

EARLY ADVERSITY EXPERIENCES AND WELLBEING AT SCHOOL

**A TRAINING MODULE FOR
(PROSPECTIVE) TEACHERS**

BRIGHTER FUTURE

Innovative tools for developing full potential after early adversity



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INDEX

UNIT 1

Child protection systems and the school

UNIT 2

The school as a community

2.1.A whole school approach on wellbeing

The importance of intersectionality in achieving educational equity

2.2. How to develop inclusive schools where everyone counts

UNIT 3

Adverse Childhood Experiences

UNIT 4

Connection between well-being and learning

UNIT 5

5.1. From behaviour policies to a relational approach: Inclusive schools

5.2. From behaviour policies to a relational approach: Working with parents/caregivers

5.3. Sexualized behavior and child abuse

UNIT 6

The child's story at school

Introduction

“Early adversity experiences and wellbeing at school” is an outcome of the project “BRIGHTER FUTURE. Innovative tools for developing full potential after early adversity” co-financed by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union. It aims at providing material for the training of school staff working with children and adolescents who have experienced early adversities and who are in alternative care.

During the Brighter Future project, our international team has designed a series of training modules, especially addressed to professionals working at school or with schools, suitable for deployment in multiple contexts.

The training modules are the result of a process involving the analysis of the child protection system in different European countries, the review of the scientific literature on school and early adversity, and a qualitative data collection using interviews and focus groups in Spain, Italy and the Netherlands aimed at collecting voices from the key actors in the field: students, teachers, adoptive parents, foster parents, social workers, activists (especially careleavers and parents associations).

Starting from the analysis of these materials, the Brighter Future team has collaboratively identified a set of key topics for a training curriculum that can be used with pre-service and in-service professionals interested in developing skills and tools for dealing with complex life paths in the school community. The topics have been translated into learning units accompanied by scientific references. Each member of the team has contributed to the training design with their specific expertise and professional background, allowing a multi-perspective and multi-disciplinary understanding of the issues examined.

The Output is structured according to different sections, representing a set of key topics for constructing welcoming, respectful and fair school environments: section 1 is focused on child protection systems and the role of the school in the life path of children who have lived early adversities; section 2 deepens the idea of the school as a community and the importance of adopting an intersectional perspective within a whole school approach; section 3 addresses the concept of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their impact on the school life of the child and the class; section 4 is dedicated to the connection between wellbeing and learning and the ways to recognize and enhance this connection in the school community; section 5 focuses on restorative approaches and ways to deal with unexpected and disrupting behaviors at school; section 6 addresses the personal stories in the school context, navigating between privacy and boundaries, and the construction of caring and respectful relationships among peers and with adults.

All of the units address a main training need for teachers and school staff dealing with the complexity of the school experience for children who live in alternative care, are adopted, and/or have lived forced migration. The booklet provides both key

concepts based on up-to-date scientific research and lesson plans that approach two levels: a brief theoretical introduction, enriched by some reading advice for those searching for a more in-depth analysis; and a variable number of learning units with activities suggested to develop a single lesson or a longer training program on the topic. All the units describe in detail focus, learning goals, timing and development of the activity, and supplies needed. The sections all together can be considered as a whole training module. However, the expert trainer can focus on the single section, and select the units according to specific needs, participants, and contexts. The activities described can be used with a wide range of audiences and they are thought to be adjustable to different contexts and various styles of interaction.

The learning units can be adapted according to the trainers' disciplinary background, the specific aims of the training as well as on the needs of the group of participants.

UNIT 1

Child protection systems and the school





Introduction

The child protection systems in the EU are embedded within different policies and organisations at the state level, but they are all grounded in the children's rights stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It is important that school principals and staff familiarise themselves with the key actors and the organisation of the local child protection system, but also that they share the awareness that the school is an actor of this system, and can play a very important role in the life of children who are in alternative care and adopted.

Children spend a great amount of their time at school. The school's duty to provide opportunities to remove barriers to children's participation and to promote social justice and inclusion is a fundamental part of its role of accompanying children to learning and goal achievement. At school, children can experience a learning environment that welcomes students with different backgrounds and abilities and is capable of fostering inclusion and citizenship. Also, the school builds a collaborative relationship with students' families and caregivers and offers important community resources for informal contact and support.

