CHAPTER 9

Parent support

9.1. The role of parents in the development of emotional intelligence

The family represents the first "social laboratory", in which the individual experiences his/ her first relationships with the social world and tests his/ her first social skills. All the things learnt about relationships during the childhood within the family environment will further be implemented and tested with the peers, with other adults, with romantic partners etc. But not all that we learn in the family works in the "outside social world" and not all that is functional will function right away. Most often than not the process of acquiring social skills is a sinuous one and scattered with heavy and sometimes painful emotional experiences and it requires repetitions and fine tuning throughout childhood, with the ability to understand and manage emotions playing a crucial part in this process.

Emotions may be roughly defined as inner responses which reflect our state in relation to a situation or a stimulus. Emotions are tri-dimensional, as they have three distinct components: a subjective experience, a physiological reaction and a behavioural response. According to the resemblance between emotions of different people in similar situations, we have managed to label them and categorize them, but they essentially remain personal and subjective. Still, we are able to recognize our own emotions due to the physiological clues we get from our body while feeling a certain emotion and, at the same time, we are able to recognize the other people's emotions, by processing their behavioural reactions.

Emotions are numerous, multifaceted and complex – some authors state that there are up to 28 distinct emotions, while others speak about thousands of distinguishable emotions. Either way, children are not able to identify and categorize them without help; they need guidance in recognizing and managing them on their own, just like we normally do when trying to teach them how to read and write.

Today we know that in order to live an emotionally satisfying life, it is essential to understand which emotion is showing up and it is helpful to recognize which one is showing up fully, for both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Recognizing and addressing emotions in children is essential for their emotional development and well-being and parents are the most appropriate persons to do that, as they are the ones spending the most amount of time around their children and witnessing their emotions and contexts.

Recognizing and managing our own emotions helps us better understand the way we function and guides us towards inner self-regulating and behavioural adaptation processes which are beneficial on both psychological level and social level. Managing emotions does not mean controlling, repressing or masking them, but recognizing emotions and making sure that the resulting actions are appropriate to the situation.

The family is a system of members and relationships which function together as a whole, just like the components of a bicycle – any piece is important for the full functioning and if just one piece will change shape or place or the way it functions, then the whole system will be affected. Thus, it is not hard to guess that the emotional exchanges in a family are influenced by any of its members, even in situations in which those are not directly targeted by the actual communication. In this context, the ability to effectively manage emotions is of crucial importance for the well-being of all well-functioning of the whole family.

Emotional management is a component of the wider concept of emotional intelligence, which has been put on the map of psychological development by Daniel Goleman (1995) and has been since tackled by many other researchers and practitioners alike.

While emotional management is a lifelong journey, its roots are firmly established during childhood and the parents have a pivotal role in nurturing their children's emotional capacities and providing them with the tools to navigate effectively the complex landscape of emotions.

Regarding the parents' role in emotional management and its impact on child

CHAPTER 9

development, research in various fields, including psychology, neuroscience and sociology, provides valuable insights into this crucial aspect of parenting. A recent interesting study pointed out that parental emotional regulation significantly influences the way children cope with emotions, as they learn to emotional modelling (Edvoll et. Al, 2023), thus parents who model healthy emotional regulation behaviours tend to have children who are better at managing their own emotions.

Also, the attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby, emphasizes the importance of secure attachments between parents and children. Research conducted by Mary Ainsworth (1965, 1978) has shown that children with secure attachments to their caregivers are more likely to develop better emotional regulation skills.

Recent advances in neuroscience have revealed that brain development is highly impacted by early experiences and research suggests that nurturing and emotionally supportive parenting can have a positive influence on the brain, particularly in areas related to emotion regulation. Conversely, adverse childhood experiences, such as neglect or abuse, can have long-lasting negative effects on emotional management.

Science has established five main foundations on which emotional management relies on and all of them are related to the ways that parents act and choose to educate:

1. **Emotional modelling.** Children learn by observing the behaviour of those around them, primarily their parents. Parents serve as emotional role models for their children. When parents display healthy emotional management, children are more likely to emulate these behaviours. Conversely, parents who struggle with emotional regulation may inadvertently pass on these challenges to their children.

