am I doing, what's next, etc.
- Personalized, allows learners to test out and navigate in a nonlinear fashion.
- A knowledge graph frame of reference, instead of a list of materials to get through.
- Learn-by-doing.
- Integration of external materials.
- Interactive content and assessments.
- Human involvement at scale, for example, online coaching or group collaboration.
- Engagement tools, e.g. gamification, mobile, social integration, etc.

- Visible and transportable credit for what's been learned.
- Delivered in the context of lifelong learning programs.
- Heavy use of data to improve the learning experience and course material over time.

Finally, a new paradigm, crowd learning, has attracted the interest of researchers. Crowd learning essentially encompasses three main areas:

- Machine learning
- Crowdsourcing and crowd sensing applications
- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)

Indeed, crowd learning is designed as a process that involves “harnessing the knowledge and expertise of many people to answer questions, solve problems, or enable collaborative learning” (Sharples, Kloos, Dimitriadis, Garlatti, & Specht, 2015). It can accordingly be seen as a process of learning from the knowledge and experience of others.

Crowd learning can be defined as a form of collective learning in which individuals contribute their knowledge and experience to the achievement of prefixed learning objectives. This definition encompasses machine learning as well as crowdsourcing. In effect, we can gather data from crowdsources in order to implement machine learning solutions, but studying the knowledge acquisition of individuals in time and space, namely in crowd contexts, could lead to the implementation of more effective crowdsourcing applications (Prpić, Shukla, Kietzmann, & McCarthy, 2015). Learning how a crowd behaves and knowing its attitudes are crucial factors, both in designing new services for a broad audience and in emulating learning capability in a machine. Furthermore, Big Data and data mining technologies are creating new learning needs aimed at effectively exploiting the mass of information available on the Web (Witten, Frank, Hall, & Pal, 2016)

Digital social learning

It is widely agreed that online learning is the logical solution to satisfy the demands of modern education in terms of flexibility, professionalism, and economic sustainability (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009).

There are, however, also those who hold a different view. Their criticism revolves around two principal elements, the content reliability of online learning and its effectiveness. How can one identify credible and reliable content on the internet? An emblematic case is Wikipedia, the popular open encyclopedia. It provides internet users with a vast quantity of information but Wikipedia's content is not always of a high quality. Many entries are incomplete, superficial, incorrect, or even intentionally absent. Moreover, Wikipedia's content is usually anonymous, as very few authors use their real names.

Online education is also argued to be neither practical nor effective since teachers cannot adapt their teaching style to the learning needs of students, and the face-to-face relationship is lacking (Cowan, 2006).

Despite criticisms, the internet indisputably represents an opportunity. It can be an important source of supplemental information, although it cannot be used in all circumstances and for all needs.

Recently, several researchers have started to investigate the non-formal and informal learning processes that take place on the Web. This mode of learning has been designated *social learning* (Baldwin, 2016), but it would be preferable to address this modality of learning as web learning or digital social learning, so as to avoid confusion with the social learning theory.

In the literature, digital social learning is considered as a part of informal learning. For this reason, it is helpful to highlight some basic principles of informal learning.

The definition of informal learning is commonly introduced in terms of a contrast with formal learning (Marsick and Watkins, 2001). In fact, in many respects, these two forms of learning are complementary.

Three basic types of informal learning have been identified:

- Self-directed learning that is intentional and conscious; it refers to learning programs undertaken by individuals or groups without the assistance of teachers, instructors, or facilitators.
- Incidental learning that is not intentional but conscious; it occurs when we learn without any intention of learning, e.g. by direct experience.
- Socialization that is not intentional and conscious; it refers to attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and skills acquired in everyday life, often through imitation.

Considering digital social learning only as a part of informal learning is an evident reduction of the digital social learning scope. It appears, de facto, as a specific learning modality since it can be included in overall learning activities, especially in non-formal training programs. For instance, training courses can include self-directed learning activities carried out on the Web.

Sharing information and knowledge among peers by means of Web-based interactions is a usual practice (see forum discussions for the use of words or to solve computer problems. If you don't know how to do something, for example how to open a file with the extension “.rar”, you can search on the Web and find the software to download and manage this type of compressed file. Moreover, there are a huge variety of tools and sites available on the Web that support learning processes allowing collaborative technologies (groupware applications, webinars, online conferences, etc.) and which provide a wide range of peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

- As a consequence of the digital revolution and the resulting instability of employment, integrative and flexible forms of education are in great demand. It is not the case that, in this decade, validation of non-formal and informal learning has suddenly become a topical issue and a priority for national and European vocational education and training (VET) policies.
- Nowadays, social learning represents both an opportunity and a challenge for the training profession (Bowers & Kumar, 2017). Benefits essentially concern the integration of formal curricula with just-in-time knowledge. Challenges concern how effectively it manages informal content and the risks hidden in social media.

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Chapter 3.RTA

THE PROJECT COURSE OF PARENTING SCIENCE: COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Abstract

The classes “*Communication with parents*” cover the most topical issues of Parenting Science with a focus on communication. The items are chosen for discussions according to the parent most attended questions of parent integrated roles, communication among parents and children, peculiarities of communication in digital age; these are contextualized with the current social processes and needs. Articles and clips are suggested to consider and discuss. The course consists of suggested and optional activities, as well as tests for parent self-evaluation of their communication skills, conflict solvation, and reflections on the content of the course. Wide literature suggested for parents’ choice, local country issues are welcome.

Parenting Science develops not only because of the large variety of education possibilities and NGO that assist parents. The perceptions and conceptions change due to the diversity of cultures living side-by-side in the countries; this also because of the expanded knowledge on parenting and a shift in mindset that cause the need to replace the concept of parent authority, child obedience, and authoritarian style of child-rearing and communication in families – this is being replaced by the more complex concept of *positive parenting*: parental responsibility, respect to the needs of each family member, mutual protection of everyone’s rights, fostering the child rights and skills of critical thinking, self-expression, or responsible autonomy.

The content and its implementation are organized into three mutually integrated parts of activities; these three parts are:

- (1) activities that initiate communication - participants communicate with their peers, discuss, share views, agree, disagree, etc. – this makes a reason to communicate, covers the functions of warm-up, and starts integrating the content;
- (2) activities that are directed to evaluate and improve communication skills – these make use of part (a) to have an evidence-based discussion on communication and skill improvement;
- (3) activities that develop skills of an active listener – this belongs to a successful communication and improves parent and parent educator competencies; unfortunately, this part usually is missing in traditional programs.

Introduction

The session 2020 conducted by RTA *Communication with parents* cover the most topical issues of *Parenting Science* with a focus on communication. The items are chosen for discussions according to the parent most attended questions of parent integrated roles, communication among parents and children, parent educator communication with parents, peculiarities of communication in digital age; these are contextualized with the current social processes and needs. Course educators

can add some specific activities to meet special needs of the course participants. Articles and clips are suggested to consider communication peculiarities, competence improvement, and discussion. The course consists of thematic activities that include short introductions and tests for the course participant self-evaluation of their communication skills and conflict prevention, as well as reflections on the content of the course. The transition situations when paradigm shifts in the societies make parents and their educators feel powerless to decision-making and acting or behaving to achieve the new more complex parental goals; parents feel losing control over their children that quite often is accompanied by a feeling of lost mutual understanding among the members of the family.

The leading conception. During the last decade the parent, social worker, parent educator, as well as stake-holder conception of what parenting is or what it should be has changed considerably and challenge a new look at the content of parent educator courses, as well as introduce a new paradigm of *Parenting Science*. This is not only because of the large variety of education possibilities and NGO that assist parents. The perceptions and conceptions change due to the diversity of cultures living side-by-side in the countries; this also because of the expanded knowledge on parenting and a shift in mindset that cause the need to replace the concept of parent authority, child obedience, and authoritarian style of child-rearing and communication in families – this is being replaced by the more complex concept of parental responsibility, respect to the needs of each family member, mutual protection of everyone's rights, fostering the child rights and skills of critical thinking, self-expression, or responsible autonomy.

The term *positive parenting* has entered the area of family up-bringing to inform about the approach that has emerged from European policies in the family relation area, but parents do not know how to implement this; and their educators need some assistance to prepare them for implementing this paradigm shift. More specifically the term has been described in the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2006) to Member States on Policy to Support Positive Parenting (<https://rm.coe.int/168046d340>). The *positive parenting* framework initiated by the Recommendations facilitates the development of programmes, projects, services and/or measures to support families that aim to foster equal opportunities for families; it necessarily implies providing support for the NGO, educators, other professionals who work with families on regular basis.

The chapter of the project completed by Rezekne Technological academy followed the philosophy that parent education and support programming should assume that parents are more likely to provide appropriate nurturing and guidance as they acquire a greater understanding of child development and children needs, as well as the parent roles in the changing and technology-rich social environment. All parents need support from community agencies: (a) to grasp the most topical changes in society and learn appropriate ways to implement these; (b) willing to improve family education and want to be successful.

Content and its organisation

The aim of the classes: to offer parents an opportunity to improve their understanding and skills of parenting; obtain deeper knowledge in Parenting Science and practice; further develop their communicative skills and accents on cooperation, as well as improve self-evaluation experience.

The content

1. Parenting Science and parents' roles, the main content of parenting science and essentialities of practices; adult learning features, their self-evaluation - 4 + 4

2. The essence and benefits of cooperation; role of cooperation in adult learning and parenting; cooperation in child rearing and family upbringing - 4 + 4

3. The essence of communication, its relation to successful cooperation; role of communication in children and adult learning; communication as a core of parenting; self-evaluation of communication practices - 4 + 4

4. Self-evaluation and evaluation of parenting skills – a starting point of the further target-setting; principles of a productive and successful self-evaluation - 3 + 3

5. Evaluation of the outcomes - 2

Organisational issues and strategies

Allocated hours, total – 32 hours (3 credit points): Autonomous learning – 16 hours; Face-to-face or Skype classes – 16 hours

Course participants will learn or improve their skills and competence (the themes of the program are mutually integrated by the design of classes):

- Parents' roles and adult learning features
- Role of cooperation in adult learning and parenting
- Role of communication in adult learning and parenting
- The basis of the parenting science
- Self-evaluation and evaluation of competencies
- Outcomes of the classes 'Communication with Parents':
- Course participants will acquire new knowledge in 'Parenting Science';
- Further develop their skills to communicate with children;
- Learn how to identify the core problems and specificity of the children in digital age;
- Obtain the basic skills of self-evaluation.

Methodology

Part 1. Initiating communication

Activity 1-1. The dominating family needs in the European context

Adult and parent education need in the EU – why and what parents need to know and be able to achieve in their children upbringing? The social context:

- post-industrial changes and digital technologies – the new generation lives among and with

- digital technologies;
- too much time spent in communications via mobile devices and too few for live communication;
- enormous speed of changes in technologies and technological devices;
- responsibilities of families change in the uncertain social world and new way of their children thinking;
- youth employment becomes a problem related to appropriate education and their will to work;
- demonstrated will of youth's independence and self-confidence coupled with comparatively poor life experience.

Please, work in groups and make a list of the dominating needs (5 min.):

1. The dominating family needs (from your experience, impact of the digital age, etc.)	2. Parents' learning possibilities, making use of these (to be filled in during the session)	3. What the course of <i>Parenting Science</i> can provide more (to be filled in by the end of the session)
Knowledge: Skills: Attitudes:		

When the list is ready – this will serve you as a starting stage in your discussions on parenting – please, discuss it in small groups or at a plenary session and select some 3-4 for more detailed discussion:

- Why do you consider the selected needs dominating?
- Where is the main problem?
- Agree upon one need (these can be more if you can allocate more time for discussions) that is the most common for families that are represented in the group.

