



Erasmus+ project “Extending Social Educators Competences”
ESEC Project Nr. 2018-1-PL01-KA204-051126

HANDBOOK REPORT:

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



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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.



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1. 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



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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).



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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 means to normalize a feeling. Normalizing is when emotions are diffused or reframed in a more acceptable manner to preserve the status quo. This technique focus 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*.



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2. 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



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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.



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-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.

3. 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

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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.



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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.



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4. 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

5. 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



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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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Normalizing feelings

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