From protection to inclusion

A handbook for teachers on children in alternative care and adopted children

BRIGHTER FUTURE
Innovative tools for developing full potential after early adversity

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affords every child the right to "a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development" (Art. 27) and requires that parents or those responsible for the child "secure, within their abilities and financial capabilities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development". When, for whatever reason, parents find themselves unable to fulfill these obligations, states are responsible for ensuring such care in situations where children are "temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment" (Art. 20). After assessing the situation, such children are provided with an alternative care solution until they can return to their family, either in a foster family or in a residential facility. When return to the family will not be possible, adoption may also be considered as a permanent solution.

Besides having experienced separation from their first parental figures, many of these children have faced other forms of early adversity, such as abuse, neglect, institutionalisation or negative prenatal experiences (e.g. exposure to alcohol, other toxins or the mother's stress). Such adversity may have affected their development on several levels, including emotional skills, cognitive processes, and the ability to make sense of their life experiences and arrive at a positive sense of themselves.

Without specific training, educators may have difficulty understanding the needs and behaviour of these children, a misunderstanding that can lead to inaccurate "labels" and ineffective strategies. Some commonly applied educational strategies or well-intentioned comments that do not take into account the diversity of life experiences and personal circumstances may end up being insensitive, exclusionary, or discriminatory.

This handbook has been produced by "BRIGHTER FUTURE: Developing innovative tools for developing full potential after early

adversity", an Erasmus+ funded program whose international team gathered with the aim of putting actionable information and useful tools directly into the hands of teachers. The handbook is designed to assist teachers in acknowledging how different life trajectories and experiences at early stages shape children's development, and how school serves a unique place from which to overcome the potential negative impact of difficult experiences in the early stages of life.

We aim to provide teachers and school staff with information and practical strategies to create a welcoming environment for all children in school, regardless of their family experiences and life trajectories. Obviously, this is not just the teachers' task. While the expertise of educators in interacting with pupils and parents is certainly an essential factor, it is also important to recognise that inclusion is the result of institutional and systemic efforts rather than a teacher's individual skills and personal qualities. Children and parents in the school environment are required to fill in forms, take part in collective moments, and meet different staff. It is important to ensure that in these moments each child, including their familial ties and kinships, is seen, recognised, and valued. Moreover, the right to effective education requires institutional action to ensure that school staff is trained to understand the special needs resulting from early adversity.

This handbook is not intended to, and cannot, replace that. Instead, in its pages, teachers and educators will find practical information and recommendations, some of which they likely already apply in their professional work. In order to support that work, we have compiled the strategies that, according to our collective experience, are the most effective.

The first part of the handbook focuses on how early adversity can impact a child's development and the potential challenges arising from it. Such challenges can include understanding the needs behind what can be seen as difficult or undisciplined behaviour, or how adults may have to deal with their own difficult feelings in order to provide the appropriate support. Then we move to practical strategies that can help teachers in their work with these children and teens. The final section is devoted to reflecting on how things like cultural myopia or lack of training can lead to exclusionary practices, however unintended, and to providing tools useful not only to welcoming all children regardless of their life trajectory or living situation, but also to fostering values of inclusion, equity and mutual respect.

I. UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF EARLY ADVERSITY

An awareness of how early adverse experiences can affect human functioning is essential for teachers. Such awareness is crucial to helping educators develop sensitivity to the multiplicity and variety of the needs and the potential of any given cohort. Furthermore, being informed of the consequences of early adverse experiences provides tools to frame and correctly interpret the way some children behave or react. Just as it is fundamental to know about deafness in order to properly interact with the hearing impaired, so we need accurate and current information to allow us to frame emotional reactions that may otherwise be incomprehensible or misunderstood.

Children and adults alike learn to react and shape our behaviour and thoughts from experience. In ideal circumstances, children express their needs and have those needs consistently met by their primary caregivers. This, repeated many times per day, along with the caregiver's other nurturing behaviours (rocking, smiling, etc.), will give a child a secure foundation from which to explore the world. Through their relationships with their primary caregivers, they also learn how to manage their own emotional state and about the basis for building other meaningful relationships.

Young children who have not experienced adults as safe, predictable, and consistent in their care often internalise the idea that adults can't be trusted and the world is not safe. If they did not have sensitive caregivers who helped them to learn how to recognise and manage their emotions, they might have difficulties with self-regulation. Children exposed to a violent or chaotic environment often develop a strong fight-flight-freeze response, which is not easy for them to overcome. A range of reactions may develop in response

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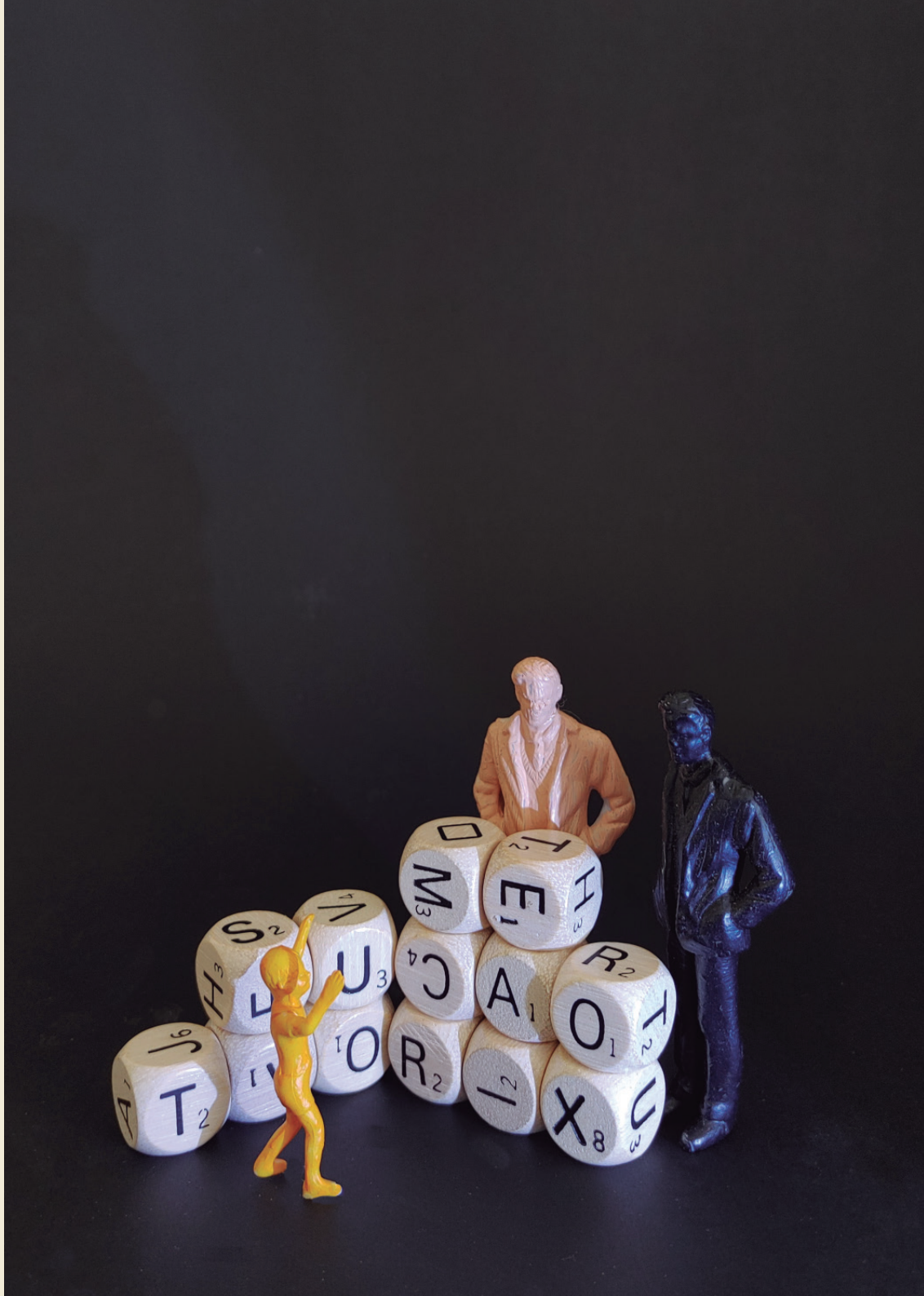
to inconsistent and neglectful care, including passivity, anxiety, fear or excessive compliance. Due to a lack of caring adults to help them to meet their needs, they have had to take control to meet those needs themselves and to resolve their own difficulties. When such children enter the school system, what they have learned to do in order to survive may then be (mis)read as "disruptive behaviour".