Activity 1-2. Positive parenting - discussion

Reading of small chapters of articles which the participants chose before the sessions and suggested for discussion: read, comment, views, other participant experiences, conclusions (suggested for discussion: Rodrigo, M.H., Almeida, A., Spiel, Ch., and Koops, W. (2012). Introduction: Evidence-based parent education programmes to promote positive parenting. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 2012, 9 (1), 2–10); the following statement and a question had been suggested:

(a) the full implementation of the Council of Europe Recommendation positive parenting requires an appropriate response to these challenges – what the challenges and achievements could be?

(b) What do you understand by notion *positive parenting*?

Activity 1-3. Communication in solving topical parenting problems

Parenting (child rearing) is a process of promoting and supporting the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Parenting refers to a raising of a child in balanced and coordinated relationship of biological and social development (Abraham, 2017).

Make a list of problems you want to solve and means that you have for it.

What do we want to solve?	What do we know about the need/problem?
What tools/means/methods do we have?	What do we need to learn, understand, and do?

When the table is ready, discuss it in small groups or plenary session (if there are few participants).

Spot out common needs for the majority of the participants; discuss why? What are the reasons? What knowledge, understanding, and communication skills do you have or lack to cope with the needs that you experience?

Activity 1-4. Perception in communication

What can you judge of this family: For the session two pictures had been used:

- Initiate a discussion on what the participants noticed and how their perception influences their reaction and communication in general. The participants imagine their possible reaction and comment the picture (below) from: <http://theconversation.com/alone-together-how-mobile-devices-have-changed-family-time-111478>;
- Which apps do your children use? Should you know all possible apps or you can rely on your children choice? Do you talk of these possibilities with your children? The picture from: <https://www.pinterest.com/mashable/the-best-apps/>) The picture of apps to self-check the course participants or children recognition; also, to comment their possible usage by exchanging views of the participants, identifying those used by the participants' children, as well as discussion of how these could be introduced to parents and used when assisting them.

Use the pictures below to discuss the chosen hints. You can choose more relevant pictures from the web.

Some hints on the ways of acquiring competencies:

- Involvement in activities, cooperation with school and children
- Communication – value sharing, mind-set development
- The most effective way to do it is learning every-time, any-where
- Learning together with peers, teachers, parents, and others
- Parents' learning from their children and children's learning from their parents
- Discuss the family members' achievements of each day, just devote some minutes to



this strengthen mutual understanding

- what can you judge about mutual relations in this family; what can you ‘read behind’ the picture?
- What can parents do in favour of their children and young generation?
- What are the parents’ roles? Do they change in the age of technologies?

Mind: there is a noticed tendency – as soon as parents or teachers join an app child use to change for another app.

Do you know what APPs your children use? Use the picture *Alphabet of APPs* (below). More pictures are available at: <https://www.pinterest.com/mashable/the-best-apps/>

Do you know how, when, with whom your children communicate in the web?

You can choose for the discussion:

- The most popular free applications
- The most popular iPhone apps –what is on the screen of your child’s iPhone?

Activity 1-5. Non-verbal communication

Using nonverbal means is a powerful communication skill. Ask participants to describe a situation when either the speaker or the listener used nonverbals like facial expression, body postures and actions, body space boundaries, eye contact either appropriate or addressed to something else, and why these means are important in knowing if someone is listening.

Discuss in groups/plenary session the term *appropriate eye contact*. What can you ‘read’ in other’s eyes?

Suggested pictures for Activity 4.



The picture from the blog: *Alone together: how mobile devices have changed family time* Available at: <http://theconversation.com/alone-together-how-mobile-devices-have-changed-family-time-111478>



The picture from: <https://www.pinterest.com/mashable/the-best-apps/>)

Part 2. Improving communication skills

Activity 2-1. Self-evaluation.

The activity starts with self-evaluation (Table 1 is given by the program below - *Questionnaire: Interpersonal Communication*) – participants evaluate their communication skills, make conclusions, and then discuss in the group:

- the most advanced and those that need improvements. The educator suggests to group the two kinds of skills (well-developed and under-developed), usually these are the same in major.
- Then the discussion goes on by identifying the reasons; these are also grouped into traditional and normative (parent-centered) education and the child- or learner- learning centred.

Conclusions on Table 1.

Activity 2-2. Styles of communication

Suggest to comment on two styles of adult communication in a family; use the self-assessment table to make conclusions on well-developed or under-developed communication skills:

- When you are at home you never pay attention to me/ as if you do not notice I am at home. You return home every evening and go straight to the TV/computer/iPhone. You seem to care more about the news in the world than what is happening in our family/with our children.

- I feel like we are not paying attention to each other/children/domestic affairs when we both return home from work. I wonder if your family/me/children are less attractive than the events in the world. Would you like to share the news of the day/ what was the day like for both of us/children? I think we are not connecting very well to discuss our family affairs/we should contact closer to

discuss....

Activity 2-3. The most topical problems in families are communication-related

What are the most topical problems of your children, what they want to be, to have, and avoid? What we want to achieve by solving a topical problem?

Spot out topical problems in families and why do these exist

What is the problem we want to solve?	What are/is our children/child problem that they want to solve?
What do we know about our children's problems?	What do your children tell you about their problems?
Spot out the most topical of your children's problem	Initiate a discussion with the child/children

Discuss these in small groups then in plenary session: Communication-related problems in families.

You will see that you and your children want to be successful, recognized, accepted in peer and/or adult community (family), need more communication, arrive to the mutual understanding among their family members. Actually, your needs are common, the tools, ways, means of achieving might be different (because of different experiences).

Now it is time to discuss the problems with your children/youth deeper, in details, and make it a regular affair in families. It will take some time, actually discussions should be non-stop, and these should be a normal topic among constant communication in your families. This is what your children need first of all; this is where your children learn life.

If you can allocate more time for your group discussions, you can exchange experiences and spot out what you do often or do not do at all.

Activity 2-4. Your family target skills

Skills are the expertise or talent needed in order to do a job or task: practical jobs, learning, drawing, swimming, communicate, cooperate, etc. These allow a person for doing particular job at a respective level of quality and achieve the desired success. Skills make a person confident and independent in life. Almost any skill can be learned or improved if they are set realistic.

2020 growing/emerging mixed skills – (not every skill for everyone). Introduction by The World Economic Forum, 2019, on the most required jobs and competencies in the nearest forthcoming years.

- (a) Work in groups and distinguish between hard and soft skills:
 - Analytical thinking and innovation vs. knowledge
 - Active learning and learning strategies vs. passive knowledge
 - Creativity, originality and initiative - by problem-solving

- Technology design and programming - active technologies' user
- Critical thinking and analysis - view-point for discussions, ideas, arguments
- Complex problem-solving - context vision
- Leadership and social influence - manage a particular areas of activities, self-management
- Emotional intelligence - clear shared attitudes, responsibility, reciprocity
- Reasoning, problem-solving, idea-producing - target-oriented activities, process management

- (b) Use the list of the most topical skills by The World Economic Forum, 2019. Range the skills according to: (a) priorities in your family, (b) priorities of your children, or (c) planned to acquire in the nearest future by your children or... (you may choose the most topical criteria for skills/competence analysis).

Additional activity. Systems analysis and evaluation – self-evaluation, target-settings

Self-assessment is an activity of collecting evidences to evaluate one's knowledge, skills, abilities, attitude, and other qualities. Self-assessments may also have a strong effect on how people are perceived within the family. This includes a look back over the quality of accomplishments and demonstration of communication and cooperation; they reflect mutual relations in families. Self-evaluation is a background for target-setting.

Compare parent and children skills. You can draw one more table to analyse what skills/at least some bases of these each of your children or your have acquired and demonstrate them in learning and everyday activities, what skills are still unknown to you and your children. You will notice that, say, digital skills might be better developed by your children (age or other individual differences might interfere).

You can also self-evaluate your knowledge and skills.

Activity 2-5. Evaluation of hard and soft skills

Discussion:

Why soft skills (human qualities) become as important as the hard (pragmatic, technical) ones?

Select an item from the suggested above or choose your own and create one more table: Values and individual qualities in your family

What values do our children/youth share among their peers?	What values that they share follow those of our generation?
Which of these can you accept and which not? The main answer will be to the question 'why'?	Find reasonable arguments to the question: why your children's values correspond to yours and why not?

Suggest to complete this table: (a) by parents and (b) by children. Then do a small comparative study: dominating values of children compared to those of parents. Isn't this a nice reason for discussions? Can we judge of dissonance in values? What can we say of communication, misunderstanding, and reasons of conflicts in families? Comment: children often complain that parents do not understand them – what could it mean?

Now you can discuss in small groups or at plenary session, why children or youth challenge human qualities alongside with the practical skills; how is digital competence valued, etc. – you can choose the most appropriate focus.

Activity 2-6. Discussion on parent roles

Participants should be able to

- identify the various aspects of parent roles
- agree upon a set of the generic role aspects of parenting
- reflect upon conceptualisations of parenting from a European perspective (use experiences of the participant countries in this seminar/program)

By developing a critical awareness through discussions of the various aspects of the parent roles, participants will be encouraged to adopt a differentiated approach in endeavouring to respond to the individual needs of parents and adult learners at various stages of their professional development.

Discuss if and how parent roles are related to values and communication style in families

Need analysis to meet the parents' roles and features of adult learners

1. With reference to your own experience, consider the following roles.
2. Then identify those **five roles** you consider to be the most important aspects in parenting and place them in rank order. **Comment your choice**

When selecting each role, please, register the questions which you put forward here:

3. Discard any roles you deem of little importance or irrelevant and add any roles that you consider essential, but have not been cited on the cards. Please give reasons for your choices.
4. Share your thoughts with the members in your group and agree a list of parent roles, which you consider to be 'essential' or 'less important'. Add any roles that were not included in the original list on the blank cards provided.
5. In the plenary, **share your group's decisions** with all participants.

Suggested list of parent roles (you can add more roles):

Adviser	manager	initiator
Coach	care-taker	partner
Assistant	enabler	evaluator
Guide	leader	listener
Mediator	instructor	model
Protector	supporter	facilitator

Select to your opinion the most important parents' roles and spot out possible ways to integrate these. If you choose it an individual activity discuss your individual vision with the other participants of this program. You will see much in common. Now you can exchange opinion how parents can integrate their roles in everyday family life.

Activity 2-7. Adult learners - parents as learners

The best learning is learning together with your children – make it a joint venture! What can you children teach you?

Please, find below some most important features of adult learners. Read them and discuss in groups:

- What you have to master for parenting to improve your family upbringing or family pedagogy?
- If you are a teacher or educator to deliver the Parenting science program for parents, what you have to take into consideration when preparing and delivering classes for parents (they are adult learners).

Discuss in groups what you should spot out as the dominating features – these might be specific and differ between the two above mentioned target groups.