This Unit 1 is composed of three sections:

- Section 1. *Learning Unit Reference Sheet*: an overview of the unit which summarises the key content and learning objectives. At the same time, it provides a suggested structure of activities useful for working on the topics to be addressed.
- Section 2. *Contents*: here you can find the content needed to structure the information to be conveyed during lessons and other teaching activities.
- Section 3. *Slides*: the slides that support the lectures, already organised by topic.



SECTION 1.

Learning Unit 1 Reference Sheet

Key contents

- How child protection works at the international level; connection to the rights of the child
- Why are children in the protection system?
- The teacher’s role, actions and tools within the child protection system
- The teacher’s responsibilities (the “right amount” of vigilance and protection)

Learning goals

Knowledge

- Know how child protection works
- Understand the role and place of teachers and the school in child protection
- Know the main areas of vulnerability and resilience of children in contact with the child protection system

Skills

- Better understanding of difficult child and family situations
- Ability to identify and connect with professionals in child protection at the local level

Values

- Being non-judgmental
- Empathy
- Awareness that the teacher is neither alone nor self-sufficient

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
1	Lecture on children's rights, child protection, the role of teachers and the school	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> lecture, think-pair-share, Q&A time <i>Tools:</i> slides	45'	Classroom with mobile seats
2	Participants share previous experiences of working with children in alternative care at school and discuss the role of school as a(n un)safe environment	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> small group discussion (before the lecture if used as a warm-up and first stimulation, or after the lecture to comment and elaborate starting from the key content): prioritise key elements that might be opportunities/ barriers to making the most of the school experience <i>Tools:</i> poster/ diamond ranking app	45'	Classroom with mobile seats
3	Narratives from children coming to school from different adverse paths: Watch videos or have in-person meetings with care-leavers/adopted/in foster care/asylum-seeking youth about their school experiences In subgroups, frame the key elements of the school environment and the school staff's strategies that emerge from the narratives. In plenary discussion, list possible strategies and challenges for the school.	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> videos, testimonials <i>Tools:</i> poster, post-it	60'	Classroom with mobile seats
4	Simulation of collaboration meeting with local child protection actors		60'	Classroom with mobile seats



SECTION 2. Contents

In this section, the main privacy issues underlying traumatic personal biographies are addressed in a simple and effective manner. Basic knowledge and tools are developed regarding privacy policies and constraints and how to build relationships of trust and collaboration between the multiple actors involved (pupils, school, caregivers). Through the “Whole Community Approach” framework, the aim is to provide interpretative tools useful for reading behaviours that might otherwise be mistaken as poor collaboration, if not open opposition. Topics are presented in self-contained sections. This way the material lends itself to use as a whole or to customised use by the trainer.

#1. Children’s rights and the child protection system

The child protection systems in the EU are embedded within different policies and organizations at state level, but they are all grounded in the children’s rights stated in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

It is important that school principals and staff not only familiarise themselves with the key actors and how the local child protection system works, but have an awareness that school is also an actor in this system, and can play a very important role in the life of children who are in alternative care and adopted. For this reason, it is necessary that school staff is acquainted with the essential features of child protection and is aware of the reasons why children might be in care, the challenges they go through, and the role and tools that the teacher and school community have to support these children and their caregivers during their school career.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 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 fulfil 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, the children are provided with an alternative care solution, either in a foster family or in a residential facility, until they can return to their own family. When return to their family will not be possible, a permanent solution such as adoption may also be considered.

2. How the child protection system works

Child protection policies for children living outside their family care vary from country to country, according to their values, social historical traits and available resources. For example, while the United Kingdom has very high figures of domestic adoption (more than 4,000 each year), in The Netherlands this protection measure is nearly anecdotal, with some 28 adoption yearly, being the supervision by a family guardian¹ the most common measure of Dutch child protection. As stated in the [UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children](#), there is a broad consensus that, whenever a child does not have a family that can provide appropriate care, the following principles should guide the protection actions to be taken by the state:

- The **best interests of the child** should be the primary consideration in all matters involving or affecting them. This principle is related to the point about children being fully-fledged human beings, whose interests are important and who should be given space to be heard and respected. **Dialogue, negotiation and participation** should come to the forefront of common action for children.
- **Removal of a child from the care of the family should be seen as a measure of last resort.** Whenever possible, it should be temporary and for the shortest possible duration, so that the child returns to parental care once the original causes of separation have been resolved or have disappeared. Poverty should never be the only justification for a child to live in alternative care but should be addressed by providing appropriate support to the family.