For a child whom life has taught that adults cannot be trusted, trusting them and following their rules can feel like an unsafe option.

In the educational context, there is an expectation that children and young people follow the lead of adults and comply with the school's rules and regulations. These rules are usually intended to provide a safe, calm space conducive to learning. However, for a child whom life has taught that adults cannot be trusted, trusting them and following their rules can feel like an unsafe option.



Behind behaviour

Children that have been through situations of neglect, prolonged institutionalisation, mistreatment and/or abuse may show difficulties in one or more of the following areas. Such difficulties can easily represent risk factors for the psychological, relational and social development of these children, if those around them fail to provide a careful, respectful and welcoming environment. For this reason it is crucial to know what can lie behind the child's behaviour.

Sensory processing and/or self-regulation
They may be overly sensitive to sensory input, undersensitive, or both. Sensory processing issues can also affect balance and movement. When children are in situations that cause sensory overload, they can't self-regulate. Their emotions and behaviours go unchecked and they are often labelled as "difficult" or "overreacting."
By the same token, those who have not had a caring environment in early stages may find it difficult to understand and manage their emotions.

Executive functioning
Early adversity and trauma can lead to higher levels of stress, greater difficulty modulating and accurately appraising emotion, and compromised executive function abilities. When this is not taken into account, their difficulties are often confused with disorders such as ADHD. When executive functioning is underdeveloped, children may show dysregulated behaviours, defiance or their own coping behaviours that are once more interpreted as disruptive and sanctionable.

Chronic stress
Learning how to cope with adversity is an important part of healthy child development. When we are threatened, our bodies activate a variety of physiological responses, including increases in heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones such as cortisol. When young children are protected by supportive relationships with adults, they help children adapt, which mitigates the potentially damaging effects of abnormal levels of stress hormones. When strong, frequent, or prolonged adverse experiences such as repeated abuse are experienced without adult support, stress becomes toxic, as excessive cortisol disrupts developing brain circuits. If a child is exposed to toxic stress before age three without the support of an attentive parent or caregiver, it can affect her/his ability to learn, cope with stress or build healthy relationships with peers and adults.

Peer relationships
Positive peer relationships require learning how to express themselves, how to take turns, and how to apply empathy when dealing with others. The acquisition of these skills may have been compromised in those children who have suffered social deprivation, a situation that is aggravated when there are difficulties of self-regulation and impulsivity. These underdeveloped skills can be amplified in unstructured environments such as breaks and lunchtimes, where children are expected to have all of the age-related skills to be able to manage without focussed supervision. Poor social skills can lead to social rejection or exclusion, which may lead adolescents to become involved in deviant or risk-taking behaviours.

Change and transitions
Most children don't like change and they struggle when moving house or starting a new school, but for some children even little changes (such as an unexpected change in the daily activities schedule) may be completely overwhelming. The same can happen with small transitions (e.g. moving from one task to another). They may show their discomfort by being more aggressive, regressing to old behaviour (thumb sucking, bedwetting), or complaining of physical symptoms (headaches, stomach aches).

Learning delays or difficulties

Through the first years of life, the brain undergoes its most rapid development. Those children who have been deprived of stable, caring environments may have missed key developmental stages and skills that they need to be able to achieve their age-related expectations. As a result, their chronological age may not correspond to their developmental age, including speech and language difficulties or delays. When this goes unnoticed, they often become disengaged from the learning process and both they and their self-esteem suffer from not being able to perform along with the rest of their peers.

Difficulties with a new language

Those entering the country at a certain age may struggle with the acquisition of the local language. Children arriving via intercountry adoption seem to generally catch up in a short time, at least at an oral level. However, they may struggle with more abstract language, which may only become evident later on, as they learn to read and write and are confronted with more abstract content. With children arriving at an older age, it happens sometimes that schools find it difficult to offer the right level of education which leads either to too much pressure or, on the contrary, to demands below what they are capable of, which causes frustration on all sides.

From early adversity to resilience

While our past experiences can help explain how we have learned to think and react, they do not determine our future. The plasticity of the human brain allows us to continue to learn new things and change our thinking and behavioural patterns. Being aware of the potential impact of early adversity on children is an essential starting point to support their capacity for resilience, which should be the real focus of any educational and care plan addressed to them. It is not a matter of "fixing" them or getting them to return to "normal" functioning. Rather, they should be accompanied in a process of growth and empowerment, which encompasses the integration of negative experiences within a "wider sense of self". In fact, we can define resilience as the ability to construct a wide enough space within oneself that negative experiences can be integrated without having an unduly disruptive impact, thereby allowing children to project themselves into the future in a positive way. With the help of their teachers, schools can be a powerful space to build resilience for children in a caring, structured environment where they are able to develop their full potential. For children who experience early adversity, committed teachers and a healthy school environment can make all the difference.

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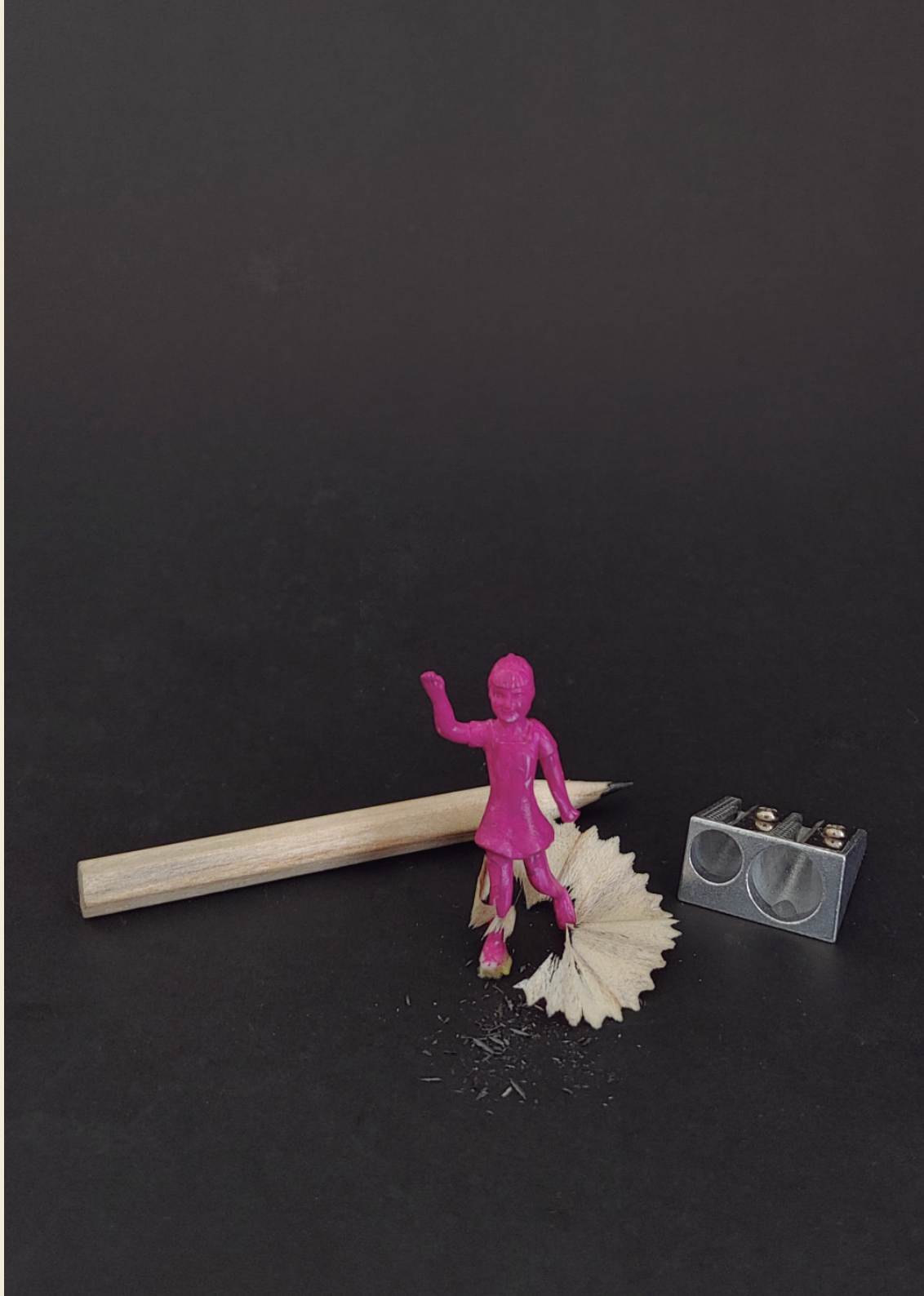