2. **Emotional validation.** Validating a child's emotions is essential. Parents should create an environment where their children feel safe expressing their feelings without judgement. By acknowledging a child's emotions and discussing them openly, parents help their children understand and accept their feelings, reducing the likelihood of emotional suppression or denial.

3. **Teaching emotion regulation.** Parents play a crucial role in teaching children how to regulate their emotions effectively. This involves strategies such as deep breathing, mindfulness and problem-solving. By imparting these skills, parents empower their children to cope with challenging emotions in a constructive way.

4. **Empathy and understanding.** Empathy, the ability to understand and share another person's feelings, is a core component of emotional intelligence. Parents can cultivate empathy in their children by listening actively, asking open-ended questions and encouraging their children to consider how others might feel in different situations.

5. **Conflict resolution.** Conflict is a natural part of life and parents can teach their children valuable conflict resolution skills. By demonstrating healthy communication and problem-solving during family conflicts, parents equip their children with essential tools to navigate disagreements in their own lives.

The role of parents in shaping their children's emotional management skills extends beyond childhood. As children grow into adults, the emotional foundation laid by their parents influences their ability to thrive in various aspects of life. Individuals with high emotional management capacities are often more resilient in the face of adversity, better building and maintaining healthy relationships and more effective in their careers. Thus, the role of parents in emotional management is a crucial and enduring one with profound implications for the overall development and happiness of their children.

CHAPTER 9

9.2. The parents are the change they wish to see in their family universe

Parenting is a complex and multifaceted journey which extends far beyond the basics of providing care and sustenance. It involves shaping a child's character, values and emotional intelligence. Among the various elements of effective parenting, the concept of parental emotional modelling stands out as a fundamental and powerful force in a child's development and emotional well-being.

Parental emotional modelling refers to the process by which parents demonstrate and express their own emotions in front of their children. Children are astute observers and they learn how to understand and manage their own emotions by observing how their parents navigate theirs. This modelling can encompass a wide range of emotions, from happiness and excitement to frustration, anger and sadness.

The influence of parental emotional modelling is present on multiple levels regarding the emotions' disassembly:

- **emotional awareness** - children learn to recognize and name emotions by watching their parents; when parents openly express their feelings and label them (e.g. I'm feeling frustrated right now), children are more likely to develop a rich emotional vocabulary and an awareness of their own emotional states;
- **emotional expression** - parents serve as role models for how emotions can be expressed and managed; children who witness parents handling their emotions constructively are more likely to adopt healthy emotional expression patterns themselves; conversely, children who observe parents suppressing or explosively expressing their emotions may struggle to find effective ways to cope;
- **emotion regulation** - parental emotional modelling also plays a significant role in teaching children how to regulate their emotions; when parents demonstrate strategies for coping with stress or managing anger calmly, children

internalize these techniques, enhancing their own emotional regulation skills;

- **empathy and understanding** - witnessing how parents react to other's emotions can foster empathy in children; when parents show compassion and understanding towards each other's feelings, children learn the importance of empathy and how to offer support to others in times of emotional need;
- **conflict resolution** - parents often model conflict resolution skills when they navigate disagreements or conflicts with their family; children who observe parents addressing conflicts respectfully and finding mutually satisfactory solutions are more likely to emulate these problem-solving approaches in their own relationships.

Drawing from these lines of influence, children who grow up in an emotionally expressive and supportive environment tend to have higher emotional intelligence, better mental health and healthier relationships in adulthood. They are more likely to navigate the complexities of life with resilience and empathy, both in personal and professional settings.

In order to provide a healthy and constructive personal emotional model, parents should focus on the following key aspects:

- ✓ *self-awareness* - parents must first develop their own self-awareness by understanding their emotions, triggers and patterns of emotional expression and this involves recognizing and acknowledging their feelings, both positive and negative; self-awareness is the foundation of effective emotional modelling;
- ✓ *emotional regulation* - parents should demonstrate healthy ways of managing their emotions and this includes techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness and positive self-talk;
- ✓ *emotion expression* - parents should encourage open and honest emotional expression within the family and should feel comfortable discussing their feelings and, when appropriate, sharing them with their children; this helps children see that it's normal and healthy to express a wide range of emotions;
- ✓ *showing empathy* - parents should show empathy towards others, including their

children; when children are upset, the parents are supposed to acknowledge their feelings and validate their experiences and this practice teaches children the importance of understanding and supporting others' emotions;