Discuss the ways you can meet the adult learners' features

Each group takes one cluster (or more if you can allocate time for this):

1. Adults have a need to know why they need to learn something before they undertake learning it. They look for the practicality of content. Traditionally adult learners tend to take courses without questioning why the course is important to their education. Usually they do not choose unnecessary courses.
2. Adults have a need to be responsible for their own decisions and to be treated as capable of self-direction. (School learners, on the other hand, often have a need for direction to be provided by teachers.
3. Adult learners have a variety of life experiences which are their richest resources for learning. This is in contrast to traditional learners who rely heavily on the teacher's knowledge. Why parents often experience problems with their children? What are the dominating problems?
4. Adults are motivated to learn things that they perceive will help them cope with real-life tasks or problems. They are also motivated by a sense of self-esteem. Traditionally school learners are more subject-oriented and they seek to successfully complete courses regardless of how the content is related to their own goals.

Activity 2-8. Cooperation: perceiving – understanding – doing

Cooperation is the process undertaken by two or more people of working, learning, creating something, organizing one's life together to complete a task or achieve a goal. The value of cooperation/collaboration is achieving better results by putting experiences together; this often creates synergy, that is impossible while working alone.

1. **Video on attention and perception** (you can choose other clips that you find relevant). **Find in the web:**

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/why-people-with-creative-personalities-see-the-world-differently>

1. Please, pay attention to the instruction of the video.
2. After watching the video, please, speak out what you have noticed/perceived
3. If you have to make a decision, what is your perception (how many cases did you notice to base on for your decision?)
4. What else did you notice to make your conclusion?

Your conclusion on the video and decision-making: Your ideas for cooperation with the group? What activities can you initiate with the group?

Compare the components and discuss differences and common features of Cooperation and Collaboration

(You can enter the web-site and test your collaboration skill. Test: English: Online Collaboration Skills Barometer / <http://dev.ecdl.lt/project/online4edu/index.php?lang=en>)

Synergy – additional possibility which is not available when working individually; the importance of this phenomenon lies in possibilities to create new knowledge.

Discussion: what you consider to be the most important components of collaboration at the conceptual level? What components should be improved?

- Awareness – We become part of a working entity with a shared purpose
- Motivation – We drive to gain consensus in problem solving or development
- Self-synchronization – We decide as individuals when things need to happen
- Participation – We participate in collaboration and we expect others to participate
- Mediation – We negotiate and we collaborate together and find a middle point
- Reciprocity – We share and we expect sharing in return through reciprocity
- Reflection – We think and we consider alternatives
- Engagement – We proactively engage rather than wait and see

Activity 2-9. Values of communication.

Now we have collected situations, views, experiences; communication helped us with this. What is communication, why it is so important?

Make a list of communication values and discuss it in small groups or at plenary session

Mind a methodological statement: *communication and different kinds of action are two interrelated phenomena that make a background for human individual development and enhancement.*

Communication is an act of transferring information from one person or group to another. Quite often communication reaches the form of discussion – exchange of knowledge, views, opinions, or values.

Additional/extra activity. Strategies for effective/positive parenting

Avoiding children and adult behaviour problems, avoiding physical or/and mental violence/misbehaviour.

Table 2. Some hints for a program for parenting skills' enhancement

Reasons	Some hints for the possible program
<p>Children and even adults feel <i>frustrated by a problem that's too big for them</i>. They <i>haven't yet learned how to control their impulses</i>, or avoiding conflicts in socially acceptable ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - kids don't process emotions and information the way adults do; - hostile attributions keep hot the very problem they want to solve or even create new ones 	<p>Assistance in developing experience of reasonable behaviour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss the problem to spot out reasons (aims and desires; means or tools chosen to solve the problem; finding common desires and negotiating on differences - Discuss possible solutions, let children, /adults themselves make a decision
<p><i>Special difficulties</i> - like stressful life events, emotional regulation problems, attention deficits, autistic symptoms, or quite often - hyperactivity</p>	<p>Theories and practice of special pedagogy</p>
<p>Behaviour depends on <i>how people perceive the world it is shaped by the social environment</i> and <i>how people evaluate</i> the influences of the world agents (according to individual meaningful <i>criteria</i>)</p>	<p>Family <i>culture</i> and its cultural contexts Behaviour, parents as <i>behaviour models</i> Discussion on events, literature, theatre, etc. in families – <i>creating emotional culture and values</i></p>
<p>Family members <i>can have a powerful influence</i></p>	<p><i>Moral support</i> and <i>practical training</i> of socially acceptable behaviour - developing experiences</p>

An extra activity: Some pedagogical hints to solve conflicts

Do not...	Do... / parents need assistance:
<p>Do not address <i>the whole person</i> – this destroys chances to change (like: you are a bad child); people might perceive a situation differently</p>	<p>Address his/her <i>behaviour</i> (like: this reaction / behaviour is not the best way you can do it... Just think of it)</p>

Do not make <i>immediate</i> decisions and evaluations – people (especially children) might need more time to process verbal instructions, require more practice	First try to understand the reasons, come to realistic expectations (this might take time for considerations); re-shaping demands
Do not lose a focus on feeling protected in family - emotionally dis-balanced people and kids are less likely to learn on their own	Get realistic expectations about the development of empathy, kindness, attitudes, relations; Support their <i>sense</i> of being protected
Do not lose focus on maintaining a <i>positive relationship</i> ; ... do not keep listing misbehaviours	The first step is <i>reorganizing one's priorities</i>
Do not sacrifice one's own emotional well-being, do not complain about bad relations, misbehaviour etc. Stress shades thinking and damages relationships	Learn how to manage stress, how to maintain good relationships

Let us self-evaluate our communication skills. Why communication is important?

Optional Activity

Let us design a course/classes „Parenting Science: Positive parenting “:

(a) for parents if you are teachers/mentors/educators;

(b) for your personal development if you are parents and want to go deeper into Parenting Science.

1. The aim: to assist parents (adult learners) in developing parent and children engagement skills, provide parents opportunities for acquiring the basis of the *Parenting Science* to enable them self-conduct the improvements of their parents' competence.

2. The achievements: knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, ... experiences etc. – the *focus of the program*. Will you, please, reflect on what you have learned during this session?

3. The content – items/components of *Parenting Science* which the program covers to offer the parents a possibility to gain the planned achievements:

- Knowledge and understanding of their children (psychology, anatomy, health, caring...): cognitive abilities, emotional balance etc.
- Educational possibilities and functions of a family: *role models, engagement, communication, cooperation, sharing partnership and values*
- **Cooperation and communication** – basis of family engagement; **why** it matters to the success of children and schools
- Exploring the impact of **family engagement** to better educational outcomes and learner developmental success
- **Exploring effective** parental practices
- Helping parents to achieve understanding of the most often reasons and preferable **responses to children misbehaviour**
- **Special needs...**

Engagement is essential for kindergarten, school, college, as well as family upbringing improvements. It is also increasingly recognized as an integral element for proficient practice as an educator.

4. Tools, technologies you will suggest:

5. **Self-evaluation** and evaluation of the program outcomes

Suggested table for self-evaluation

Table 1. Questionnaire: *Interpersonal Communication*

The following confident statements have the aim to help parents (also teachers and/or educators) to conduct effective communication by reflexing about *skills for interpersonal communication*. The questionnaire can be used either for regular classes or for final self-evaluation. For a current session in the Parenting science program we accentuate communication (choose the most appropriate partner of communication and self-evaluate accordingly) or chose as many as you like – this then will take more time to complete:

- a) with children
- b) with colleagues
- c) with acquaintances
- d) with other parents
- e) with...

	Not Confident 1	2	3	4	Very Confident 5
1. I understand the importance of interpersonal communication with ...					
2. I understand that the communication process depends on many factors					
3. I know that I can manage some of these factors (mention them)					
4. I know that some other of these factors do not depend on me or on what I want (<i>mention them</i>)					
5. I understand that my whole behaviour is involved in communication, verbal and non-verbal signs					
6. I know that for an effective communication the verbal signs I use must be clear					
7. I know that non-verbal signs, body language (facial expressions, gestures) are sometimes more significant for communication than language itself.					
8. I am aware that, if verbal signs and non-verbal signs do not coincide, the communication partner(s) will be confused (<i>please, think of a situation for a group discussion</i>)					
9. I understand that the way I perceive reality differs from that of my children (other persons)					
10. I know that the way I perceive reality is a result of my socialization					
11. I know that I perceive reality through a “filter” consisting of my experiences, my thoughts, my values (<i>think of cases to be discussed</i>)					
12. I know that the same ‘filter’ applies for children (any other person) involved in communication					

13. I understand that I have to distance myself from this “filter” and think of the children’s (partner’s) experiences in order to be “open-minded” for successful communication					
<i>Think of situations when current context interfered with communication, prepare it for the group discussion or self-evaluation</i>					
14. I understand that every communication process takes place within a communication context					
15. I know that this context consists of: time, place, situation, and everything else that has preceded between the communication partners					
16. I know that all messages of the communication partners have to be “heard” at two levels: the information-level and the relationship-level (<i>please, be prepared for a discussion</i>)					
17. I know that at the information-level the message includes opinions, emotions, experiences, values etc. of the partners					
18. I understand that at the relationship-level the messages might be strongly influenced by emotional tension between communication partners					
19. I can hold back my emotions, so that I can communicate in a rational manner					
20. I can simplify my language, so that my partner can understand more easily what I mean					
21. I understand that communication requires certain abilities like the following (<i>mention some of them and suggest for discussion</i>):					
22. I can listen actively to what my partner (children) say, e.g. I can put myself in his/her position					
23. I have a high self-estimation that allows me to communicate with others in an honest way					
24. I understand the importance of the meta-communicative competence (e.g. understanding principles of communication)					

Discussion: what collaboration and communication skills we have, and which ones still need improvements?

If you are a teacher who delivers these classes: What should be of special attention in the program which you are going to offer the parents/choose for your individual development?

If you are a parent: How such classes for parents could be improved?

Part 3. Active listening – an important component of communication

(Modified from the TISSNTE project, 128825-CP-1-2006-1-UK-Comenius C21). Parent educators can choose any of the suggested activities or do all if there is enough time; it is possible also to suggest some activities for parent autonomous completion.

Communication is successful if partners are good listeners. Quite often in family communication fails if the partners do not know how to listen to each other. When you decide that you really want to listen to someone, and give them a chance to tell you whatever they want to tell you, then active listening is appropriate; it will not necessarily always be a counselling situation; in fact it is extremely useful in educator - group or parent – child communication.

The aims of active listening are to put the listener into a neutral, non-directive, non-judgmental frame of mind, so that she can give full attention to the person who is speaking, and

allow him to make his own way through his story without interference. We often think of it as a gift, because the luxury of talking through an issue without interruption or blocking of any kind is very rare indeed.

Activities should be introduced by a short instruction because Active listening is rear part of programs: When you decide that you really want to listen to someone, and give them a chance to tell you whatever they want to tell you, then active listening is appropriate; it will not necessarily always be a counselling situation; in fact it is extremely useful in educator - group or parent – child communication. The aims of active listening are to put the listener into a neutral, non-directive, non-judgmental frame of mind, so that she/he can give full attention to the person who is speaking, and allow him to make his own way through his story without interference. We often think of it as a gift, because the luxury of talking through an issue without interruption or blocking of any kind is very rare indeed.

Activity 3-1. What is active listening and why it is important?

The participant group is split into two parts, each has an assignment that is not known to the other group: – one is the speaker's group, one reads a text, speaks on the qualities of active listening, or on any chosen topic; the rest of the group watch the listeners (preferably each watches one listener) and makes notes that are evidences of attentive (or just opposite) listening. Preferably for reading/speaking a longer text is selected, lasting for some 10 minutes so that there is enough time to collect evidences. It might be a theoretical chapter.