The risk of labelling

When we talk about "early adversity" or "trauma" to describe a past with difficult and painful experiences, there exists a real risk that we perpetuate an unnatural division between "normal" and "traumatised" people; that is, between those who need help and those who are able to offer it. A difficult past may help to explain a specific way of functioning, but it does not define either who someone is or who they will become. Focusing only on the past may obscure the tremendous resources and skills students bring with them, and pigeonhole them as "needy" individuals who are unable to make a positive contribution. Moreover, when their emotional security is compromised, or when they have not had the opportunity to develop the specific competencies essential to fitting into school dynamics, adults may interpret a student's behaviours as inappropriate and in need of sanction. In such cases, disciplinary actions will only make things worse. Instead, responsible adults should keep in mind that these children bear no responsibility for their early adverse experiences, and that they need and deserve empathy, compassion, and assistance. In lieu of punishing them, such a stance sets the stage for children to learn new and better ways to manage their emotions and acquire new skills.

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Being aware of our own emotions

Working with children who experienced early adversity can be challenging. Even the most experienced teachers may find it difficult and distressing to confront the suffering and pain of others. Some situations (even if they are apparently trivial) can evoke intense feelings or past experiences, causing their own emotional security to waver. In such circumstances, it is not unusual that feelings of irritability and negativity towards the child emerge, feelings which, left unchecked, can escalate and impact the teacher-child relationship significantly.

When children and young people do not respond to our care, attention, or encouragement, this can lead to despondency on our part. For many teachers and educators, constant rejection by a child they work hard to build a relationship with can feel very demotivating. This is not because they are uncaring people, nor is it because they are not very good at their jobs. When we consistently try to engage with someone without receiving a response this can wear on us, and when no progress is experienced our investment feels futile and a sense of failure and hopelessness can set in.

When we understand that everyone's emotions will run high in the context of challenging behaviours, we are much less likely to feel threatened or anxious, and more able to remain in control and adapt to the situation. This will, in turn, enable us to recognise the behaviour as the child's attempt at communication; therefore, our response is likely to be more flexible and understanding of the needs of that individual child. Understanding the experience of an abused or neglected child is in itself an intervention.

Dealing with your own feelings in challenging situations

Working with children's discomfort can trigger feelings of helplessness, loneliness and fear on the part of the teacher.

Here are some guidelines that may help in such situations:

- Let your feelings emerge and acknowledge them to yourself, however uncomfortable they might be.
- Try not to judge the child's actions, blame them, or make them feel inadequate.
- Instead, assume an observational approach to the child, and look for signs of their discomfort.
- Foster a relationship of trust with the child that makes room for discussing challenges and jointly coming up with potential solutions.
- Report and share what you have observed with the headmaster of the school and other professionals who care for the child, with the goal of defining an appropriate intervention.
- If you regularly find yourself overwhelmed by such situations, consider obtaining support for yourself, such as professional supervision, peer support or psychotherapy.

II. BUILDING A SOLID BASE FOR SUCCESS

Feeling good at school

Schools are under pressure to prioritise learning outcomes, given the constant scrutiny and evaluation of the progress of their pupils. In turn, the pressure of teacher and educator workloads can at times be overwhelming, and having to think about the individual needs of children who have experienced early adversity alongside the needs of the rest of their students can feel like a daunting task. Having said that, we know that children who feel stressed, unsafe or unwelcome at school will not be able to learn and succeed academically.

All children need to feel safe and welcome at school, and this is especially true for those who, for whatever reason, find it difficult to establish their place in the group, or who struggle to follow school rules and rhythms. Thus, their wellbeing is paramount. At a minimum, "feeling good" implies the following self-perceptions, which schools should endeavour to cultivate with all children:

- **Feeling capable:** Feeling useless and helpless is devastating for one's self-esteem and wellbeing, but this is often how children and young people feel when their emotional, social and mental health needs are not understood.
- **Feeling accepted and valued:** Perceiving that one is meaningful to others and that they value our contributions is essential for our wellbeing.
- **Feeling a sense of agency:** That what they do and the choices they make influence what happens to them.

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In order to allow children to develop and maintain these perceptions, there are many things that teachers can do in both formal and informal contexts. Here are some suggestions that could be helpful, keeping in mind that different students benefit from different tools.

- **Spotlight the strengths of every child.**
  When most interactions with their teachers revolve around their struggling to follow the norms, children will most probably feel helpless and under constant stress. Highlighting their efforts and achievements gives them a different perspective on themselves. We all find it easier to keep our motivation up when we can savour the sweet taste of success from time to time, so acknowledging their achievements or improvements (even if they are still far from the final goal) is usually a fresh start in the way they feel at school. Children and adolescents also benefit from being given responsibility, as in peer tutoring, cooperative learning, being assigned tasks and chores in the class routines, or having a role in school activities. In such roles they can show different sides of their personality to themselves and to others, subverting the image of a vulnerable and powerless person.

- **Show a genuine interest in them as individuals.**
  Demonstrating to children from the outset that we are interested in them and aware of the positive contribution they bring to the group will not only provide the basis for a positive relationship, but will also contribute to their sense of belonging and emotional safety. Such interest is embedded in trivial daily routines as well as in pivotal events. For instance, a fundamental way to do this is to make sure you pronounce and spell their name properly.

- **Foster a sense of community in the classroom and the school.**
  Developing a sense of belonging and connection is particularly important for youth who experienced adversity in early life. Many activities can be developed involving smaller and larger groups,

Class Assemblies

Class assemblies can bring children together in one group, and they can help inform children of important events, information, and successes they have had as a class. They help to remind children of the little community of which they are part, and give them opportunities to learn from and make a positive impact on those around them. They can be also used to prevent conflicts or to learn how to solve them. With the support of their teachers, they can be a powerful tool to acquire the necessary skills for cooperating and developing a solution-oriented approach to a difficult situation.

where the class group is a crucial environment. Class routines and rituals, as well as cooperative learning, may provide effective opportunities to strengthen connections among classmates.

- **Provide opportunities for self-expression and representation.** Children and adolescents who experienced early adversity often have to deal with a multiplicity of contradictory and painful emotions and feelings. However, the verbal medium is not necessarily the best way for them to express themselves. It can be worthwhile to offer them the opportunity to access and experience various expressive forms such as art workshops, sports, music, theatre, etc. In such different contexts, children can depict themselves in a new light, showing strengths and talents never before revealed.

Consistent, predictable and repetitive environments

Children and young people need appropriate structures and boundaries to grow and develop. A consistent, predictable, and repetitive environment is paramount in helping children feel safe and contained. This is absolutely crucial for children who feel overwhelmed or out of control. Moreover, attachment theory tells us of the importance of nurturing adults and environments to enable children and young people to thrive. The school environment is a place that allows the child or young person to continue to form attachments and connections as they move through their life cycle.
In order to provide such a caring and nurturing environment, following the **UPPP strategy** may be useful:

Perceiving their teachers as "sherpas" who accompany them on their school journey and their possible difficulties is a priority, even more so in conflict situations.

- **Unconditionality:**
  It is essential children know that, whatever happens, we are on their side. Perceiving their teachers as "sherpas" who accompany them on their school journey and their possible difficulties is a priority, even more so in conflict situations.