✓ *resolving conflicts effectively* - modelling effective conflict resolution within the family includes listening actively, using "I" statements to express feelings and seeking mutually beneficial solutions; demonstrating respectful communication during disagreements sets a positive example for children;

✓ *self-care* - parents are supposed to highlight the importance of self-care and should prioritize their physical and emotional well-being, thus showing children that taking care of oneself is essential for maintaining a healthy emotional balance;

✓ *seeking help when needed* - it's important for parents to acknowledge when they need help with their own emotional challenges; seeking therapy or counselling when necessary sets a valuable example that seeking support is a healthy way to address emotional difficulties;

✓ *consistency* - is crucial in emotional modelling, as children learn from repeated behaviours and observations over time; therefore, parents should strive to maintain a consistent and positive emotional model in their daily lives;

✓ *teaching coping strategies* - parents should actively teach their children coping strategies for handling difficult emotions, by explaining how they manage their emotions and involve kids in age-appropriate practices; this helps children develop their emotional toolkit;

✓ *communication* - parents should foster open and effective communication within the family and encourage their children to ask questions about emotions and provide age-appropriate explanations; parents are supposed to create a safe space where their children can freely discuss their feelings.

Parental emotional modelling is a powerful and enduring force in child development. Parents who recognize their role as emotional models have the opportunity to shape their children's emotional intelligence and well-being positively. By focusing on their own behaviour first, parents can create an emotionally nurturing environment that empowers their children to develop essential tools for a successful and fulfilling life. Recognizing the significance of parental emotional modelling underscores the importance of cultivating emotionally healthy households that promote the emotional growth and resilience of the next generation.

Even though parents play a crucial role in the development of emotional intelligence, they should not be blamed or shamed if they sometimes fail to play their part in a constructive way. Bear in mind that parents want the best for their children and the decisions they take are meant to protect and nurture and even though sometimes overprotecting and pushing too hard for development in a certain direction might bring more harm than progress, they do not act like than on purpose. Parents are humans too, and sometimes they make mistakes, but they may be helped to find their track, by providing them correct information and access to specialised support for parenting and personal development.

9.3. Tools for parents who wish to raise emotional intelligent children

The parents' main tasks when helping their children recognize their emotions are to help them differentiate between the wide range of emotions experienced and to legitimize all emotions.

In order to efficiently solve the first task and help children differentiate between emotions, the parents may follow the next steps:

- **Observe the nonverbal cues.** Most of the times, children are not expressing their feelings verbally, because they are not capable to, but that doesn't mean that they do not feel emotions. Thus, parents should pay attention to their body language, facial expressions and tone of voice. These nonverbal cues can provide valuable insights into the children's emotions.

CHAPTER 9

- **Ask open-end questions.** By asking questions that require more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer, parents will encourage open communication and may found out more about the inner context of the child. For example, parents may ask: "How are you feeling today?" or "Can you tell me what's been bothering you?" or "What has been the highlight of your day?".

- **Make use of active listening techniques.** When a child does express their emotions, listen attentively without interrupting or immediately offering solutions. Show empathy and understanding by saying things like: "I see that you're feeling sad. Can you tell me more about why you feel this way?".

- **Label emotions.** Help children identify and name their emotions. Use simple language and age-appropriate terms. For example: "It looks like you're feeling frustrated because you couldn't solve that puzzle."

- **Use visual aids.** Younger children, especially, may benefit from visual aids like emotion cards or charts with faces displaying different emotions. This can help them associate feelings with specific expressions.

In order to contribute to dignifying and legitimizing all emotions, parents may choose to act as following:

- **Normalize emotions.** Let children know that all emotions are valid and a normal part of being human. Avoid judgment or shaming for expressing emotions, even if those emotions are negative.

- **Use personal examples.** Parents may find similar situation in their own lives in which they have felt in a similar way, especially for vulnerable or negative emotions. In this way, the children will understand that feelings are not shameful and they should allow themselves to feel them.

- **Read books and stories.** Reading books and stories that focus on emotions can be a helpful way to introduce and discuss different feelings. Ask questions about the characters' emotions to engage in conversations about emotions.