Discuss the collected evidences, possible mistakes in perception, and reaction to the situation of those who are not attentive enough listeners.

Listening is an evidence of respect.

Afterword, they practice active listening in pairs, changing the roles. This practice can be videotaped and analysed as well.

The aim is to help parents or parent educators use evidences to better understand the concept and development of the active listening, as well as develop skills of a good listener. The focus of this practicing exercise is effective communication. It can be used at the beginner phase and also for experienced participants of the activity. The activity can be individual, and pair work – the choice depends on the participants.

Chapters for the exercise Active listening should be chosen by the educator.

Activity 3-2. Evidences of active listening

Active listening is a component of communication, perceiving some information, knowledge, evaluations, etc. that will be use to participate in communication or react. The participants:

- (a) individually read a small suggested chapter about active listening to answer some questions;
- (b) reflect on their experiences and select evidences of active listening.

Afterword, they practice active listening in pairs, changing the roles. This practice can be videotaped and analysed as well. The aim is to help parents, parent mentors/educators understand

the concept and development of the active listening, as well as develop skills of a good listener. The focus of this practicing exercise practice is effective communication. It can be used at the beginner phase and also for experienced participants of the activity. The activity can be individual, and pair work – the choice depends on the participants.

Chapters for the exercise Active listening should be chosen by the educator.

Activity 3-3. The course seminar of this project suggested Half, R. (2015). 10 Quotes to Inspire Active Listening. (Available at: <https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/salaries-and-skills/10-quotes-to-inspire-active-listening>). The participants comment the Quotes to Inspire Active Listening (when time is limited, participants can choose one or two statements to comment, illustrate by their own situations when they were either successful or ‘bad’ listeners. This activity can be optional).

10 quotes to comment are (the focus of comments can be chosen either by participants or the educator):

- Listen at least as much as you talk.
- Listening is a sign of respect.
- Never stop listening, the speaker will decide when to stop; or you can apologise and ask to stop.
- Learn by listening and think what you can learn from your child or educator from a parent.
- Listening should be open, demonstrate interest in it and will to know the speaker’s view.
- Learn to bite your tongue, learn to keep silent when your partner/parent/child speaks.
- Don't try to multitask, do not suggest several topics or problems at a time.
- Use your eyes and your ears, demonstrate your ‘listening’ by all senses.
- Exercise the creative force, listening creates us, we obtain our qualities by listening.
- Do more listening than talking

Activity 3-4. Active listening compared to everyday conversation patterns

Suggest parent educators (or parents) to reflect on their everyday communication and note down the differences between Active listening and Normal conversational patterns (make a table), when the exercise is ready, suggest a discussion and conclusions, as well as statements on their achievements, what they have learned from this activity. From this activity, participants can see that there could be many other choices of responses.

Think of any other possible “Active listening” responses for the discussion. Very useful might be situations from the participant experience when violated one or more advise (of the 10 given here): interrupted talk by the listener had the effect of blocking the flow of what the talker wants to say, and directing the conversation in the direction of what the listener wants to know; people cannot manage to do active listening and anything else at the same time - that is what we mean when we say it requires strict self-discipline; you remember situations when your child stopped conversation by saying ‘you do not love me...’, etc.

1. _____
2. _____

Activity 3-5. Choosing a way of listening to your peers, family members, or anyone else (focus should be chosen). Suggest parents/parent educators to reflect on:

- a. In what situations do you think you would find active listening useful in your private life?
- b. List the “rewards” of active listening (what you can learn, acquire a skill to communicate, make friends, etc.)

Using nonverbal means is a powerful communication skill. Ask participants to describe a situation when either the speaker or the listener used nonverbals like facial expression, body postures and actions, body space boundaries, eye-contact, etc., and why these means are important in knowing if someone is listening to what others are talking about.

Discuss the term *appropriate eye contact*. How nonverbals can reflect a person’s inner world. Suggest a situation or choose one described by the course participants.

Activity 3-6. Self-evaluation to improve one’s skills of active listening

Suggest parent educators (or parents) to reflect on their everyday communication and note down the differences between Active listening and random conversational patterns (this can be a home-work; make a table), when the exercise is ready, suggest a discussion and conclusions, as well as statements on their achievements, what they have learned from this activity. From this activity, participants can see that there could be many other choices of responses.

Think of any other possible “Active listening” responses for the discussion. Very useful might be situations from the participant experience when violated one or more advise (of the 10 given here): interrupted talk by the listener had the effect of blocking the flow of what the talker wants to say, and directing the conversation in the direction of what the listener wants to know; people cannot manage to do active listening and anything else at the same time - that is what we mean when we say it requires strict self-discipline; you remember situations when your child stopped conversation by saying ‘you do not love me...’, etc.

1. _____
2. _____

Suggest parents/parent educators to reflect on:

- a. In what situations do you think you would find active listening useful in your private life?
- b. List the “rewards” of active listening (what you can learn, acquire a skill to communicate, make friends, etc.)

Note: the number of activities depend on the scope of the program, time allocated for the course/program, as well as the peculiarities or needs of the course participants - course educators can select the most appropriate activities and modify them.

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Chapter 4. INCLUDE PARENTING INTERVENTION FOR CHILDHOOD BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES

Abstract

Parents who have children with disabilities are often reported to have physical and psychological distress related to caring for their children. Children with behavioral disabilities may manifest a wide range of difficulties in social adjustment and/or social communication and social relationships. These difficulties may extend from aggressive behavior and acute psychomotor agitation to apathy. Disturbed families, poor parenting practices, poor social and economic live circumstances could be blaming factors for the onset of behavioral problems. Behavioral difficulties may be the secondary effect of the manifestation of intellectual, developmental or other disabilities. Behavioral disabilities may have significantly negative impacts on the individual, the family affecting their quality of life (QOL) and all the society

This chapter presents theoretical models of the impact on Quality of life for families of children with behavioral disabilities, assessment methods understanding and assessing parent's needs and of quality of life, and suitable methods to support families in order to improve their quality of life and motivated to self-care.

Practices which better integrate family QOL research findings into practices are also demonstrated in this chapter. According to research findings: a) family support proved to be a crucial component of FQOL. There is a positive relationship between family support strategies and the families' resilience, stress reducing, and QOL of family promoting. Family support through families Networks that support each other proved to be of greater importance, b) Parenting stress is a factor that impacts QOL in family as it affects emotional well-being, parent-child communication, and child emotional, cognitive and social development. Some of the families' needs are: provision of respite care services (funding and government support), education, daily therapy programs for their children and respite and health care. Consequently, greater financial stress, more frequent disruption of family routine, and reduced social activities outside the family are basic symptoms that a family has to deal and cope with.

These theoretical and practical issues are presented in parallel with practical issues for social educators and school counselors in order to develop specific skills and learn to use specific tools and methods to effectively support families with children with behavioral disabilities. More specifically a 7 step model for the development of effective partnerships with parents and practical issues are presented in order for social educators to support parents to improve QOL and to motivate them for increased self-care.

Practical issues for self-care and improvement the quality of life are presented also for parents of children with behavioral disabilities. Parents who pay attention to their own physical and emotional health increases well-being and quality of life.

Introduction

The concept of disability

According to the ICF international classification of functioning, disability and health (ICF-CY, World Health Organization, 2007), a person's level of functioning is approached as the dynamic interaction between her or his health conditions, environmental factors, and personal factors.

ICF provides a combined view of the individual and social dimensions of health through a bio-psychosocial model of disability which is based on the integration of medical and social factors. ICF provides a multi-perspective approach to the classification of functioning and disability as an interactive and evolutionary process. In this way, Figure 1 illustrates this model of disability by ICF.

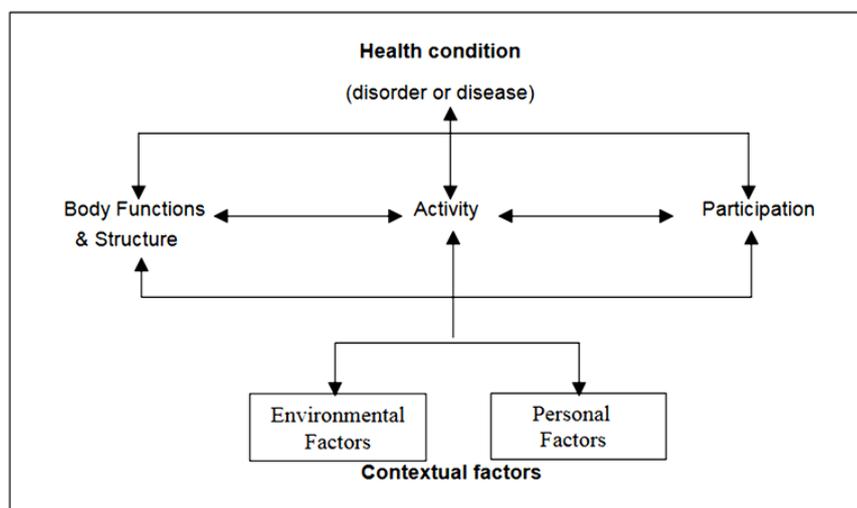


Figure 1. Interactions between the components of ICF international classification of functioning, disability and health: children & youth version (ICF-CY, 2007 page: 17) According to the bio psychosocial model, disability and functioning is the interaction between two factors, health conditions and contextual factors (i.e. environmental and personal factors).

Contextual factors include environmental and personal factors. **Environmental factors** refer to social attitudes, architectural characteristics, legal and social structures, as well as climate, terrain and so forth; and **internal personal factors**, which include gender, age, coping styles, social background, education, profession, past and current experience, overall behavior pattern, character and other factors that influence how disability is experienced by the individual.

Disabilities affect various areas related to the state of psychosomatic of a person's health: Vision, thinking, Movement, Communicating, Mental health, Hearing, Learning Remembering, Social relationships

“There is a dynamic interaction among these entities: interventions in one entity have the potential to modify one or more of the other entities. These interactions are specific and not always in a predictable one-to-one relationship. The interaction works in two directions; the presence of

disability may even modify the health condition itself. To infer a limitation in capacity from one or more impairments, or a restriction of performance ICF differs substantially from the 1980 version of ICIDH in the depiction of the interrelations between functioning and disability. It should be noted that any diagram is likely to be incomplete and prone to misrepresentation because of the complexity of interactions in a multidimensional model. The model is drawn to illustrate multiple interactions. Other depictions indicating other important foci in the process are certainly possible. Interpretations of interactions between different components and constructs may also vary (for example, the impact of environmental factors on body functions certainly differs from their impact on participation) (ICF-CY, 2007 page: 16).

Behavioral disability

“Development is a dynamic process by which the child moves progressively from dependency on others for all activities in infancy towards physical, social and psychological maturity and independence in adolescence. In this dynamic process, the child’s functioning is dependent on continuous interactions with the family or other caregivers in a close, social environment. Therefore, the functioning of the child cannot be seen in isolation but rather in terms of the child in the context of the family system. This is an important consideration in making judgments about the child’s functioning in life situations. The influence of family interactions on the child’s functioning is greater in this developmental phase than at any later point in an individual’s lifespan. Further, as these interactions frame the acquisition of various skills over the first two decades of life, the role of the physical and social environment is crucial”. (ICF-CY, 2007 page: 16)

Children’s mental health and wellbeing is shaped during childhood and adolescence. The socio-cognitive and emotional skills and behaviors that are being developed at these early stages remarkably affect choices and opportunities during adulthood. The quality of the social-economic environment in which children grow up significantly affects their behavior, social interaction, learning, vital skills and social skills and determines their life during adulthood. As a consequence, negative experiences that children would face at home or at school may adversely affect cognitive and emotional skills development. The factors affecting mental health and behavior may be related with disturbed families, poor parenting practices, poor social and economic live circumstances (WHO European Region, 2020). Mental health, behavior and wellbeing may be affected when children present intellectual, developmental or other disabilities (Horbach, 2020, Jansen, 2020, Ngashangva & Dutt, 2015).