- **Predictability:**
  Predictable people and routines are key to supporting emotional safety of young children. For those teens who have experienced adverse childhood experiences, it may also be crucial to strengthen the trust relationship and feel safe.

- **Presence:**
  Greeting children with a smile and steady eye contact, asking them how they are and waiting for their answer, empathetic gestures and other signs that make them feel seen and valued will help them to stay connected and feel good at school.

- **Patience:**
  Major changes, such as learning to trust in adults and regulate their own emotions, do not happen overnight. It is quite possible that at times children may seem to go "backwards" in their learning and emotional progress. Keep in mind that this is part of the journey and that no one, neither the teacher, the parents or caregivers, nor the child themself, is to blame.

How we respond to children and young people and the language we use is also a crucial part of our developing an ongoing relationship

A "point person" at school

Having access to someone in school who is responsive and nurturing in their approach provides the child with the experience of a healthy relationship, which is central for the child's ongoing development. The appointment of a "point person" for emotional support in school will give the child the opportunity of establishing a positive relationship and will provide an additional attachment figure. This is a hugely important figure for a child or young person in school who has experienced insecure attachments and early life adversity. This could be their primary teacher or another person the class group spends significant time with, but other possibilities may also be considered.

with them. Below are some classroom “top tips” which, when used consistently, can help children and young people feel seen and valued, which in turn will help them stay calm and regulated in school:

- Set a routine for welcoming and for saying goodbye, making sure that each child has the opportunity for contact and personal communication with you when needed
- Prepare the child for what is going to happen (especially at times of transition and changes in the routine).
- Seat the child where they feel safe (e.g. with a wall behind them or by a door).
- Regularly check in with the child (this can be as simple as a thumbs up or nod of the head whilst children are completing tasks).
- Take a deep calming breath when facing challenging moments, so you can respond rather than react.
- Help the child to stay calm by giving them soothing, repetitive activities (e.g. sorting the coloured pencils or collating handouts).
- Work alongside a child in an activity to build a relationship (e.g. complete a jigsaw puzzle together)
- Give time ‘in’ not time out (e.g. bring them next to you rather than sending them out)
- Show the child that you have them in mind (e.g. ask them about something that matters to them, like their pet/ weekend/football team).
- Add extra scaffolding to the activity or task (e.g. help them to get started, employ visual prompts, break it into chunks).

My World

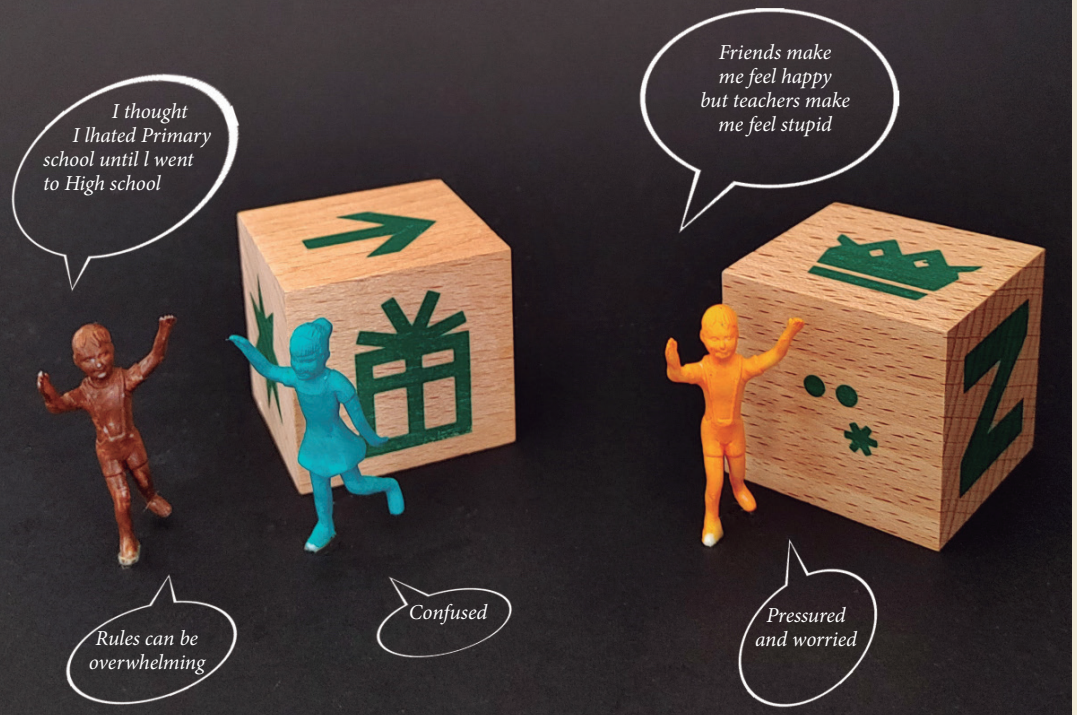
An activity that can help teachers to get to know children and young people better is “My World”. This can be a drawing of themselves or the things that are important to the child. The “My World” activity can be a mixture of written words and drawings which helps the child share with a teacher the things important to them.

Each child will respond differently to this activity. Think about the level the child is at and how willing they are to share information about themselves with you. Take this at a slower pace and complete over a period of time. This will allow you to set the pace to meet the child’s needs and will give the child time to learn that relationships with adults can be positive experiences.

- Give them two ‘correct choices’ (both get the job done, and the child will feel like they have some control).
- Above all, make sure the child knows you appreciate how difficult it is for them. A simple “I know this is hard for you” reassures them that their struggles and efforts are being acknowledged.

When school is a scary place

It is crucial to know that school can sometimes be a scary place for children and young people, and this fear can cause them to struggle to communicate their thoughts and feelings. When this happens, we are likely to see their fear manifest in their behaviour. Here are some ways that children told us school can make them feel.



Starting a new school/ Welcoming plan

Moving from one country to another or being placed in a new care environment (either a foster or adoptive family or a residential facility) often means attending a new school. From the child's perspective, it means yet another challenge that adds to the stress of changing routines and caregivers.

Whenever possible, school entry should be delayed as much as possible after the move, to give the child time to adapt and feel secure in their new environment. Concerns may arise that delaying entry into the classroom could cause or exacerbate a gap in knowledge and skills. However, teachers know that the ability to meet school challenges in a positive way depends, above all, on the emotional security of the student. Children who feel loved and feel safe enjoy learning. Conversely, those who feel vulnerable and insecure can have difficulty seeing what is new as being interesting, and may find it difficult to concentrate on their tasks. Restlessness and fear are stronger than curiosity.

Prioritising their psychological and social comfort over their academic performance or their adjustment to school dynamics is key. As with any child entering school for the first time, the top priority must be to make them feel happy and secure at school.

Once the date for starting school has been established, a period of rapprochement and transition should be established. A flexible approach that takes into account their emotional needs will be key to positively accompanying children during the beginning of their school life.

Here is a list of recommendations to help make this process as smooth as possible:

- **Prepare them**, anticipating what is going to happen and what their routines are going to be like from now on. For young and old,

facing the unknown is easier when we have some information in advance about what is going to happen. Confirming that situations happen as planned reduces the stress that all change produces. Especially for young children, the more consistent and structured their routines are, the easier it will be for them to assimilate.

- **Allow them to get to know the school** beforehand, as well as the people who will take care of them. Discovering the environment and establishing new relationships with a parent or someone else they trust by their side will make the transition much smoother and easier. It is advisable to make several visits to the school in the days or weeks leading up to their start. During the first visit, younger children may need to feel the physical proximity of their parent/caregiver at all times. There is no need to force them to let go of this contact. As they feel safer, they will likely dispense with physical contact and venture out to explore all the exciting new things that come their way. With older children and teenagers, scheduling a meeting at lunchtime or to have a soft drink with a teacher willing to act as a reference point may be a wise idea.

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- **Schedule a gradual incorporation**. Losing – yet again! – all their references for most of the day can be an excessive test for children who have already lived through too many changes and losses. During the first days, weeks or months, it's ideal if they can attend school for a limited amount of time and return to the safe environment of the home before they feel overwhelmed.