Unless there is a strong reason against it, all decisions concerning alternative care should ensure maintaining the child as close as possible to their habitual place of residence, in order to facilitate contact and potential reintegration with their family and to minimise disruption of their educational, cultural and social life.

- **Large residential care facilities (institutions) should be progressively eliminated.** Since there is consistent evidence indicating that institutional care negatively affects children's development, especially at early ages^[3], states should prioritise other care solutions that can provide individualised and small-group care, whether temporary (such as foster families) or permanent (such as adoption).
- **Siblings** with existing bonds should not be separated by placements in alternative care unless there is a clear justification in the best interests of the children. In any case, it should be ensured that siblings can maintain contact with each other, unless this is against their wishes or interests.

¹ A family guardian is someone who gives advice about upbringing and makes agreements with parents about this. The parents remain responsible for the child themselves. They are obliged to cooperate with the advice and agreements of the family guardian. In a plan of action, the family guardian writes, among other things, how the parents themselves think they can solve the problems and whether they need help from care providers. The parents make important decisions about the child together with the guardian. Parents and children are required to follow the guardian's instructions.

Forms of Alternative Care

Despite small differences in terminology and content, we can group the different protection measures European states apply for out of home care in three categories:

- **Foster families:** Children in foster families may live with relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings or others) or with unrelated foster parents. In the event of the need for placement, states usually try to find carers in the extended family (aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.). When this is not possible, they look for an alternative care solution, which can be a foster family with nonrelative adults.
- **Residential care:** Since families are considered the optimal environment for the growth, well-being and protection of children, “the use of residential care should be limited to cases where such a setting is specifically appropriate, necessary and constructive for the individual child concerned”, as stated in the [UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children](#). Nevertheless, there are still many children in the EU that live in such settings, although efforts are made to promote deinstitutionalization, especially for younger children. Large institutions have been replaced in many countries by “family-like” small units in order to better meet the specific needs of the child². Residential care can also refer to placement settings such as emergency shelters and supervised independent living.
- **Adoption and permanent placements:** When the return to the birth family is not feasible, the priority should be to find a permanent family placement within a reasonable period. In such a situation, adoption (through which children who will not be raised by their birth parents become full and permanent legal members of another family) may be considered the most suitable solution. In some countries, such as the United Kingdom, special guardianship is increasingly used as an alternative to adoption. Special guardians may be foster carers, but are usually people within the child’s birth family or family network, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, or family friends who take parental responsibility until the child becomes an adult.

3. The school in the forefront of children’s protection needs

How does a school meet the needs of these children and youngsters?

Children spend a great amount of their time at school. A school’s duty to provide opportunities to remove barriers to children’s participation and to promote social justice and inclusion is a fundamental part of its role of accompanying children to learning and goal achievement.

² The case of Italy is a good example. The law 149/2001 concerning the protection of the child of 2001 prescribed the closure of the so-called orphanages by 2006 and mandated to privilege family foster care or residential care in small units “family-like”, with a maximum of 10 children. This process was accompanied by a diversification of the forms of foster care in order to better meet the specific needs of the child and the family of origin.

At school, children can experience a learning environment that welcomes students with different backgrounds and abilities and is capable of fostering inclusion and citizenship. Also, schools build collaborative relationships with students' families and caregivers and offer important community resources for informal contact and support. For children who have had adverse experiences, a welcoming and safe school environment and good collaboration between school and social services can improve social inclusion, prevent dropout and foster personal development.

However, schools can also be spaces that restrict learning and social inclusion. While they have the power to designate the identity markers that are most desirable and enable certain students to succeed within the institution, conversely, these same social and cultural markers can very easily promote exclusion.

Data confirm that children in alternative care show lower academic success (Flynn, Tessier and Coulombe, 2013), lower job achievement in adult life (Hook and Courtney, 2011), and worse health conditions (Dixon, 2008); the quality of the school environment can make the difference.

From an ecosystemic perspective, development occurs within an ecological system that promotes agency, learning, and interaction through everyday "proximal" processes (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). To support such conditions at school, some key points must be considered:

- Interaction with primary caregivers and key actors in different contexts.
- "Ecological transitions" as key moments for developing agency and learning.
- Sense of belonging and community relations as resilience factors.