- **Teach coping strategies.** Once emotions are identified, teach children healthy ways to cope with them. Encourage deep breathing, taking a break or engaging in a calming activity like drawing or journaling. These practices will draw with themselves the conclusion that emotions are to be experienced, the only thing needed managing is how to express them in a proper and non-harmful way.

- **Model emotional expression.** It has pointed out before how children learn a lot by watching adults. Be a positive role model by expressing your own emotions in a healthy and constructive way. This can help children learn how to manage their feelings.

- **Create a safe environment.** Ensure that children feel safe and comfortable discussing their emotions with you. Foster an environment where they know they won't be judged or punished for sharing their feelings.

Remember that helping children recognize and name their emotions is a lifelong process. Encouraging open and honest communication about feelings can contribute to their emotional intelligence and overall well-being. If children consistently struggle with managing their emotions, if they exhibit extreme emotional reactions or if you're concerned about their mental health, consider seeking guidance from a child psychologist or counsellor.

Emotional intelligence does not mean people only feel happiness and satisfaction or just positive emotions! Being emotionally intelligent means that one is able to regulate all negative emotions and prevent those to disturb one's emotional balance.

9.4. Workshop plans

Introductory workshop

WORKSHOP 1
Title/ topic: ➢ Why parents should wish for emotional intelligent children and how to achieve that?
Expected results: by participating at this activity, the parents will: ➢ learn about the concept of emotional intelligence and its components; ➢ be aware of their role in developing their children's emotional intelligence; ➢ be able to apply tools and techniques in order to recognize and manage their own emotions; ➢ be able to apply tools and techniques in order to support their children to recognize and manage their own emotions; ➢ feel motivated to engage in educational strategies and measures in order to develop their children's emotional intelligence.
Preparation: ➢ The trainer should choose a spacious room in which the space may be easily reorganized and the participants may to sit in a circle, so they may see each other. ➢ The trainer welcomes the participants, introduces himself/ herself and asks the workshop participants to do the same. ➢ The trainer asks the group of parents to share how they feel in the present moment and writes down the names of different emotions on the flipchart. The variability of the emotions will be the starting point of the workshop. **Resources:** ➢ whiteboard/ flipchart sheets and markers; ➢ sticky notes, A4 sheets; ➢ pens/ pencils; ➢ video-projector, laptop.
Main activity: ➢ The trainer will make a short presentation about human emotions and about the concept of emotional intelligence, pointing out the need of developing this skill in children and the role of the parents in this endeavour. ➢ He/ she asks the participants to write down on a sticky note their biggest fear as a parent (the notes will be anonymous). Then the trainer asks them to stick the notes on a flipchart sheet or on a wall and read them out loud, before addressing them by pointing out how common some fears are, how love for somebody makes us fearful of not losing that person etc. ➢ The trainer opens ups a discussion by asking the participants to share how they cope with their fears as parents. Their solutions will be written down on the flipchart. The trainer discusses each solution and points out the need of being self-aware and self-empowered before tackling the development of the children's emotional intelligence. ➢ The group will be divided in pairs and the participants are asked to share with their partners a current difficulty that they have with their children and how they address it. The partner should also share a point of view and a solution that he/ she might

apply if he/ she would have the same difficulty. Then they should switch roles. After completing this phase of the exercise, each pair will join another (thus forming groups of four) and share ideas about approaching difficulties with children. The groups of four will then summarize their discussion and share their conclusions with the big group (it may be orally or in a written form - on a flipchart sheet).

➤ The trainer summarizes all conclusions and points out the importance of communication as a tool to identify solutions and to empower.

➤ The parents are then asked to write a note to themselves on a sticky note, by completing the phrase: "I am a good parent, because…"

Reflection/ discussion/ tasks for the following period:

➤ The trainer will ask the participants to imagine there is a big basket in the middle of the room and they should put in there one important idea they leave the workshop with (it may also be one word reflecting their experience or what they have learnt).

➤ The trainer will wrap up the session by offering a motivational message in order to inspire parents to act as emotional intelligence developers for them and their children.

➤ Keeping a journal of emotions, of meaningful experiences with their children and of important insights regarding the development of emotional intelligence might also be an inspiring and motivating task for the parents, while it provides documentation of their trials, errors and successes in guiding the development of their children and may constitute topics for further workshops and discussions.