- **Never lie to them**. This maxim, which applies to any student, is critical for children who have had their relationships with previous caregivers severed. Telling them that their parents are going on an errand but will be back soon can have devastating effects, both on their sense of security and on the bond of trust they have already begun to build with their new family or caregivers, and will undoubtedly make bonding with the teacher more difficult.

- **Give them space to express their doubts, hopes, and fears**. The child may have lots of questions about the new school, new teacher, and new friends. It's important to find spaces where the teacher and the child can explore these questions and provide answers. Give them the opportunity to express their opinions, anger, sadness and/or hopes. During such interactions, teachers should be calm while aligning themselves with and encouraging the child. Thus a difficult situation can be transformed into a very constructive experience.

- **Establish a Peer Mentor**. The relationship established between peers is often greater than with adults. Peer mentoring has a positive impact on the emotional health and well-being of children and young people. A peer mentor who accompanies the child in the new context helps to improve their confidence and security in that space, as well as helping them to interact with other children. Whenever possible, meeting some classmates before starting in a new school is also a good tool to reduce the anxiety of fitting into a new environment.

Changes and transitions

Carla usually enjoys going to school but once in a while she has what her teacher calls "one of those days" when her mood seems to change out of a blue. She may look completely out of control for no reason, but I have learned that it happens every time her teacher is ill and there is a substitute teacher.

Changes, even when we welcome them, take energy. And they often mean leaving a safe place for the unknown or quitting doing something we like to do something that needs to be done. This can trigger different levels of anxiety and/or frustration in each person, depending on their previous experiences in life and their emotion-regulation skills. Those who have experienced unexpected changes in their early years (many times linked to the loss of everything that was familiar and safe) may struggle in the face of even tiny variations in their daily routines. Children who are usually happy and calm may lose their temper and show disproportionate anger when they find out that their teacher will not show up because she is ill and someone else will take charge of the class. Even what may look like a nice surprise (e.g. a special event in the park during school hours) may make them feel threatened. They may then disconnect from the environment or show unusual aggressiveness. It is important to note that none of these reactions are rationally decided; they are instead emotionally reacting to change as a red flag. When overwhelmed by the situation, they need the adults around them to understand that, from their perception, it is their very security which is at stake. Focussing on what may be seen as an inappropriate behaviour will not help and may only make things worse.

The best way to help them with changes and transitions is to tell them in advance what is going to happen, being as specific as possible. Realising that things happen the way they are supposed to will help them to keep calm. If you have noticed that a particular child has trouble coping with changes or transitions, small gestures (such as a knowing glance or some warm words) can help them stay "connected".

Communication with families or primary carers

"I try to avoid meeting Ian's teacher when I pick him up at school. Every day she's got something to complain about. I know it's been hard for him to fit in, but I just don't feel he needs to be reminded at the end of the day all what went wrong in front of his classmates."

Foster parent of an 8 y.o.

While a good collaboration between families and schools is always positive, it is essential for those who joined their family through adoption or who live in a foster family or foster facility. Open communication between parents or caregivers and teachers is important for a variety of reasons:

- As we have seen, since their first experiences were very different from those of their peers, it is logical that sometimes their reactions are too. Effective communication between teachers and caregivers provides the school staff with keys to interpreting their reactions, avoiding basic misunderstandings such as confusing an anxiety problem with a discipline issue.

- It is not unusual for children who have lived in institutions or in environments that are not conducive to their development to fall behind or make irregular progress in their studies. When both their caregivers and teachers know this, they are better able to help identify their needs, understand potential difficulties and work together to help them overcome them.

- Every child is different. What works with one may not work with another. Sharing information about which strategies work at home or at school will certainly help to lead to the best ways to support them in their growth and development.

- Good communication helps both teachers and caregivers to shape realistic expectations and set common goals and provides security to the child.

Building a relationship of trust is not always easy. Each party begins with the baggage of previous, similar relationships. Thus, for example, adoptive or foster parents may have felt undervalued, judged or misunderstood in their needs by other professionals. Here are some useful recommendations to start off on the right foot and maintain a collaborative approach:

Effective communication between teachers and caregivers provides the school staff with keys to interpreting them, avoiding basic misunderstandings such as confusing an anxiety problem with a discipline issue.

- **Establish a first meeting before or at the beginning of the course.** Many schools, particularly with younger students, do this as a rule. Offering the possibility, even with older children, is a good way to lay the foundation for a good connection.

- **Strive to use appropriate vocabulary** (see p. 26) and comment in passing on efforts to learn about the potential effects of early adversity on child development.

- **Explain that anything they share about the child's past is absolutely confidential**. Parents or caregivers may fear that details of children's previous history will become public knowledge. Letting them know that you are only interested in what can help you better support the child lays the foundation for good communication.

- **Use private communication to share areas of concerns or difficult situations**. Especially with young children, teachers and parents

or caregivers may have daily opportunities for brief interactions (e.g. at drop-off and pick-up), these moments are more suited to engaging in positive reinforcement such as commenting on specific achievements, while avoiding criticism of the child's behaviour or his development, especially when other children or parents are around. Even if others are not present, highlighting what went wrong during the day in front of the child should be avoided at all costs, since it would only add to their stress and feelings of failure. Instead, it is better to highlight improvements and positive behaviours.

- **Involve the child whenever possible**. While there are cases in which it may be necessary for teachers to meet parents or caregivers without the child present, children should definitely be involved in meetings regarding how things are generally going at school, so that they can calmly articulate their strengths and difficulties, and participate in crafting a plan to address any concerns or areas for improvement. It is important to make children aware of the reasons why they may need specific help, in order to prevent them from feeling guilty or ashamed about it. It is also important that they decide which aspects of their personal history are shared, how and with whom. In addition to being their right, having control over their personal history will give them added security and confidence.

- **Keep in mind that these children are, above all, children**. Understanding the influence of certain experiences can help us to better understand their reactions and needs. However, as with all learners, decisions about their education and their future must be made on the basis of their specific strengths and vulnerabilities.

Networking with other professionals and resources

Jessica is a 7 y.o. girl. She was removed from her family due to physical violence by her father, who may also have sexually abused her. After a short placement in the emergency care community, Jessica was placed in a foster family. So, she started her second grade in a new school. At the beginning she was a good and quiet child, but after some months she started showing signs of discomfort. One day, as Jessica started to masturbate compulsively, the teacher reacted by yelling at her in front of the whole class, making her feel dirty and ashamed.

Addressing the needs of children who have experienced abuse, maltreatment, neglect or traumatic events requires a coordinated effort involving different actors and continuous exchange with other professionals. When confronted with a child who expresses distress through, for example, sexualised or aggressive behaviour, teachers can find support in other professionals to design effective interventions:

- **Be open to listening to and working with other professionals**. If the parents or primary caregivers of a specific child ask you to meet with another professional who is already interacting with the child, take it as an opportunity and not a criticism of what you are doing. Both parties can benefit from sharing their information and insights.

- **Identify local resources** and other significant social and health professionals, and territorial services to develop a network for complementary actions.

- **Support the creation of multidisciplinary teams** skilled in counselling and care of children who experienced trauma in its many forms (such as abuse, neglect, war, deprivation, etc.) in order to define a shared, multi-professional project focusing on the needs of the child (including objectives and assigning tasks). If the school offers psychological support, involve the person responsible for this service.

III. A SENSITIVE APPROACH TO DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Personal histories are personal

Allan, 10 y.o., was severely abused in his early childhood. After joining his new family through intercountry adoption, he is starting in a new school. He has already visited the school and met his teacher in advance and is very excited about meeting his classmates and also nervous about making a good impression. His teacher asks him to stand up and tell the classroom about life in the place where he was born. The question triggers very difficult memories and he freezes, feeling everyone in the room staring at him and waiting for his answer.

Well-intentioned teachers sometimes do not realise that asking about a child's origins or past experiences could put them in an extremely stressful position. Some personal stories can be harder to share than others, but the key point is that everyone has the right to share only what they want to and only with whom they wish.

Certainly, schools are one of the main places where children learn about human and social diversity, and diversity in the classroom can be an enriching resource. At the same time, for those that have experienced some kind of early adversity, being asked to share about their past may make them feel exposed and helpless.