On the other hand, school is not a "naturally" inclusive environment, and children in alternative care can encounter many obstacles, among them:

- Current discourses surrounding students in alternative care, adoptees, refugee students are largely framed according to deficits (Uptin, Wright, Harwood, 2012).
- This positioning places the student in a frame of negative and deficit assumptions within schools (being traumatised, a victim and at risk) (Keddie, 2011).
- "Institutional narratives" that silence the students' story and perspectives
- Implicit curriculum and school policy: competitive and standardised school environments, where some students might fall out of the school's bounds of acceptability

Therefore, schools need to develop knowledge and tools to manage the complexity pupils bring with them.

Some key points to supporting a welcoming and inclusive school environment are based in a perspective of holistic protection against violence:

- Ensuring the best interest of children in all actions.
- Building a structural partnership between school and child protection services (joint trainings, multi-professional teams...).
- Participation of the adults who are responsible for the child in the school community and its offshoots.
- Whole-school approach.
- Promoting protection factors at both the individual and environmental level.
- Legitimising children's stories and experiences, including by representing diversity in books and other materials used in the classroom.
- Preventing discrimination and avoiding stigmatisation.



SECTION 3. Slides

In this link you will find a powerpoint divided into 5 parts. It is possible to use the presentation as a whole, or to only use certain subsections, depending on your objectives, the learning context and the type of audience. Some subsections contain suggestions for group work and group discussion. A list of references is provided.

1 Introduction and icebreaking

2 Children's rights and the child protection system

3 The process of protection

4 The school in the forefront of children's protection needs

5 References



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Slides for this unit are provided in Annex 1

UNIT 2.1

The school as a community

A whole school approach on wellbeing

The importance of intersectionality
in achieving educational equity





Introduction

The school has the responsibility to favour the integral development of its students. It is necessary to create a space of wellbeing and good cooperation where the needs of each child or adolescent are met. Likewise, as an educational community, it must promote an optimum level of communication between students, teachers and families, and have protocols and action plans that facilitate appropriate responses to complex situations, both in the classroom and in other areas within the school context.

In order to be able to carry out this work, multiple aspects and areas must be taken into account. This unit will address all of these layers, to provide tools apt to foster the overall wellbeing and development among the children's cognitive and performative skills, as well as emotional and relational ones.

This Unit 2.1. is composed of three sections:

- Section 1. *Learning Unit Reference Sheet*: an overview of the unit which summarises the key content and learning objectives. At the same time, it provides a possible structure of activities useful for working on the topics to be addressed.
- Section 2. *Contents*: here you can find the content needed to structure the information to be conveyed during lessons and other teaching activities.
- Section 3. *Slides*: these slides, which are already organised by topic, support the lectures



SECTION 1.

Learning Unit 2.1 Reference Sheet

Key contents

- How to develop a community as a school
- How to work with a whole school approach on wellbeing
- Working with parents and families
- Taking care of the teaching team: the circle of influence
- Empowering teachers
- The importance of intersectionality in inclusive education

Learning goals

- Understand what a whole school approach is, as well as its components, which function and contribute in coherence with each other.
- Learn about supporting models and theories
- Learn why a community school approach is the most effective way to contribute to the wellbeing of students and why it improves their learning
- Understand that an environment of acceptance of emotions and difficulties, with room for difference and tailoring to needs, contributes to improved wellbeing of all students.
- Learn with whom you can work within and around the school on the wellbeing of all students and how you can do this as a team.
- Understand the role of intersectionality in inclusive education
- Learn to identify intersectional identities of students

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
1.1	<p>a) What is a community? What makes people belong to a community?? Define the terms (community, belonging)</p> <p>b) Interactive activity: rethinking the school with an ecological lens. Focusing on the community approach</p>	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i></p> <p>a) Inquiry-based: we construct the definition of a community with the responses in the classroom</p> <p>b) Work in groups and sharing,</p> <p>Cooperative learning, Project-based</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask the participants the question: What is a community? Get answers aloud from the audience as a warm up activity (5 min) 2. Provide a general definition with the responses given (and our knowledge) 3. Ask them if the school is a community. They have to discuss this in groups and write in post-its the reasons why it is (10 min) 4. Sharing responses and putting the post-its on a poster. 	30 min (5 min instruction, 15 min in groups, 10 min sharing)	Classroom
1.2	<p>Presentation of evidence on...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The whole school approach - How everything influences children's wellbeing - Sharing the model of Katherine Weare and the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner 	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i></p> <p>Teacher-centered</p> <p><i>Tools:</i></p> <p>PowerPoint presentation and written materials</p>	45 min	