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SELF-AWARENESS

WORKSHOP 2
Title/ topic: ➢ Self-awareness – the role of parents in indentifying children's emotions
Expected results: by participating at this activity, the parents will: ➢ get familiar with the concept of emotional intelligence and its four dimensions;   ➢ get familiar with the world of emotions and their role in human life;   ➢ understand the specificity of emotional development in children;   ➢ be able to support the children in recognizing their emotions.
Preparation: ➢ The trainer welcomes the participants.   ➢ The trainer presents the thematic range of the parent workshops and the content of the current workshop.   **Resources:**   ➢ whiteboard/ flipchart sheets and markers;   ➢ sticky notes, A4 sheets;   ➢ pens/ pencils;   ➢ video-projector, laptop.
Main activity: ➢ The trainer conducts a mini-lecture on the concept of emotional intelligence and its four dimensions/ components.   ➢ The trainer presents a definition of emotions, then divides the participants into groups consisting of 2-3 persons and distributes sticky notes asking them to write down the emotions expressed by their children – one emotion on one note. Then the participants read the names of the emotions and stick the notes to the board – creating a spectrum of emotions. The trainer supplements other emotions that the participants have not mentioned.   ➢ It is important that the following basic emotions are indicated: joy, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, shame and disgust. The following may be evoked: Robert Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions or the Feelings Wheel designed by Kaitlin Robbs.   ➢ The trainer gives a mini lecture on how the emotions are formed – neuro-mechanics of emotions, cortical and subcortical brain structures responsible for the formation of emotions. Then, in a discussion with participants, the trainer defines the role of basic emotions in human life.   ➢ It is important to emphasize that emotions arise automatically and that they constitute reactions to what we experience – they quickly provide us with information. It should be stressed that emotions cannot be classified as bad or good, even though some are more pleasant while others are unpleasant, and that every emotion is important - e.g. anger informs about the violation of our boundaries; sadness informs us that we have lost something that is important to us, allows us to rest and receive support; anxiety/ fear protects us from danger; shame informs us that we have transgressed

some norms; joy informs us of a sense of accomplishment and happiness, gives us a lot of energy and brings us closer to other people.

➤ The trainer gives a mini lecture on the emotional development in childhood, focusing on the children aged 6-10 years old. The children at this age face one of the biggest challenges encountered so far: going to school. They need to adapt to the school tasks, to the new rhythm of learning efforts and to the new social demands that arise in the school environment. During this period, it is very important for the children to understand that their parents are on the same team as they are (often, children feel that parents side with the teachers against them) and offer they full support.

➤ The trainer divides the participants into groups of four. Each group receives a large flipchart paper sheet and it is asked to discuss the parents' role in supporting the children in recognizing and naming the experienced emotions and to write their ideas down. Next, each group presents their findings to all the participants. The trainer should point out the important ideas for parents to keep in mind, completing the presentations of the workgroups with relevant information.

➤ At the end of the workshop, the trainer invites participants to a debriefing round: thoughts and reflections that accompany participants after this workshop.

Reflection/ discussion/ tasks for the following period:

➤ The trainer suggests the use of an Emotion Log: work with the child to create a map of his/ her emotions. There will be a separate page dedicated for each day of exercise – half of the page should be filled with situations and emotions experienced by the child and the other half by the emotions that the parent recognised in their child at that time. At the end of each day, the parent and the child should talk about the emotions felt by the child on that day and compare their observations. The parent will be the one completing the Emotions Log, which may be kept for a dozen days or so.