Child’s behavior affected by critical dramatic events in early childhood or adolescence or because of family low social-economic environment vary from aggressive behavior and acute psychomotor agitation to apathy.

Disturbed behavior is often chronic and might present more than once in one’s lifetime in every individual. These disturbances with their relative disorders have a significantly negative impact on the individual, the family and the society and affect their quality of life QOL.

Quality of Life

About quality of life

Quality of Life (QOL) is defined as the individual's perception of their position in life in the context of their culture and value systems in which they live, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. It is a broad concept incorporating an individual's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs, and relationship to the salient features of the environment" (WHO, 1997).

Health-related quality of life HRQOL and Family Quality of Life (FQOL) are components of the overall quality of life. HRQOL is determined primarily by health status and conceived as dynamic, subjective, and multidimensional. The dimensions often include physical, social, psychological, cognitive and spiritual factors (Bakas et al., 2012). The unique characteristic of FQOL definition emphasizes on examining the perceptions and dynamics of the family unit as a whole (Hu et al., 2012).

Family Quality of Life FQOL is defined as "a dynamic sense of well-being of the family, collectively and subjectively defined and informed by its members, in whom individual- and family-level needs interact" (Zuna, Summers, Turnbull, Hu, & Xu, 2010). FQOL has proven to be an essential indicator of living conditions of families with children with disabilities and of assessing the supportive services they receive.

Theoretical models of the impact on QOL of families with children with behavioral disabilities: Five-factor construct model

Parents who have children with disabilities are often reported to have physical and psychological distress related to caring for their children, thus affecting their QOL. Researchers, using qualitative research data, have focused on conceptualizing the model factors impacting on FQOL. Based on early empirical research, the first instruments were created to measure FQOL (Garcia-Grau, McWilliam, Martínez-Rico, & Grau-Sevilla, 2018;) As soon as the researchers started to use these instruments, they became interested in exploring factors that have an impact on FQOL. For instance, Figure 2 shows a five-factor construct model to examine the impacts on FQOL and explain FQOL outcomes (Hoffman, Marquis, Poston, Summers & Turnbull, 2006).



Figure 2. Five-factor construct model of examining FQOL outcomes (Hoffman, Marquis, Poston, Summers, & Turnbull, 2006)

Researchers in several countries, have focused on this five factors construct model to examine the impact of quality of life of families that have children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Bhojti, Brown, & Lentini, 2016). Evidence from empirical research has confirmed that families of children with ASD are satisfied with emotional well-being. In addition, it has been reported that differences in FQOL levels depend on the type of disability (e.g., Down syndrome, ADHD, ID, ASD). A call for future research in order to further explore factors that impact FQOL, including cultural background of parents is put forward.

FQOL model of support services

A unified theory of FQOL has been put forward to better integrate FQOL research into practices and services for families with disabilities (Zuna, Turnbull, & Summers, 2009). Under this framework, it is proposed that parenting stress is negatively linked with FQOL, and family support is positively associated with FQOL given the fact that individual perceptions concerning parenting behaviors can have a direct impact on someone's life satisfaction (Hsiao et al., 2017). Caregiver is defined as the parent (either mother or father) or other family members (grandmother or grandfather, siblings, aunt or uncle and adoptive parent) of the disabled child who is responsible for parenting or caring for the disabled child. A caregiver provides practical, day-to-day unpaid support for a person unable to complete all of the tasks of daily living (Savage and Bailey, 2004).

The interactive process results in the outcome of quality of life which, in turn, influences family strengths, needs, and priorities (Zuna et al., 2010). Figure 3 illustrates the components of a

unified theory of FQOL. Research findings based on this theory have demonstrated three basic issues.

First, family support proved to be a crucial component of FQOL. “Family support is defined as a set of strategies directed to the family unit in order to ultimately benefit the family member with disabilities. Family supports usually include formal and informal and tangible goods that allow each family member to optimize their level of participation in different life environments”. There is a positive relationship between family support strategies and the families’ resilience, stress reducing, and QOL of family promoting. Family support through families Networks that support each other proved to be of great importance.

Second, families have been least satisfied with Emotional Health. Parenting stress concerns the aversive psychological responses to the challenges and demands of parenting role. Parenting stress is a factor that impacts QOL in families since it affects emotional well being, parent-child communication, and child emotional, cognitive and social development.

Third, some of the families’ needs include the provision of respite care services (funding and government support) education, daily therapy programs for their children and respite and health care. Consequently, greater financial stress, more frequent disruption of family routine, and reduced social activities outside the family are basic symptoms that a family has to deal and cope with.

There is a strong relationship between the supports and services provided to children and their families and FQOL and the supports provided can predict FQOL (Zeng et. al, 2020)

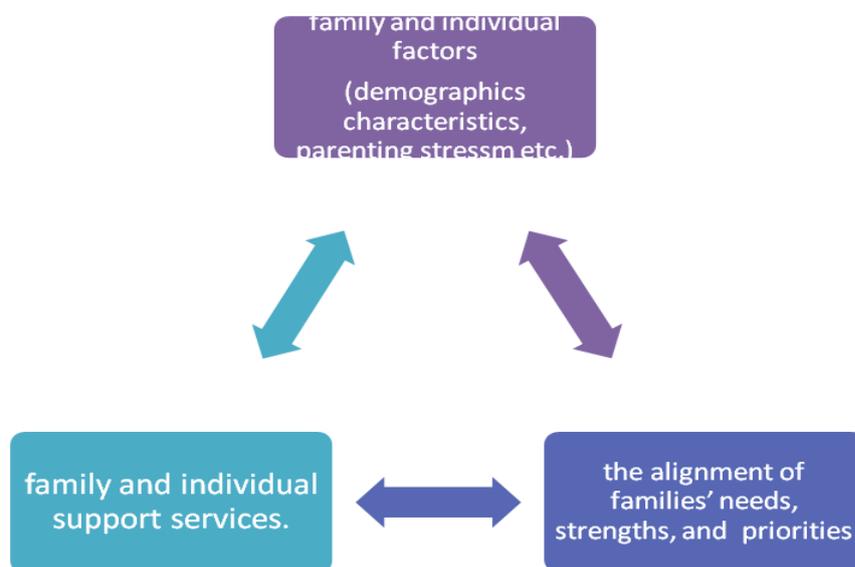


Figure 3: Components of unified theory of FQOL (Zeng et.al, 2020)

Assessment of satisfaction of FQOL

Quality of life has received much attention as it is an indicator of general well-being. Consequently, a wide range of tools now exist measuring quality of life in a variety of ways. However, family quality of life hasn’t received nearly the same level of attention, despite its crucial

role in shaping our young lives. For this reason, the FQOL scale has been developed by Hu, Summers, Turnbull and una (2011).

Assessment of satisfaction of FQOL is of great importance in order to help families realize the level of support they need. This information is of great importance for government and professionals also. For these reasons, the FQOL scale has been created. It is a 25-item inventory rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale. Its purpose is to measure several aspects of families' perceived satisfaction in terms of quality of family life. Family quality of life is measured under five domains that are determined by the five-factor construct model of examining FQOL outcomes (Hoffman, Marquis, Poston, Summers, & Turnbull, 2006). These five factors are:

- Family Interaction
- Parenting
- Emotional Well-being
- Physical / Material Well-being
- Disability-Related Support

Self care

About self-care

The WHO 1998 definition of Self-care is to take care of oneself. 'Self-Care is what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health, and to prevent and deal with illness. It is a broad concept encompassing hygiene (general and personal), nutrition (type and quality of food eaten), lifestyle (sporting activities, leisure etc), environmental factors (living conditions, social habits, etc.) socio-economic factors (income level, cultural beliefs, etc.) and self-medication.' **According to the** UK Department of Health,

“Self care is a part of daily living. It is the care taken by individuals towards their own health and well being, and includes the care extended to their children, family, friends and others in neighbourhoods and local communities. Self-Care includes the actions individuals and carers take for themselves, their children, their families and others to stay fit and maintain good physical and mental health; meet social and psychological needs; prevent illness or accidents; care for minor ailments and long-term conditions; and maintain health and wellbeing after acute illness or discharge from hospital.”.

Self care goals and strategies

Parents who pay attention to their own physical and emotional health experience increased well-being. Self-care practices aim at supporting them to play an active and self-empowered role in their children's and family life, in their child's care to build capacities based on parents strengths in taking control of their lives and in making decisions important for their families. Some of these practices are to:

- address children's specific needs
- support the success and evolution of their own children
- crosses stressful experiences,



- crosses pressures and social barriers
- helps family to be adapted in changes
- build strong relationships with community networks
- be resilient, in hard times
- enjoy good ones
- accessing and continuing the support and specialty services.

Parents of children with different types of disabilities are motivated to prevent stress – burnout and to learn how to recognize their signs.

Stress affects parents physically as well as mentally. Some common physical signs of stress include: headaches, low energy, upset stomach including diarrhea, constipation and nausea, aches, pains, and tense muscles, and insomnia.

Stressful events could be recognized in order to be avoided. The identification of such events that stress parents is the first step of self-care. Daily events like shopping in a specific shop, relationship with specific parents, going to schools events or events with parents that have negative attitudes towards the child with disability would make parents to feel stress. Once they recognize these events and situations cause their stress, they will be prepared to avoid or cope with them. In this manner parents develop a sense of greater confidence in their possibilities that contributes to their well-being and quality of life (QOL). Self-care strategies that have been suggested are presented in Figure 4.

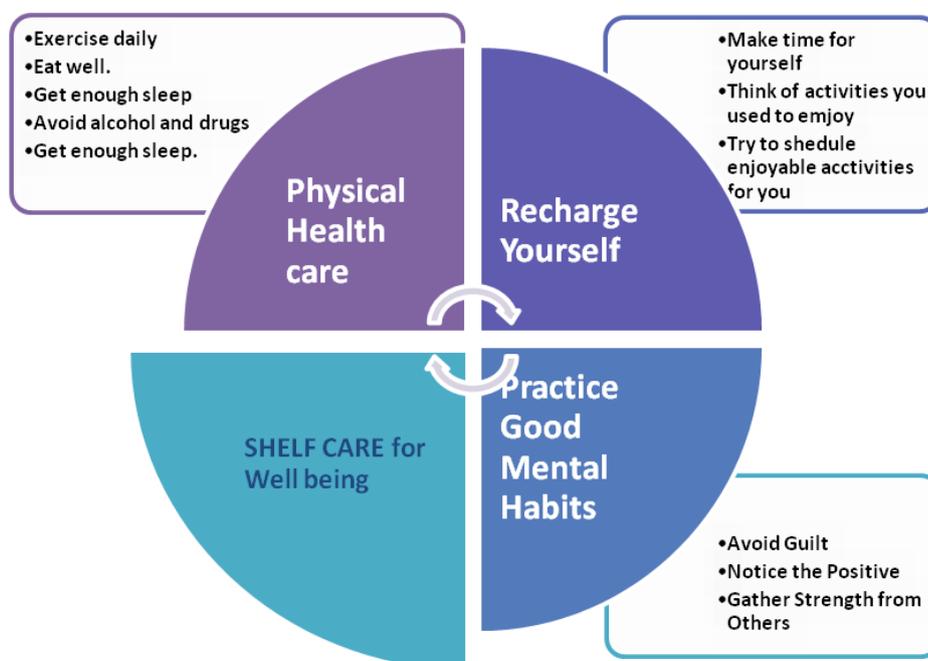


Figure 4: Self-care strategy for well being

Practical issues for social educators

The role of the school in children's mental health

Schools are second only to families in their potential to affect children's mental health. They can contribute to young people's successful development by providing nurturance and the opportunity to develop cooperative social relations and social and psychological skills. Thus, it is natural that a considerable number of preventive interventions have been developed for delivery in schools, including preschool settings.