Schools are also a place where children acquire and practice social skills, including learning to respect others. Recognising the boundaries of privacy is a key lesson. Peers may ask intrusive questions out of curiosity, especially if they have heard some information about a child's family situation that is unfamiliar to them. For example, a child living in alternative care could be asked why she is not living with her parents. Teachers can use such opportunities to teach about privacy while also addressing the underlying curiosity through the sensitive delivery of more general information, thus taking the child themselves out of the spotlight. (See next section).

Answering children's questions/curiosity

"One of the children in my classroom (they are in first grade) asked about another one who is living in a foster family: 'Why did Kim's mother abandon her?' The question caught me unaware. I know why Kim was removed from his home but I didn't think it was appropriate to explain it publicly. Nor did I want to leave the question unanswered."

A primary school teacher

School is not only the place where children acquire skills such as writing or doing mathematical calculations. With the accompaniment of adults, it is also a protected environment in which they learn to live together, develop their personality, and discover the complexity of human relationships. In this environment, teachers are the reference figures with whom to process what happens around them. Teacher's attitudes and comments therefore have a powerful influence both on children's understanding of the world and also on their self-concept. On potentially sensitive issues, such as gender, cultural diversity, or the child protection system, teachers need to be prepared to answer children's questions and comments with clear and respectful information.

Whether or not they have peers who are adopted or in out-of-home care, children may well be curious about adoption and other alternative care situations. When a child living in a traditional family discovers other family models, it is normal to try to find out more. In much the same way, a film or a piece of news they have heard may raise new questions about these issues.

When answering children's questions or talking about issues like family diversity, migrant trajectories or the reasons why a child may enter the child protection system, two principles should be paramount:

- **Use of respectful and non-judgemental language**
  Embracing diversity sometimes implies a revision of the vocabulary used to talk about the experiences of others, replacing insensitive or biased terms with others that reflect their realities in a neutral or positive way. As a teacher, one should not only be able to use respectful, non-judgemental language but also be ready to gently correct pupils when they do otherwise. For example, a child could talk about the "true mother" or the "true parents" of a classmate that is adopted or lives with a foster family. By asking something like "do you mean her birth mother?" (or, if suitable, "do you mean her birth mother or her foster mother?"), you can teach how to use respectful language. By the same token, when talking about parents whose children live in alternative care or children that arrive in the country without parental figures, we should always be careful not to use negative stereotypes or derogatory words.

  As a teacher, one should not only be able to use respectful, non-judgemental language but also be ready to gently correct pupils when they do otherwise.

  It is worth highlighting that sometimes a term used in legal texts or policy documents may develop such a negative connotation that is better to avoid it altogether. Such is the case for LACs ("Looked After Children") in the UK, AMV ("Alleenstaande Minderjarige Vreemdelingen") in the Netherlands, MSNA ("Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati") in Italy, and MENAs ("Menores No Acompañados") in Spain.

- **Privacy and information**
  Particularly if they have personal experience with alternative forms of care, it is quite possible that children will ask their teachers questions about adoption, foster families, and peers arriving in the country without relatives to take care of them, etc. Phenotypical differences between a child and those he or she calls his or her parents (as is often the case in intercountry adoption) or some information about a family situation that has puzzled them may be the trigger for their curiosity. Questions such as "why did Sofia's mother abandon her?" or comments such as "Andy says he has two dads, he's a liar!" provide an opportunity to learn about family diversity, children's rights and the limits of privacy.

  When answering their questions, we should always keep in mind that, even if we have been told, we do not have the right to disclose the particular circumstances under which a particular child was placed in the care of the state. This does not mean that we should censor their curiosity or fail to respond to it. Saying something like "I can see you are curious about adoption, but this is her story, and it is not OK to ask such personal questions; I am sure you too experienced a situation when you felt the need to keep something private" can be a way to remove the focus from a particular child and protect their right to privacy, while opening the floor to discuss the topic more in general.

  As children get older, their questions may become more complicated or specific. Teenagers may ask complex questions about the process of removing custody from parents and other issues about which their teacher does not have an answer. If this happens, the best attitude is to be honest and commit to seeking it out, or to direct students to where they can obtain more information on the subject.

USING THE RIGHT WORDS

Instead of…	better use…	because…
"true/natural mother/father/ parents/siblings"	mother/father/parents/ sibling sor birth/ biological/foster mother/ father/parents/siblings	Adoptive and foster families are real and true. In most occasions, there is no need to use an adjective. If the distinction is needed, "birth/biological" can fit more properly.
Abandon a child	Relinquish Search for help	In the vast majority of cases, parents who have children but cannot take care of them look for a way to find someone to do so, they do not abandon or get rid of them. Another option could be "could not parent the child".
"Ana's foster adoptive parent" "Joe's adopted siblings"	"Ana's parent" "Joe's siblings"	In most occasions, there is no need to use an adjective. Consistently making reference to the way the family was formed can give the impression that they are somehow less valid than others.
Own child	Biological child	Adoptive children are not "alien children".
Is adopted	Was adopted	Adoption is one part of an adoptee's life, not their defining characteristic. It is something that happened to them and is an integral part of their history, but the event has now ended. [1]
Orphanage	Home, residential centre	Most of the children living in institutions are not orphans.
Using the word 'adoption' to refer to the sponsorship support of animals, etc. For example – adopt a tiger, dolphin, tree etc.	Sponsor	Can be confusing to hear this word used in two different contexts and implies that adopted children – sponsorship of animals are the same?
MENAS (Spain), (LAC (UK), MSNA Italy), AMV (Netherlands)	—	Although unintended, naming a person through a label or category is an action of dehumanisation. This is particularly true when the category is marked out in disempowering terms.

1 Some adoptees defend the use of the present to point out that adoption does not end, that it es part of their identity, However, in the school context, it seems important to us to contextualise it as a life event and not as a defining feature.

Conversations that matter

Explaining family issues to children

Basic ideas for satisfying the curiosity of preschoolers and children in primary school about adoptive and foster families:

- **Sometimes, some people have a child, but they are not prepared or they cannot take care of him or her**. Around the first years of primary school, children begin to learn the basis of reproduction. They then may realise that there had to be other parents before a child was placed in adoption. By the same token, when they see a child with Asian traits who says "mom" to a woman who does not resemble them, they may need help to understand. It is important to clarify that there is no such thing as "real" and "fake" parents. We can talk about birth parents in the case of adopted children, and their adoptive parents are of course "real" and will be their parents forever.

- **The reasons why a child was placed in an adoptive or foster family do not have to do with how she or he is or was.** Questions such as "Why did Kai's first mother not want to keep him?" are not uncommon in classes where there is an adopted child or a child living in a foster family. Peers need to know that sometimes a family has a child but they are not prepared or they cannot take care of him or her. This can happen for a number of different reasons. Birth parents may be too young or too ill to care for a child, or have another serious hindrance that prevents them from doing so. Regardless, it is crucial to stress that, whatever the reason, it has nothing to do with anything the child did. All children need to be cared for. For this reason, when their birth family cannot, another family is found to take over. When children are adopted, their new family becomes their family forever. Other times, they live with another family or in a residential facility until theirs can take care of them again.

- **When raising their children, all families do similar things regardless of the way their family was built or its composition.**
  Emphasising that families do similar things for their children and that families are a place where they can share a feeling of being loved, protected, reassured and important can help young children better understand family diversity. Talking about what they do (such as caring, comforting when sad, taking them to school when they are too young to go on their own, etc.) allows them to understand that it is the role of the family that is important.

- **Support the concerned child's way of understanding and naming their family.**
  Some children living in a foster family call the people who take care of them "mum" or "dad". Others use words like "aunt" or "uncle" or call them by their first name. There are different ways they make sense of their situation and all of them are fine. Teachers should pay attention to the words children use, in order to avoid contradicting them.

Reviewing school assignments with an inclusive perspective

"I don't want to go to school tomorrow. The teacher has asked us to bring a picture from the time we were babies. I am sure that I am the only one that has none. And I am sure everyone is going to ask me why!".