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SELF-MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 9

WORKSHOP 3
Title/ topic: ➢ Self-management – helping parents gain insight on their children's self-management skills
Expected results: by participating at this activity, the parents will: ➢ understand the specifics of self-management during childhood; ➢ be aware of the importance of them being role models for their children; ➢ be able to support the children in recognising and managing their emotions.
Preparation: ➢ The trainer welcomes the participants. ➢ The trainer discusses the thematic range of the parent workshops and details the topic for the current workshop. **Resources:** ➢ worksheet "Emotion regulation for adults" (see annex at page 146); ➢ whiteboard/ flipchart sheets and markers; ➢ sticky notes, A4 sheets; ➢ pens/ pencils; ➢ video-projector, laptop.
Main activity: ➢ The trainer reiterates Daniel Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence and describes its four dimensions, focusing especially on the concept of self-management in childhood. ➢ It will be useful for the trainer to touch upon the emotional difficulties children face during their first years of school, as well as the challenges adults around them face during that period as well. Children at this age are not fully equipped with self-management skills, because they can't always recognize their emotions or even if they do, they don't know how to deal with them in order to regulate them. ➢ The trainer can outline some basic self-management skills achievable in childhood: monitoring rules (e.g. of a game), keeping focus on a task (e.g. counting forward/ backward, colouring), monitoring time (e.g. keep a log of their activities and how long they last), setting goals and monitoring them (e.g. something they wish to learn), delaying gratification (e.g. saving a candy for later), delaying action/ controlling impulses (e.g. waiting a minute before acting, waiting 10 seconds before saying something) etc. ➢ Then, the parents, individually or in groups, write down on the sticky notes the respective self-management skills they have noticed in their children – or the lack thereof (meaning that deficits should be brought up and discussed as well). ➢ It would be good to follow up this exercise with a short discussion on how the parents handle these skills or lack thereof (e.g. do they praise their children for successes and desired skills? Do they only focus on the problems? How do they try to help their children in developing or furthering their self-management skills?).

CHAPTER 9

- ➢ The trainer hands out the worksheet "Emotion regulation for adults" and invites participants to think of a situation where they had to handle their own emotions and fill in the questions individually. This exercise aims to help them reflect on their own behaviour and self-management skills. A short discussion about what was written down can then follow (e.g. finding common behaviours or reactions, discussing best ways to handle difficult situations etc.).
- ➢ It is important to emphasise that this exercise might bring forth some difficult emotions for the parents themselves, and that, if someone doesn't want to share what they have written down, they are not obliged to. It is also important for the trainer to remind everyone not to judge their peers, but to exercise openness and understanding among each other.
- ➢ The trainer then briefly touches upon the subject of modelling as an important parenting tool. On the basis of their vulnerability, all children tend to look up to the others around them and to copy the behaviours they see. Thus, it is easier to lead children towards development through coherent behaviour rather than through preaching.
- ➢ The trainer then divides participants into groups. Each group is given a large sheet of flipchart paper and should discuss and write down ideas about how can parents help their children enhance their self-management skills and regulate their emotions. Each group then presents their findings to the forum. The trainer can add concrete strategies that haven't been mentioned.
- ➢ At the end of the workshop, the trainer invites participants to a debriefing round: participants should reflect on how they feel after today's workshop, what they learnt, what stuck out the most.

Reflection/ discussion/ tasks for the following period:

- ➢ Prompted by the ideas and discussions about self-management strategies to help their children boost their self-management skills, parents are encouraged to pick out one or more that they believe would work for them and their children and put it into action at home. Such strategies could be:
  - o inviting children to delay their actions or gratifications;
  - o suggesting games in which children may practice their impulse control or the capacity to monitor rules;
  - o helping children make a "to-do" list/ a schedule, in order to help them set goals and monitor time;
  - o offering children the opportunity to share their emotions, to understand and discuss them;
  - o prompting the children to remain focused despite the storms of emotions and leading them through self-analysis and introspection with the help of questions;
  - o setting up a daily affirmations jar, in order to help their children start their days on a good note and feel supported etc.

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EMOTION REGULATION FOR ADULTS

This worksheet is designed to help you recognize your emotions. Using an example in your life, complete the following worksheet and practice analyzing your emotions from the situation.

What happened?

_____
_____

Why did this situation happen?

_____
_____

How did you feel, both physically and emotionally?

_____
_____

What thoughts did you have in that moments?

_____
_____

How did you want to react to this situation?

_____
_____

How did you react?

_____
_____

Was it clear from your reactions for the people around you how you felt and what you thought?

_____
_____

How did your emotions and actions affect you later?