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
2.1	Empowering the teacher activity: realising that a lot of the work you are already doing contributes to children's wellbeing	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Inquiry-based.</p> <p>Objective: motivation, seeing the value of their work, empowering</p> <p>Start discussing positive stories.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask them to split into groups and discuss a positive experience that they had as a teacher last week or in the previous weeks (before summer break). We need to ensure that there is a teacher in every group. (15 min) 2. Go back to the whole class and ask first about the positive stories. The chair or the one leading the session tries to reflect on the resilience, strengths, qualities of the teachers. We can connect those with some vignettes from your research. (15 min) 	30 min (5 min presentation of activity, 15 min activity, 10 min sharing ideas)	Classroom
2.2	Wellbeing of the teaching team; how to take care of yourself and your team & why this is so important	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Teacher-centred, theoretical</p>	45 min	Classroom
3	Diversity and intersectionality in the classroom: The importance of intersectionality in achieving educational equity	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Teacher-centred, theoretical</p> <p><i>Tools:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Powerpoint presentation - Two practical activities in groups - Recommendations for teachers - The case of Abdullah 	45 min	Classroom

SECTION 2. Contents

Part 1: The whole school approach and the school community

#1.1 Theoretical story Intro: what is a whole school approach and what is a school community

A whole school approach means that all parts of the school work effectively as an organisation and in this way contribute to the wellbeing of all students. It involves a combination of vision and policy, education for students about social-emotional development (relating with yourself and others), the timely identification of (starting) problems and offering appropriate solutions, and collaboration with parents, carers and local community organisations (see figure 1).

The core is that a solid foundation is laid in the school to function as a supportive community where students feel connected, where there is acceptance of emotions, respect for each other, and where building relationships is central (Weare, 2015). A place where differences are embraced and celebrated. In addition to attention for the students, the well-being of the teaching staff is promoted and attention is paid to the prevention of stress.

In a school community, attention is also paid to participation of students and parents, families and carers in learning and making decisions., particularly those parents and carers of students who experience difficulties or whose families feel excluded or stigmatised. By giving everyone a voice and a role, you contribute to the involvement of everyone in the well-being of growing children. This applies equally to secondary schools and primary schools.

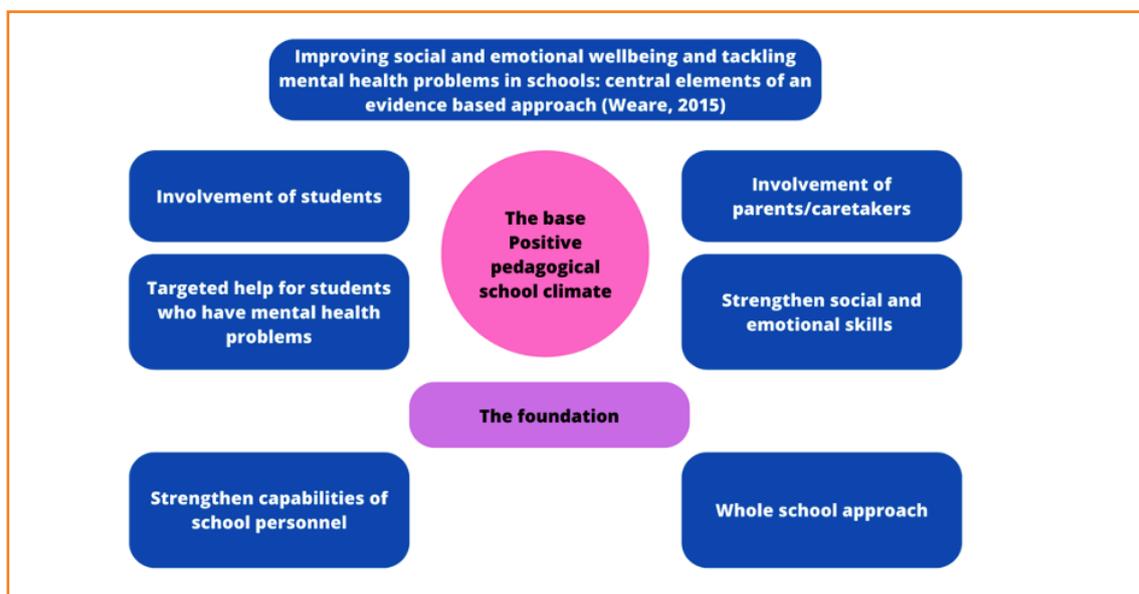


Figure 1: Model of Weare

#1.2 Why a whole-school approach works

Over the years, research has shown that a multi-component approach, in other words, a coherent integrated approach is the most effective choice when you want to promote the socio-emotional development and well-being of students. This can be explained by the ecological systems theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner (see figure 2), who claims that children develop under the influence of their environment and the layered systems in which they live. Home, the neighbourhood and the schoolyard, the classroom and the school as a whole are those systems that influence socio-emotional development. A school-wide approach focuses on all those system layers.