Most of these interventions have focused on preventing behavioral problems and externalizing disorders or promoting positive child behavior in school, although some positive results have been demonstrated on internalizing disorders, such as depression. Other programs have focused on school structural factors, such as the reward structure for prosocial behavior or school-family relations.

A number of interventions that combine multiple types of programs (e.g., parenting and schools) or multiple levels (e.g., universal and selective) have started to emerge, primarily in elementary schools.

It is well documented that social educators are really motivated to create partnerships with parents and they know the importance of school-family-community partnerships (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004) but they do not know how and it is difficult for them to start building the relationship.

The seven-step partnership model with parents

Critical questions need to be answered and specific skills and competences need to be developed. A seven step partnership with parents based on the model of seven stages to build an effective partnership was proposed by Bryan and Henry (2012).

The seven steps to partnership with parents provides the stakeholders, social educators and school counselors with critical stages in order to address important aspects of effective, sustainable, culturally congruent partnerships especially with vulnerable families from low income, social background. These steps are illustrated in Figure 5.

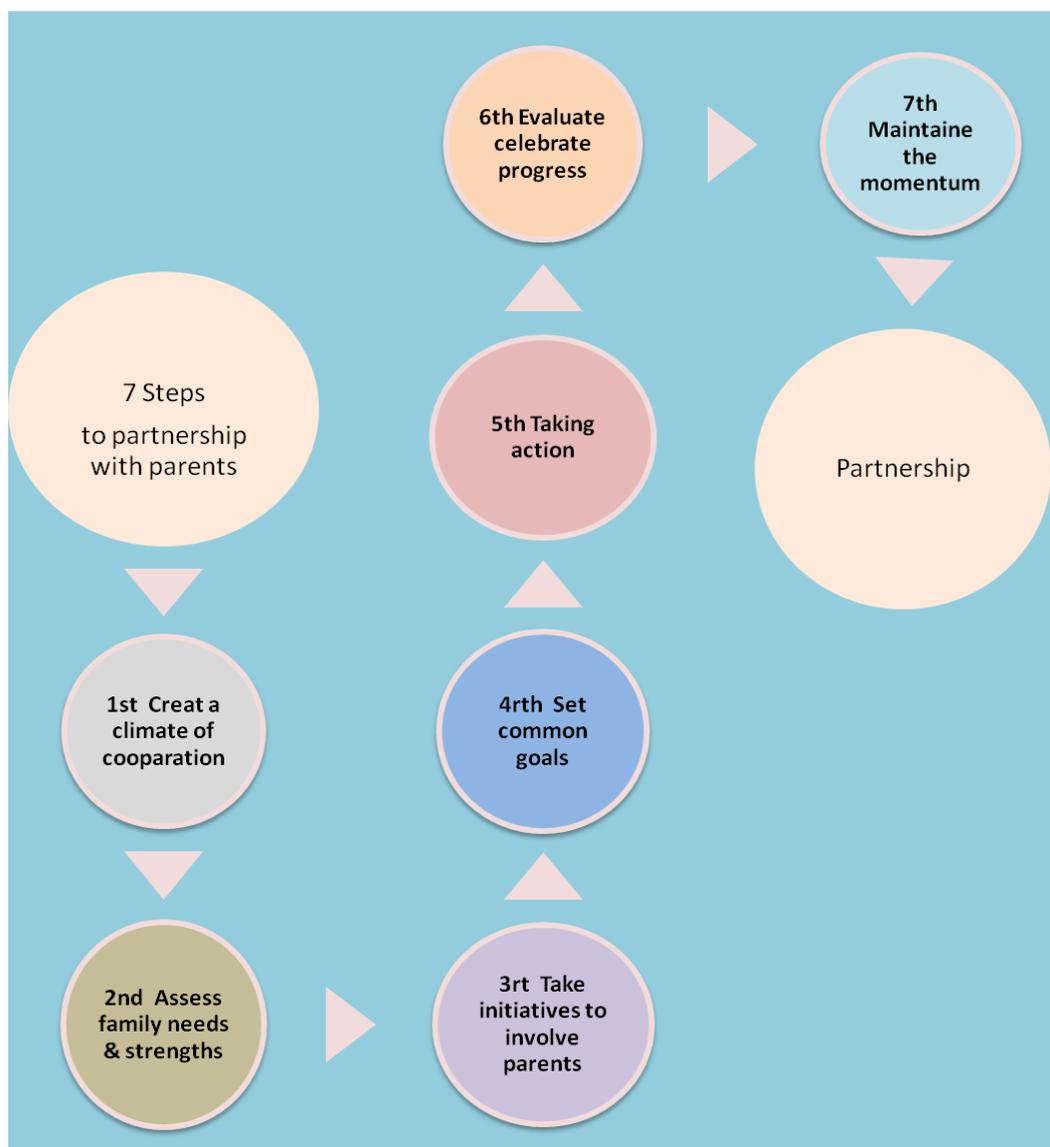


Figure 5. 7 steps to partnership with parents

In details, these seven steps are presented below.

1st Create a climate of cooperation

How to start with the partnership is a critical question. How I have to be prepared. At first a starting point has to be found. The first step for effective collaboration is to leave behind stereotypes and prejudices. Full acceptance is smoothing the ground in order the relationship to grow.

Creating an environment of respect and trust from both sides is a prerequisite to initiate the partnership. But how would the social educator be prepared and what skills have to be built? Reflection is needed on the ways to encounter equally any family and to manage gender inequalities, educational level, language, nationality, socio-economic background. More importantly, social educators should note that an attractive vision and convincing rationale for partnerships without

cultural awareness and knowledge about students and their families and communities may hinder school counselors' efforts to build successful partnerships. Trust, full respect and treatment without prejudices are the basic tools that have to be developed (see fig.2)

2nd step: Assess family needs & strengths

Social educators should use several modes to investigate the family needs. Critical questions are how do I explore the needs and capabilities of our students and their parents. How would I record them? Am I confronting traditionally disempowered or marginalized families the same as the most privileged? Am I equally assessing all families?

Some of the methods of collecting useful data for assessment concerning family needs and strengths that a social educator can use are: face to face interviews, written or online surveys, social media, and focus groups. These methods would be used for the assessment of students, school personnel, family and community members (Bryan & Henry, 2012).

Great effort should be made so that social educators can appreciate and understand the special needs of families at risk of social exclusion, such as low-income families or children with disabilities.

To assess the needs a social educator is important: a) to analyze, disaggregate school data, b) to hear different perspectives regarding the specific needs that the school staff recognize c) to develop a community resources map to identify the strengths of the community and the ways that these would be used e) to recognize the key persons to help social educators to become trustful so that community members to be in touch with them.

3rd Take initiatives to involve parents

Social educators in this step are ready to bring together parents and discuss the results of the assessment process. At this step many meetings may need to take place and key stakeholders in the wider child environment may need to be invited.

Social educators or school counselors collect data from various sources and perspectives at the assessment step to better understand the families' needs and strengths and to set goals for interventions that would lead to the improvement of the quality of life of families, especially those that are most vulnerable.

At this step School counselors should intentionally invite representatives of families typically marginalized in schools, those from low-income, immigrants, and racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds or with behavioral or other types of disabilities. These families need to be involved in goal setting in order to be motivated to participate. Social educators should enhance the feeling of belonging in school and the broader community in these families. Partnerships with broader social allies may provide interpreters, transportation, and child care at the school or community venue so that these families may be engaged in the partnership-building process and develop the awareness that they are receiving care. This feeling creates the important conditions so that parents participate in common goals.

4th Set common goals

Social educators at this step have to set common goals. The important question is how do I get all members of school and broader community to have a shared approach and goals? Social educators have to employ all their skills and competence to develop dialogue, to solve problems, to give initiatives to the most vulnerable and to members that are not in a position to stand up for themselves.

As soon as all these conditions have been met, it is time to start developing the partnership plan. This plan involves developing shared short- and long-term goals, formulated intervention programme outcomes, how and when the outcomes will be measured, and creating a timeline for partnership program events. We set short-term and long-term goals. We organize the schedule which includes goals, duration and desired results.

It is very important for the school counselors to share information in such ways that culturally diverse families be engaged in their children's education. Sometimes they may need to use nontraditional ways to foster those families' engagement in their children's education and cooperation. Ways of sharing the plan and its outcomes have to be developed so that all members of the family and social allies are informed.

5th Taking action

The important question at this step is "What will we do and how will we do it?"

The implementation of the plan and its successful completion is the goal in this step. Social educators and school counselors are responsible for taking on role-playing initiatives, monitoring the implementation of the overall redesign feedback plan, and providing overall support to all stakeholders involved in the design.

Again in this step it is important to use methods that facilitate understanding and mobilize families who are vulnerable and may have children with behavioral difficulties and come from or belong to groups other than the dominant cultural groups or at a risk of exclusion. For this reason school counselors work to implement culturally sensitive programs and activities and engage culturally diverse families in non-traditional ways (i.e., holding events in the community, conducting home visits, assigning parents as workshop leaders). Programs should integrate evidence-based practices known to meet their goals. For example, if the central goal of the partnership is to increase academic achievement, then practices known to improve achievement (e.g., tutoring) should be included in the partnership pro-gram (Bryan & Henry,2012).

6th Evaluate celebrate progress

At this step it is important the impact of activities and initiatives on families and other involved social allies be measured. The question of how the impact would be measured is important at this step. It is common that the schools develop effective programs that manage to motivate families and improve students' achievement and use inclusive practices effectively but fail to measure the results and to find ways to present outcomes through qualitative or quantitative indicators.

As they are really focus on solutions it is common that they forget to activate the evaluation plan and strategies for collecting data. Surveys and other forms of feedback from parents and community partners are important in the evaluation, examination and analysis of the results. It is equally important to review the evaluation results that have been collected from different perspectives to determine if and how the partnership program(s) met the needs of students, families and community members; how activities and pro-grams met the goals; and what positive or successful outcomes they produced.

Evaluations should provide a clear picture of the successes, strengths, weaknesses, obstacles and challenges that would be used as feedback for improvement of the program. Sharing the results with partners, families, educators and social allies through nontraditional formats (e.g. accessible stories, videos) bring together all partners and help them to celebrate the results. Indeed, sharing and celebrating the outcomes with family and community partners encourages them to continue as partners in the development and implementation of cooperation programs or activities and in the mobilization of new partners.