_____
_____

PART 2

SELF-MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 9
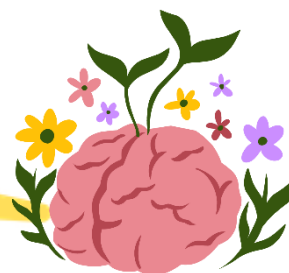
SOCIAL AWARENESS

WORKSHOP 4
Title/ topic: ➢ Social awareness - how to help children develop it

Expected results: by participating at this activity, the parents will:

➢ learn the basics about the concept of social awareness;
➢ be aware of their social environment and learn how to use it as an example and learning tool to train children's social awareness;
➢ get ideas for fostering social awareness at home.

Preparation:

➢ The trainer welcomes the participants.
➢ The trainer discusses the thematic range of the parent workshops and details the topic for the current workshop.
➢ It may be useful to recap the sequence of work and spend a few minutes on the previous content, namely the concepts of self-awareness and self-management.

Resources:

➢ whiteboard/ flipchart sheets and markers;
➢ sticky notes, A4 sheets;
➢ pens/ pencils;
➢ video-projector, laptop.

Main activity:

➢ The trainer explains the concept of social awareness.
➢ Before specifying the concept of social awareness in detail, the trainer will stimulate the group of parents to share on the possible meaning of the term *social awareness*. It might be helpful to ask a parent to come and take some notes on the board of what is being said in the attempts of defining social awareness.
➢ Once there has been some sharing, the reference definition is proposed: the ability to accurately notice the emotions of others and "read" situations appropriately. It is about sensing what other people are thinking and feeling, about being able to take their perspective and using one own capacity for empathy; it is the ability to sense, understand and react to the emotions of others within social situations.
➢ The trainer asks the group if the definition expands what they shared and if there is anything that strikes them. If there is an atmosphere of trust created within the group, which favours sharing experiences, the trainer may try to bring up the situation of the parent who has been previously invited to write on the whiteboard/ flipchart and ask how he/ she felt and how the group thinks he/ she felt.
➢ Alternatively, the trainer may prepare a photocopy of the definition and ask one person from the group to stand up and come in front of the room and read it in front of everyone. Then, the trainer may use the reader's experience to stimulate the group of parents to ask how that person felt.
➢ In any case, the core idea of this task is to let the group experience there and then the theoretical concept of social awareness.

➢ Empathy is the key to understanding social situations. The trainer will make the theoretical transition from social awareness to empathy – the latter being the ability to put ourselves in the other's shoes, to think and feel "as if" we were the other person. The trainer points out the usefulness and importance of this skill in all contexts, private and professional (e.g. in a couple, in sports, in business etc.).

➢ The trainer asks the group to share a few examples of situations in which participants used empathy to connect to other people or in which they noticed that another person used empathic skills to connect to them.

➢ The trainer divides the group in pairs, favouring pairing with strangers/ people one has never interacted before. The participants are asked to take turns in telling each other in 3-5 minutes about a movie, TV series or book they read, stressing the parts that had the biggest emotional impact on them. The listener may ask questions to get more details on the aspects he/ she thinks are more important. After the narrator has finished, the listener will expose what he/ she thinks were the predominant emotions that the narrator experienced (for example, he/ she may start by saying "If I listened well...."). After both persons in the pairs have been both narrators and listeners, the participants may share a few reflections regarding their experiences with the whole group.

➢ The trainer should stress the idea that it is important to pay attention not only to the content or the events in a certain situation, but also to the emotional experiences of the participants and, in order to do that, one needs to recollect and connect with his/ her own similar past experiences.

➢ The next sequence of the workshop focuses on using empathy to connect with children's emotions. The trainer will present a selection of short videos with children in different situations (they may include sound or not) and then asks the participants (in a frontal manner or in workgroups) to state what is each child feeling, thinking, needing in that particular moment.

➢ Further on, the trainer will explain the particularities of children's emotions and that emotional manifestations are messages, directed to oneself and/ or to the others, about how that person is in a certain moment. Understanding emotions means understanding personal needs and actions and acting accordingly. Empathy has to do less with certain words and more with attuning to one another and feeling together. If considered appropriate, the trainer may lead the discussion towards healthy and unhealthy reactions in certain situations involving emotions.

Reflection/ discussion/ tasks for the following period:

➢ At the end of the workshop, the trainer invites the participants to share what they take home from the session.