There is no doubt that in contemporary societies there is a great variety of family models that move away from the traditional family, understood as that in which a man and a woman unite and have offspring through sexual intercourse. In our classrooms, there are children who live in different family configurations, as well as in residential care facilities. Some children have two mothers or two fathers, or only one parent. Others live with their grandparents, other relatives or other people, with different levels of relationship with their parents. Some share genetic ties with other family members, but this is not always the case. Those who came into their families through adoption or through assisted reproduction treatments with third party gametes do not share DNA. On the other hand, depending on their life history, they may have little or no information about the circumstances of their birth and the first years of life (as is sometimes the case with adopted children) or the memories or information they have may contain painful or difficult aspects.

A sensitive approach to family and life histories diversity should make everyone feel included. Reviewing the books and other materials used in the classroom to make sure they reflect and promote respect for different family configuration can be the first step. Another should be reviewing some classic school activities and assignments such as the following:

- **"Bring a baby picture"**
  Adopted children and those living in foster care, as well as others who have experienced various changes of location or other circumstances, may not have photographs of their first months or years of life. If the aim is to produce an album or a mural in which present each member of the group, asking them to bring "a favourite photo from when you were younger" can be a good alternative.

- **Family tree assignments**
  The standard format with prefixed boxes (father, mother, paternal and maternal grandparents, etc.) will not work for some children. A more open approach, in which each child can freely reflect the network of people who make up his or her family unit, may result in a very enriching and interesting activity that allows for the exploration of different forms of family. Some adopted children will include only their adoptive family; others may also include their biological or foster families. All alternatives should be respected and taken naturally. For those children who do not live with their birth parents, it may be wise to talk about the activity with their primary caregivers in advance, so that they are prepared to support the children.

- **Autobiographies and Family History Assignments**
  Being asked to write about family history, personal history or on subjects such as "the day I was born" are often a source of distress for those children who have little information about their early years or whose life trajectories include disturbing and painful experiences which they may not want to share. Alternatives such as "a special event in my life", "my best day ever" or the life of someone they know are safe options that will cover the same objectives.

- **Create a Timeline of the Student's Life**
  In order to learn how to chart historical events on a timeline, students are sometimes asked to create one using their own life events from birth to present. Once again, some of them can not have the necessary information to do so, or they may feel insecure about sharing information about how they become separated

from their birth families or other private issues. Alternatively, they can be asked to create a timeline for a historical or fictional character or for an adult they know.

Reviewing the books and other materials used in the classroom to make sure they reflect and promote respect for different family configuration can be the first step to make everyone feel included.

- **Father's Day or Mother's Day**
  In some schools, preschoolers and children in primary school are asked to celebrate Father's Day and Mother's Day by writing a letter or preparing a gift to honor theirs. However, many children today do not live in a traditional family with a father and a mother. Some have a single-parent family or have two mothers or two fathers. Others have lost a parent or don't have a relationship with them. Instead of an activity that excludes them and emphasises their losses and differences, some schools choose to celebrate Family Day, so that everyone can celebrate the contribution in their lives of those they consider to be their family.

- **Tracking your genes**
  When working on genetics, sometimes students are asked to inquire about where some specific trait or theirs (such as eye or hair colour) comes from in order to help them understand how genetic traits are passed along through generations. This is problematic today since some children do not have genetic links with those who compose their families. Moreover, for those who lost connection with their birth family at an early age, the task is not only impossible to accomplish, but it also highlights a painful void of information about themselves. Rather than focus on children's relationship to their parents and relatives, teachers can find more inclusive options, e.g. suggesting that pupils imagine fictitious pairs among them and discuss what their descendants could be like.

Skin color? Whose skin colour?

In some preschool and primary school classes, we hear "skin colour" to refer to the pinky orange with which human figures are coloured. The very same use of this expression is already painfully discriminatory for those whose skin tone is clearly different. Teachers can use some skin-colour activity to talk about how we get our skin colour, how different shades are related to adapting to different environments and how, even if people say things like "he is white" or "she is black", all of us have skin that is a different shade of brown. There are several books, such as Katie Kissinger's All the Colours We Are or Paul Showers' Your Skin and Mine, that can serve as inspiration or be read in the classroom. Teachers can, for instance, collect paint chips of shades of brown, peach and pinky colours from the local hardware and ask children to find the one that better suits them and give it a name. Or they can encourage them to produce their shade in the art classroom and make a portrait of themselves.

Welcoming racial and cultural diversity

Diversity expresses itself in very different ways. Diversity is everything that makes us different from each other. This might include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, language background, religious beliefs or socio-economic status, among other categories. Research has demonstrated the different academic and social benefits of diversity in school environments. Diversity in the classroom promotes creativity and critical-thinking skills, and provides pupils with an opportunity to learn about different cultures and challenge stereotypes, which can prepare them to better navigate a diverse society during their adulthood.

When teachers disregard the diversity of the classroom, there is a chance that some students won't feel included and will perhaps be less inclined to participate. However, when teachers adopt an inclusive approach ensuring all identities are represented and welcome in the classroom, minoritised students might feel more welcome, safe and willing to participate.

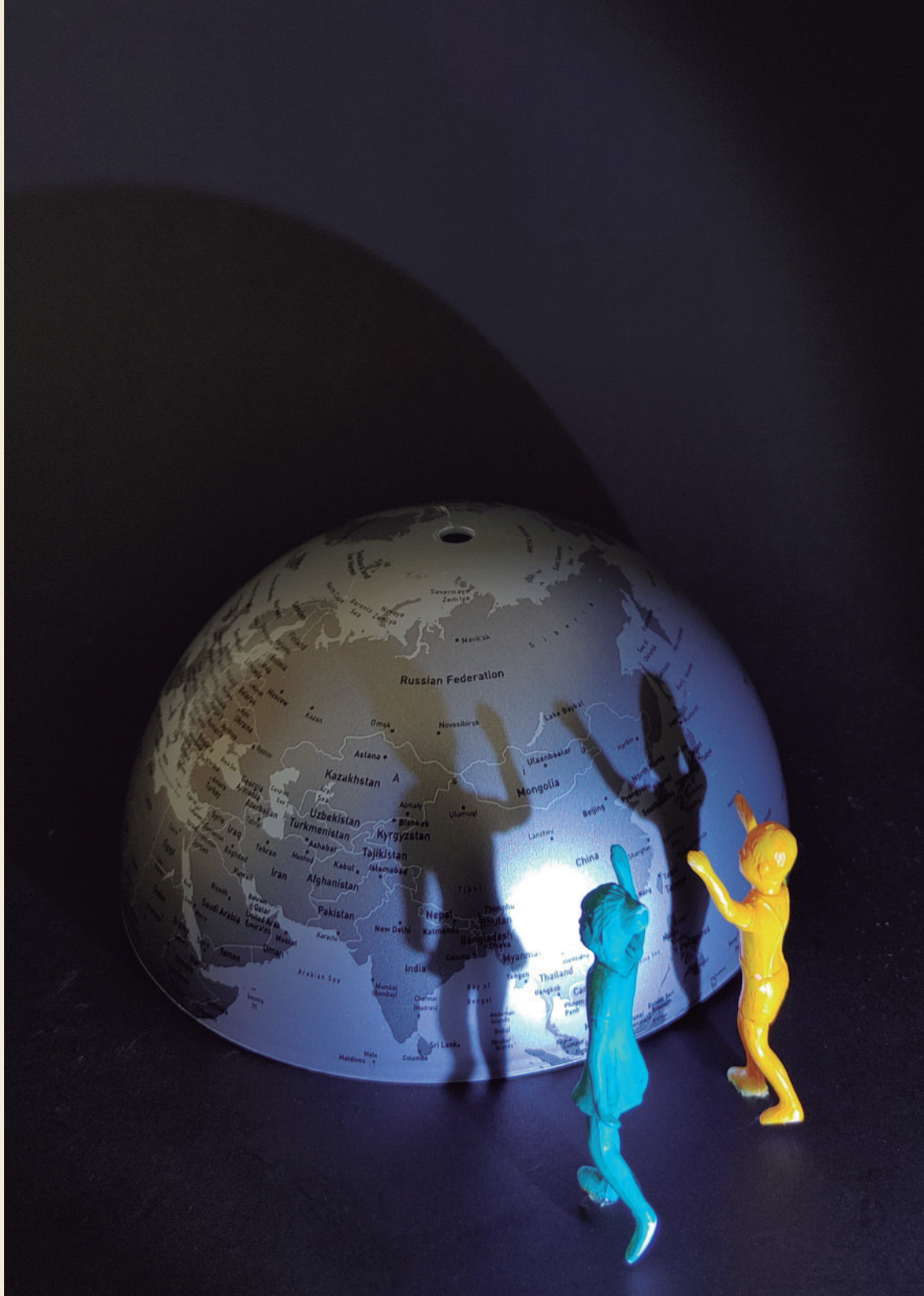
There are different strategies teachers can use to develop more inclusive and culturally responsive schools in which all the students can thrive.