7th Maintain the momentum

The sustainment of the results is an important factor. Enthusiasm and commitment are the motivators of the continuation of the cooperation. The sustainability of the results is the usage of a global strategy that is important to be used during the implementation of the program. These strategies include ongoing outreach and recruiting of family and community members as partners throughout the school year, and training and involving partners as leaders.

The National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) has made extensive research on evidence-based partnerships using Epstein's six types of involvement and Action Teams for Partnerships (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016; Chapter 26). While the NNPS model has shown positive effects on student out-comes, it differs from the equity focus of Bryan & Henry's (2012) partnership process model. Although a few scholars have used this model to structure and evaluate their partnership programs (Cook & Hayden 2016), experimental research is needed to examine the model's effects on students' outcomes, in particular, the outcomes of marginalized students.

Social educators' skills and tools for effective partnerships

In order establish effective cooperation with families (especially from vulnerable social groups), the social educators need to develop specific skills and use specific tools. This model calls for a collaborative approach to school counseling, which means that counselor educators must integrate collaboration and partnership-building knowledge and skills into school counselor training programs. In order for school counselors to develop the self-efficacy to build effective partnerships, they must be taught to do so during their counselor education programs (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004, 2006; Bryan & Griffin, 2010).

These are the main qualifications for the success of their efforts. In Figure 6, specific tools suitable for every step are presented. At the bottom and middle level of the pyramid the skills and the tools of the 7 steps are presented. The last level is prerequisite for all the others.

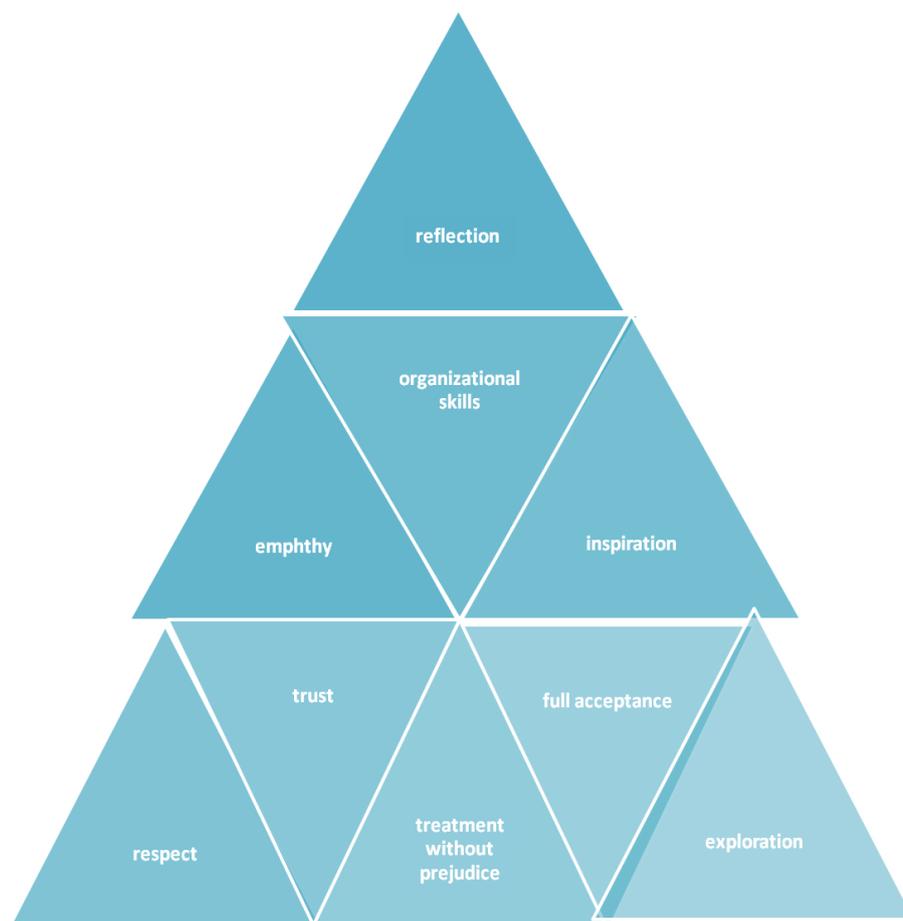


Figure 6: Basic tools and skills to enable the 7 steps to partnership with parents

As school counselors play a central role in partnership-building, there is a need for a partnership model that integrates the extant approaches to partnerships, culturally congruent strategies, and equity-focused principles (i.e., democratic collaboration, strengths-focused, empowerment, social justice) to better serve culturally diverse and low-income families.

Practical issues for parents

General self-care ‘pillars’ or ‘domains’: Figure 7 shows the framework developed by the International Self-Care Foundation for self-care based on seven ‘pillars’ or ‘domains’:

Pillar 1 Knowledge & Health literacy

Pillar 2 Mental wellbeing, Self-awareness & Agency

Pillar 4 Healthy eating

Pillar 5 Risk avoidance or mitigation

Pillar 6 Good hygiene

Pillar 7 Rational and responsible use of products, services



Figure 7: Self-Care Foundation <https://isfglobal.org/>

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Appendix

More on self-care strategies

- a. Learn to use 7 tools for self-care <https://www.caregiver.org/Taking-care-you-self-care-family-caregivers>
- b. A Manifesto for Self-Care <https://isfglobal.org/a-manifesto-for-self-care/>
- c. Self-care voices: <https://isfglobal.org/self-care-voices/>
- d. Taking Care of Yourself <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Family-Members-and-Caregivers/Taking-Care-of-Yourself>

Chapter 5. MANRA

THE PROJECT COURSE OF EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS: EMOTIONAL INTERACTION AND FAMILY DISRUPTION

The peculiarity of the 2020 session has been introduced by the pandemic that has changed the plans of the sessions and the whole project – the activities and communication with the course participants had to take place totally on-line even within the country. The project organizers had to modify the prepared organizational settings and materials for this format, as well as conducting sessions and activities.

Abstract

The Handbook Report consist of description of chapters developed by partners to provide more detailed information about materials, considerations and suggestions that are based on the 2020 session of parent educators developed in each country, within the framework of the European project Erasmus + ESEC “Extending Social Educators Competences”. This report contains all the contents of the learning unit prepared by this institution, regarding the training course held in Alzira that has been conducted by the MANRA ESEC project group. In this document it is presented the chapter developed “*Emotional and Social Skills: Emotional Interaction and Family Disruption*”, with the aim of the completion of a training course organized by the Mancomunidad de la Ribera Alta (Spain).

Firstly, the chapter reveals the *introduction* in order to explain the main idea of the selecting content for the session *Emotional Interaction*, for the face-to-face training, and *Family Disruption*, and organization of the content. The conception of the session reflects achieving parent educator qualities appropriate for developing *social skills based on emotional interaction and also skills based on the learning to manage situations of family disruption* on the background of communication as a fundamental basis of human individual development. In this report it is explained the definitions of terms selected for each session and also the usefulness of the learning units to parents training.

Secondly, referring to the *theory*, in the report it is also explain the materials used to develop the sessions of the training course. The content of the activities in the session of “Emotional Interaction” represent three groups of activities or phases of the development of communication skills or competencies: (a) those that are related to the active listening; to complete these participants have to communicate developing this skill, discuss and understand (these belong to a successful communication, nevertheless are seldom attended and included to parent education programs), (b) activities that are directed to evaluate and improve communication skills regarding the emotional

intelligence; (c) activities that develop skills in order to learn how to normalize a feeling when parents go through undesired emotions.

In addition, it is also described the *teaching methodology* used and selected to carry on with the training course activity developed by MANRA. This section deals with the considerations evolved while conducting the 2020 session, and include: information related to this training action in terms of its content and its organization, the learning units selected for face-to-face training by MANRA, such as the learning unit of the “Emotional Interaction”, or the unit selected and also prepared by Mancomunidad for the online training modality, on the theme of “Family Disruption”, according to the materials of the project’s MOODLE platform (prepared by RTA) provided, both for individual and collective learning. In the same way, regarding to these methodology, the document describes as it has been mentioned, the adaptations made to ensure attention to the needs of the participants, in relation to the situation experienced by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restructuring of training modalities, through virtual space, with respect to the development of the ESEC project training course.

It is reflected in the document the methodology used in carrying out the training course, in order to explain the mode of the session and the activities that are chosen to implement the main idea of the parent educator developmental program. This section includes reflections on the mode of the session, considerations, conclusions, suggestions, as well as some obstacles and difficulties are based on the experience collected at each cluster of the content and its methodological design: activities that initiate active listening, those that improve emotional intelligence skills, as well as activities that train skills by learning how to normalize a feeling.

Finally, the document collects information about *practical issues for social educators and parents*. On the one hand, the *practical issues for social educators* include a whole series of tools for the education of parents based on the acquisition of emotional and social skills, while on the other hand, the *practical issues for parents* consists of the knowledge and acquisition of these skills for their practical application in handling situations of family disruption and the need for emotional interaction with children.

Introduction (Definitions of terms, usefulness of the learning unit to parents training)

The session 2020 conducted by MANRA *Emotional Interaction - Family Disruption* cover the most topical issues of *Social and Emotional Skills* with a focus on communication. The terms are chosen for discussions according to the parent most attended questions of parent integrated roles, communication among parents and children, parent educator communication and active listening with parents, peculiarities of communication in digital age; these are contextualized with the current social processes and needs. Course educators can add some specific activities to meet special needs of the course participants. Articles and clips are suggested to consider emotional interaction peculiarities, competence improvement, and discussion.

The course consists of thematic activities that include short introductions and tests for the course participant self-evaluation of their emotional interaction skills and conflict prevention, as well as reflections on the content of the course. The transition situations when paradigm shifts in

the societies make parents and their educators feel powerless to decision-making and acting or behaving to achieve the new more complex parental goals; parents feel losing control over their children that quite often is accompanied by a feeling of lost mutual understanding among the members of the family.

Regarding to the *main conception* of the learning units, it is important to clarify that over the years the parent, social worker, parent educator, as well as stake-holder conception of what parenting is or what it should be has changed considerably and challenge a new look at the content of parent educator courses, as well as introduce a new paradigm of *Social and Emotional Skills*. This is not only because of the large variety of education possibilities. The perceptions and conceptions change due to the diversity of cultures living side-by-side in the countries; this also because of the expanded knowledge on parenting and a shift in mindset that cause the need to replace the concept of the different educational styles and educational patterns to be fulfilled by parents introducing new educational skills related to the emotional interaction, active listening or emotional intelligence.

Regarding to the *definitions of terms and the usefulness of the learning units to parents training*, the term *emotional interaction* has entered the area of family up-bringing to inform about the approach that has emerged from European policies in the family relation area, but parents do not know how to implement this; and their educators need some assistance to prepare them for implementing this paradigm shift. The *emotional interaction* framework facilitates the development of strategies, skills and measures to support families that aim to foster equal opportunities for them; and it includes the support of social educators, associations and other professionals that work with families.

The chapter of the project completed by Mancomunidad de la Ribera Alta followed the philosophy that parent education and support programming should assume that parents are more likely to provide appropriate nurturing and guidance as they acquire a greater understanding of child development and children needs, as well as the parent roles in the changing and technology-rich social environment. All parents need support from community agencies: (a) to grasp the most topical changes in society and learn appropriate ways to implement these by learning emotional and social skills; (b) willing to improve family education and want to be successful.