➢ Also, the trainer might divide the group in small workgroups again and have the small groups discuss what they have learnt and what they think they will apply onwards and write the conclusions of these reflections on a flipchart sheet.

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RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

WORKSHOP 5
Title/ topic: ➢ Relationship management – a pathway to success
Expected results: by participating at this activity, the parents will: ➢ be able to communicate effectively verbally and non-verbally;   ➢ enhance their ability to take decisions in groups;   ➢ improve their negotiation skills.
Preparation: ➢ The trainer welcomes the participants.   ➢ The trainer discusses the thematic range of the parent workshops and details the topic for the current workshop.   ➢ It will be useful to make use of a spacious room and have the chairs arranged in a circular setting, so that the participants may face each other.   **Resources:**   ➢ whiteboard/ flipchart sheets and markers;   ➢ sticky notes, A4 sheets;   ➢ pens/ pencils;   ➢ video-projector, laptop;   ➢ oranges.
Main activity: ➢ The trainer explains that communication and cooperation skills, as well as caring and tolerance attitudes are key characteristics in order to initiate and maintain functional relationships at any age. Also, these skills and attitudes play an important part in building the children's confidence that their contribution matters and that they can make a difference in their life and their community.   ➢ The trainer divides the group in small workgroups and invites the participants to brainstorming as many ideas as they can about how to involve children in activities in which they might learn how to take care of others. All the ideas will be written down on flipchart sheets and presented to the group. The trainer will summarize the ideas and will point out the most efficient or the most innovative ones.   ➢ The trainer explains the principles of attachment and the importance of feeling safe for the overall development of a child and especially towards structuring strong cooperation, communication and decision making skills.   ➢ Further on, the trainer divides the group in pairs and invites them to play the "orange exercise". Each pair receives an orange and the partners should argument their right to possess the orange. They are encouraged to be as creative as they can and to take a decision about who should own the orange in a given amount of time (10-15 minutes). For more complexity, the participants may be told that they are not allowed to divide the orange among them. At the end of the exercise, a quick overview of the participants' experience during this exercise is done, while the trainer will point out the importance of negotiation skills. Negotiation is a process by which agreement is reached while avoiding conflict. However, having great negotiation skills is not just

about one's ability to win an argument. In fact, successful negotiation helps people build stronger relationships with others and, therefore, improve their emotional intelligence. Negotiation fosters goodwill despite a difference in interests and teaches people to respect the concerns of all sides in a conflict. It also helps avoid future conflicts by leaving both parties equally satisfied, with no barriers to communication.

➢ The trainer will divide the group into small groups of 4-5 people. Each group needs to create a short text about a certain topic (e.g. a story inspired from the animal world on how to explain to children the importance of cooperation; a creative recipe for teamwork; a poem about the importance of diplomacy and politeness) that they will share with the other groups at the end. The idea of the exercise is to employ various communication skills and create a collaborative experience in order to inspire the participants to teach communication and cooperation at home. At the end of the activity, after all the texts have been presented, the trainer will invite participants to share their experience of working in the small group, by asking about their feelings, their thoughts, their impressions regarding what was easy or difficult, the way they have organized their task, what can they apply etc.

➢ Alternatively, the task for each group can be to come up with four words describing a particular topic (e.g. illustrated in a picture). Then, two groups would combine and their task would be to reach an agreement on which four words to use. This exercise will help them see that, although a common view is not usually present at the beginning of a task, it can be created if all parties work together. At the end of the activity, after all the words have been presented, the trainer will invite participants to share their experience of working in the small group, by asking about their feelings, their thoughts, their impressions regarding what was easy or difficult, the way they have organized their task, what can they apply etc.

➢ The final activity is focused on decision making. The trainer reads out loud pairs of similar or complementary objects and the participants need to decide individually which object they would like to be (e.g. *Would you be a hammer or a nail? A mouse or a cat? A potato or a tomato? A door or a window? A house or a yard? A bridge or a wall?*). In each round, the trainer will invite a few participants to share and explain their choices.

Reflection/ discussion/ tasks for the following period:

➢ At the end of the workshop, the trainer gives the participants the opportunity to share impressions, lessons learnt from the workshops and what they think they will apply at home – individually or in small groups, orally or in writing, on post its or flipchart sheets.

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