- **Understand the stories of your students**
  In order to promote inclusion in the classroom it is of utmost importance that teachers develop a good understanding of the lived experiences and needs of their students: Where do they come from? What is their family situation? Do they feel included in the classroom? Knowing your students means also understanding different forms of discrimination that they might encounter at school and in society. This means paying attention to different categories that converge in their social identities (race, socio-economic status, gender, disabilities, and so on). Try to

learn more about the cultural experiences of your students while respecting and honouring their cultural heritage. Keep in mind that cultural differences might influence the student's learning process.

- **Reflect on your teaching materials and develop culturally responsive practices**
  Teaching materials are sometimes limited to Western narratives. Examine your materials to see which voices are missing. Try to elaborate a culturally inclusive curriculum that ensures that the contributions of your students' cultures are not erased. You can incorporate readings and activities that show the different cultural backgrounds represented in your classroom and stimulate intercultural friendships in class management strategies and a culture of caring for one another. You can also encourage your students to share their stories and relate their cultural experiences to the topics you are teaching, but this should be done carefully. Transnationally adopted children may know little about their country of origin or feel very uncomfortable when they are supposed to identify with its culture. By the same token, some migrant children (including those that arrived to the country with no parental figures) might dislike being spotted this way while they are making great efforts to fit in the group. If you are doubtful, asking them in advance is always a secure path.

- **Develop a clear and effectively communicated policy to address episodes of discrimination and harassment in your school.**
  Develop and implement anti-bullying policies and procedures that address racist or xenophobic bullying in your school. Shut down any form of discrimination in the classroom as soon as you hear it. Take this kind of infraction seriously and inform school leadership and parents when necessary.



- **Be sure the way you celebrate diversity does not blur the fundamental idea that we are all equal in rights and dignity**
  Sometimes, well-intended actions to celebrate diversity reproduce stereotypes or reinforce the barriers between different groups, between "we" and "they". Empathising what makes us alike is also crucial. There are multiple occasions to do so in the school curriculum. For instance, when talking about nutrition, we can refer to how, depending on the foods available and their history, each culture tries to get a balanced diet. In some places, carbohydrates are mainly provided by bread; in others by rice, potatoes or legumes. In the same line, we can refer to History when talking about migration, exploring the reasons why people move to another country in different times and how most countries have a history of migration.

Sometimes, well-intended actions to celebrate diversity reproduce stereotypes or reinforce the barriers between different groups, between "we" and "they".

- **Listen to families and communities**
  Families from minoritised communities might experience challenges to making their views heard in educational settings. We must ensure that schools are inclusive of them and avoid further marginalisation. Moreover, teachers can learn a great deal by listening to their experiences and collective stories. You can invite families from different backgrounds to discuss how to develop a more diverse and inclusive school culture.

For further reading

Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children: A guide for school staff

This is a PAC UK guide for school staff designed to help education staff to make sense of children's difficulties (such as Attachment, trauma, developmental gaps etc.) It also provides whole school approaches as well as accessing support for school staff, children and their families.

Education for refugee and asylum seeking children: Access and quality in England, Scotland and Wales

This is a guide from the Refugee Support Network which provides an overview of current policy, literature and statutory guidance regarding the Education for refugee and asylum seeking children in England, Scotland and Wales. It provides research and analysis of the findings of those children within UK education systems. It considers Access to Education, Remaining and Thriving in Education and the systemic, individual and contextual barriers within this. The research also consider the future of the education of this vulnerable group of children and young people and what needs to change.

Booklist for Schools

A list of reading materials for teachers who are working with adopted and permanently placed children. In addition to this there is a list of books to support children and a further one for parents. There are also really useful weblinks for teachers and education staff such as "Calmer Classrooms - A Guide to working with Traumatised Children. There are also some links to helpful Assessment and Monitoring Tools for teachers and education staff

Useful Resources:

Case Studies

The attached resource is a set of case studies based on the experiences of children who are either adopted or who are care experienced. The case studies give an overview of the issues relating to that particular child, their vulnerabilities and how those issues are affecting them at school. The case studies then provide a "what happened next" to illustrate the importance of significant people in children's lives working together (Adoptive parents, carers, teachers and education staff). They show that when everyone works together there is a shared understanding of why a child may have some struggles. This then provides everyone with an insight into how a child is experiencing school and how they are experienced by their teachers or education staff. The case studies draw together a plan and strategies to help support that child in their school setting. These are a great resource to increase individual teachers understanding and also as part of a wider training resource in attachment and trauma based school training

Permanently Placed Children: Key Questions for Primary Schools

This resource provides a series of key questions for parents and schools to consider when thinking about an adopted or permanently placed child attending a primary school. The questions have been developed in consultation with experienced adoptive parents. They can be used for new adoptive parents to enable them to have those early discussions with schools they are considering for their child. The questions are all designed to gain a clear understanding about the flexibility of the school a parent will be considering for their child. For teachers, education staff and schools they can be used as a resource to help inform and underpin the ethos of the school in promoting and embedding the importance of being an attachment friendly and trauma informed school.

Permanently Placed Children: Key Questions for Secondary Schools

Similar to the key questions resource for primary schools the attached resource provides key questions for parents and schools to consider when thinking about an adopted or permanently placed child attending a secondary school. The questions again are from consultation with adopted parents and have been adapted to meet the needs of the changing

environment within a secondary school. Questions such as the school's behavioural policy will be key for many parents when choosing a school. For teachers, education staff and schools they can be used as a resource to help inform and underpin the ethos of the school in promoting and embedding the importance of being an attachment friendly and trauma informed school.

Me and My World

Me and My World template provides a framework for adoptive families, children and young people to share important information about the child's strengths, needs, triggers and support preferences. This is a key resource for teachers to enable them to have an understanding about a particular child. It is also an invaluable resource to enable a teacher to engage with a young person on a 1 to 1 basis as this will help inform the teacher from the child's perspective important things that they would like their teacher/s to know about them. This resource also enables a child to share with you what works for them, what worries them, what they might need help with (i.e. impact substitute teachers can have, difficulties around events such as Mother's Day/ talking about family trees etc. These resources can be placed on children's school plans which ensures all teachers have a good understanding about each individual child who has a Me and My World plan. For substitute teachers this is again an invaluable resource to give them a quick overview for children who they know briefly, but nevertheless will struggle.

Example Transition Plan and Strategies

Some children find change difficult, this can be big change (i.e. change of school) or smaller change (moving classroom) Change is difficult for adopted and care experienced children and there are lots of changes in school on a daily basis (i.e. movement of classes, change of teacher, break time, etc.) Many children need help to manage those changes. Teachers and Education staff can help support children manage change by scaffolding the process and supporting the child's emotional well-being. The adults around the child may want to consider using a transition plan to help with the process. This resource is packed with ideas that are used for different children and can be used to formulate a plan to help support that child.

Thinking about goodbyes and transitions

This resource is aimed at helping teachers and education staff support children and young people with big transitions such as goodbyes. There are exercises to help teachers support children with such transitions alongside a list of books and YouTube video links to help children with this.

Reducing Trip Trauma

Planning school trips whether for the day or overnight can be an exciting part of school for lots of children. For children with attachment and trauma difficulties school trips can sometimes feel very dysregulating. This resource is aimed at supporting teachers to plan with a child or young person's parents/carers well in advance of a trip thinking about all the different components that might be necessary to enable a particular child or children to take part. It details strategies to help reduce these issues which are have been developed in consultation with teachers and parents.