The content of the 2020 session held in Alzira is divided into three mutually integrated parts, with respect to the theme of Emotional Interaction, which consist of various sub-topics about emotional and social skills that are organized in the logic of integrating content rather than suggesting separate topics related to emotional interaction - this breaks with the traditional form of content organization. Therefore, the content is offered through various activities in each part. The three parts of the activities are:

- (a) those that are related to the **active listening**; to complete these participants have to communicate developing this skill, discuss and understand (these belong to a successful communication, nevertheless are seldom attended and included to parent education programs);

Section 1: Active listening

Definition

‘Hearing’ is a physical yet passive act involving the process and function of perceiving sound. ‘Listening’ is hearing the sounds with deliberate intention. Therefore, unlike hearing, listening is a skill that improves through conscious effort and practice. It is important to enhance the skill of listening when you want to create an environment of share and a relation of trust. Active listening involves also the capacity to help the speaker share more and feel more comfortable to do so, without feeling pushed. It also has the capacity to grow into the speaker a feeling of being understood and a more reflective way of thinking.

(b) activities that are directed to evaluate and improve communication skills regarding the **emotional intelligence** – these make use of part (a) to have an evidence-based discussion on skill improvement;

Section 2: Emotional intelligence

Definition

Emotional intelligence is the capability of individuals to recognize their own emotions and those of others, discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior, and manage and/or adjust emotions to adapt to environments or achieve one's goal(s).

In our case, emotional intelligence will be a useful tool as to understand the emotions felt by the parents and to grow in them the capacities to understand them as well. Recognize the emotion felt is the first step as to deal with them. Family facing the situation of a child with a disability might have trouble of emotion sharing and overall communication that can affect the relations between the different members (parents/children/grand-parents...).

(c) activities that develop skills in order to learn how to **normalize a feeling** when parents go through undesired emotions – this belongs to a successful interaction and improves parent and parent educator competences.

Section 3: Normalizing a feeling

Definition

As seen in the lectures, parents and families as all go through a set of undesired emotions, that can ruin or alternate communication and emotional connection between the family members. Normalizing the feeling is a good way to help someone accept and make peace with the emotions felt.

So first of all what does it mean to normalize a feeling. Normalizing is when emotions are diffused or reframed in a more acceptable manner to preserve the status quo. This technique focuses on both the experience and expression of emotion, perhaps because emotions, cognitions, and behaviors are often highly interactive. It is necessary to understand that normalizing doesn't mean neutralizing or to change the expression of the emotion to more socially accepted way. It is about giving another perspective to the person about the situation or emotion felt as to help grow a more acceptable perception.

The perspective of the person isn't to be made wrong, but to propose another independent perspective to the situation.

The main aspect that this special content brings is the integrating activities by involving experiences of parent education to identify and practice the above-mentioned paradigm shift about *Social and Emotional Skills*.

Theory

Regarding the theory described into the chapter *Emotional and Social Skills: Emotional Interaction and Family Disruption*, the learning unit of *Emotional Interaction* consists of the following theoretical aspects:

Key learning point

This lecture aims to give the capacity for special educator to create a trust space with the parents where they feel heard and understood and can freely share their emotions, as well as give them the appropriate tools to resolve disruption between members of a family.

- Title of the learning unit: Emotional interaction.

-Contents (list of its sections):

Active listening tools:

- Definition.
- Showing that you are listening (behavior and body language...).
- Ensure that you understood (example paraphrasing).
- Encourage the speaker to share (nonjudgmental state of mind, open questions...).

Emotional intelligence:

- Definition.
- Emotional awareness (emotional literacy, levels of awareness).
- Emotional validation.

Normalizing a feeling:

- Definition.
- Perspective and perception (reframing the situation).
- Empathy (using a video explaining the concept of empathy).

Lesson summary

Having a child with a disability tend to create tension and turmoil of emotions that are coped differently by the members of the family and can create disruption between them. Giving tools to the special educator to understand and release those emotions are necessary, as well as resolve the conflicts. It is also important to add that those techniques are useful for the parents to use likewise.

Expected achievements

This lecture aims to give the capacity for special educator to create a trust space with the parents where they feel heard and understood and can freely share their emotions, as well as give them the appropriate tools to resolve disruption between members of a family.

In addition, referring to the content integrated into the subject of *Family Disruption*, the subject consists of the following theoretical aspects:

- Title of the learning unit: Family disruption.

-Contents (list of its sections):

- + **SECTION 1: Lesson introduction** (Family stages of acceptance, disintegration, negation and acceptance, reintegration, personal experience, personal characteristics, values, social environment).
- + **SECTION 2: The couple as the base of the reconstruction** (The effect on the couple, how to help).
- + **SECTION 3: The grandparent's involvement.**
- + **SECTION 4: Siblings of a child with a disability** (The emotions felt by the sibling; dividing experiences into three tendencies: hungry of attention, perfect kid and early maturity; helping parents find a balance in their relations with their child).
- + **SECTION 5: Testimonies.**

Key learning point of the lecture

-Understanding the effect of the diagnosis of the disability on the interpersonal relationship between the members of the families involved in the care taking of the child.

-Introducing to different experiences and testimonies as to provide different scope of the disruption that can occurs.

-Providing tools and advice to help the families facing this situation.

Lecture summary

- The emotions felt when having a child with a disability are diverse and varied, some like anxiety for the future, shame, stress, grieving, pride is shared by the different members of the family

- The couple has to have a clear understanding of the expectation of each one, as to best prepare for the necessities that they will face. Helping them understand their emotions and share them is an important first step to a reconciliation.

- Grandparents can be a source of help for the parents giving them room to reorganize their family system and find a balance in the different interpersonal relations involved.

- Parents have to find a balance in their comportment toward their children and acknowledge that the sibling is also affected by the events.

Teaching methodology

Regarding the *teaching methodology*, it is relevant to mention that exercises used at the sessions are suggested and described in the part of the program produced by MANRA in major follows the interactivities of the hands-on or workshop sessions:

- suggested short hands-on activities, their evaluation and identifying possible modalities to conclude on their usefulness when working with parents;
- individual experiences and situation analysis to come to conclusions of possible usage to meet the parent particular needs; identifying experienced or possible situations when the conclusion or the activity might be helpful;
- a set of questions related to the content of the sessions (these are included into the session program and plans);
- lists of testimonies on examples and different skills, etc. to compare, analyse and reach a conclusion on their suitability for current situations and the needs of parents or children; these are concentrated in the assessment questionnaires;
- illustrate some important aspects that emerge when examining the impact of particular parent education examples in real-life contexts;
- comment the chosen video-clips, images, etc. that are selected for their essential message, such as apps, which are popular with children and less popular with parents; video clips that report features on social skills, etc.
- session participants had been asked to make their own personal contributions to the proposed exercises (especially valuable for observing the diversity of opinions, experiences and knowledge emerging from the group), which makes the collective learning process more enriching.

The sessions with the parents' educators held in Alzira are organized in three parts that mutually integrate with their specific methodological accents: active listening, emotional intelligence and normalization of a feeling.

The suggested activities should be related to *emotional interaction*, provide information on important parenting decisions, local strategies in a broader context, social skills, etc. Anyway, on the basis of the theoretical content and the activities proposed, participants should initiate a debate on the subject and thus reach their conclusions. The activities should inform the participants of the session by talking about the target issues to which they are addressed and trigger discussions.

Here are the illustrations (one for each part) of such activities that must be modified according to the specific needs of session participants in local areas and cultural settings.

Active listening

This is an important component of communication, unfortunately, it is seldom addressed in parent or parent educator education programs.

Parent educators can choose any of the suggested activities or do everything if there is enough time; it is also possible to suggest some activities for the autonomous termination of parents. Communication is successful if partners are good listeners. Very often a family communication fails

if the partners do not know how to listen to each other or stop the process of interaction without listening to each other's opinions, considerations, needs, etc.

Activity 1. The participants, visualizing the content on active listening, worked on the definition of the concept, how to learn how to show that you are listening (behaviour and body language), make sure that what they have told us has been understood (as for example, paraphrasing) and encouraging the speaker to share (nonjudgmental state of mind, open questions...). Participants commented on all these aspects, discussed with each other, and responded to the session's concluding questions about active listening to observe acquired skills and knowledge.

Some of the key aspects addressed during this part are: learning to listen as much as you speak, learning that listening is a sign of respect, learning by listening and thinking about what you can learn from your child or parent's educator; listening must be open, show interest in it and know the opinion of the speaker; learn to remain silent when your partner/ parent/ child speaks; demonstrate your perception of what is being said by all senses; exercise your creative force - listening creates us, we get our qualities by listening.

Emotional Intelligence

Activity 2. The participants, regarding the content on emotional intelligence, worked on the definition of the concept, the explanation of the emotional awareness term (emotional literacy, levels of awareness...) and the emotional validation.

Participants worked on all these concepts and content, discussed with each other, and responded to the session's concluding questions about active listening to observe acquired skills and knowledge.

Normalizing a feeling

Activity 3. The groups of learners, regarding the content about learning how to normalize a feeling, worked on the definition of the concept, the explanation of perspective and perception (reframing the situation) and empathy (using a video explaining the concept of empathy).

Participants worked also on all these concepts and content, discussed with each other, and responded to the session's concluding questions about active listening to observe acquired skills and knowledge.

At the end of the reading of the contents and the realization of the proposed exercises, as well as those presented in the subject of Family Disruption and the deepening of testimonies, the participants evaluate their acquired social skills, make conclusions and then discuss in groups.

Notes:

It is always useful if the educators who conduct such classes have extra exercises to change for the more appropriate ones or for those that better fit the context or participants need etc.

Time allocated for each activity depends on the program planning and time allocated for each session.

Practical issues for social educators

The training course organized by Mancomunidad de la Ribera Alta, in the chapter on *Emotional and Social Skills: Emotional Interaction and Family Disruption*, within the framework of the ESEC project, provides a whole series of practical issues or notions to social educators with the aim of learning how to articulate the educational task with the families that are in these circumstances.

It is a series of skills that train the social education professional to subsequently be able to apply that knowledge by working with families and thereby promote the acquisition of behaviors, strategies and knowledge that allow parents to interact with their children and develop these skills to learn to handle situations of stress and conflict with children.

As to extend the capacity of a social educator facing the situation of a family having a child with a disability, the course proposes different tools to be taught, that enhance the capacity of communication and emotional interaction.

This program is useful for the special / social educator:

- To control the emotions felt in the case of an outburst from emotional parents.
- To create a safe space from judgements and a relation of trust and confidence with the parents.
- To understand the emotions felt by the parents in their situation and be able to respond to it with empathy
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Practical issues for parents

The training course organized by Mancomunidad de la Ribera Alta, in the chapter on *Emotional and Social Skills: Emotional Interaction and Family Disruption*, within the framework of the ESEC project, provides a whole series of practical issues or notions to the parents with the aim of learning how to manage the educational task with their children by providing them with the correct strategies to develop emotional interaction and control situations of family disruption.

Consequently, the training provides families with a set of knowledge, through testimonies, experiences and personal experiences on these situations that invite them to reflect, to rethink their children's education from another point of view (understanding emotions) and with it to develop new educational guidelines suitable for managing behavioral difficulties, the facing of the situation and a continuity or follow-up regarding the application of these emotional and social skills within the development of one's family dynamics.

This program is useful to be taught to the parents:

- To understand the emotions felt during the various stage of acceptance
- To control their emotions in case of outburst or overwhelming situation
- To reestablish a communication with their partner (or an another member of the family) on a base of sharing in a non-judgmental space and understand that his/her experience may vary from the another member of the family

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