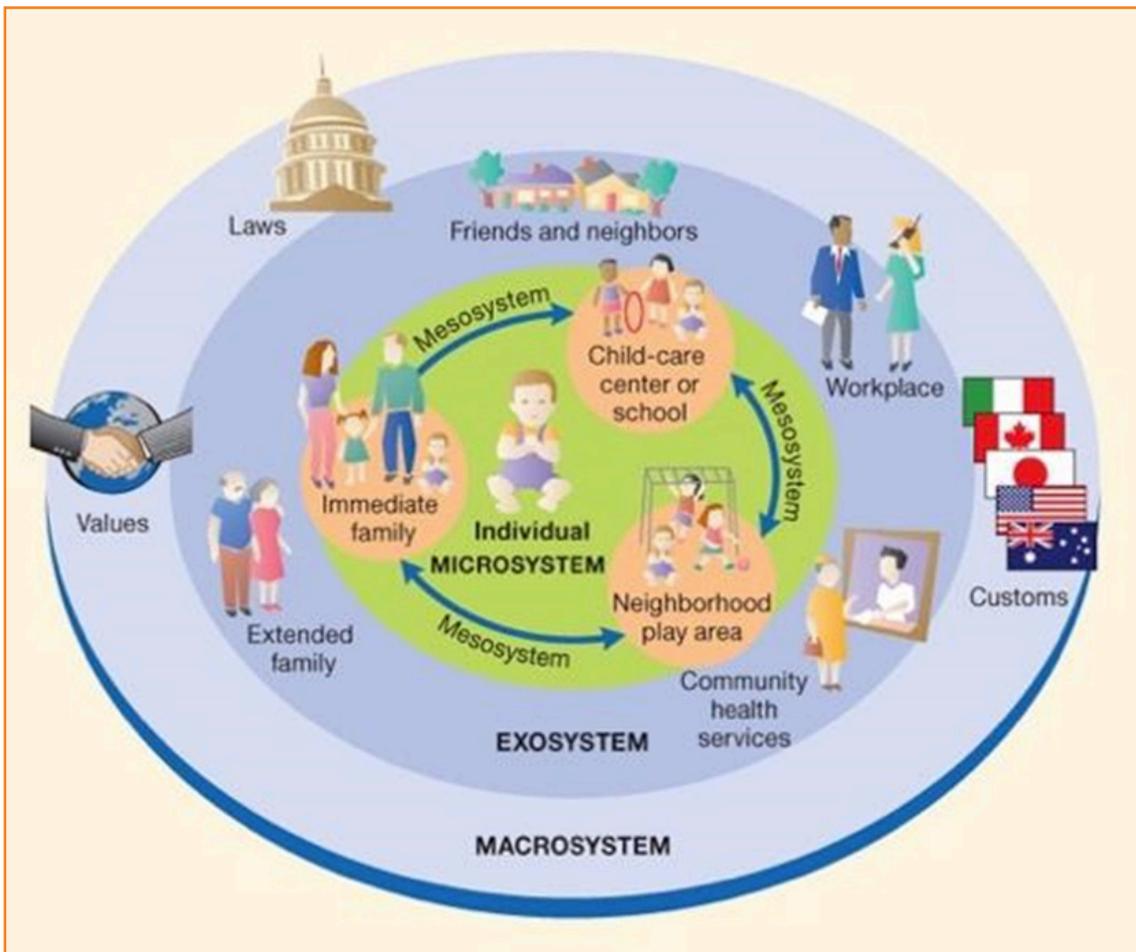


Figure 2: Bronfenbrenner's ecological system

Such an approach encompasses and mobilises the school as a whole to promote well-being and to respond adequately to the onset of children's mental health needs. A lot of research has been done showing that such a coherent approach works, while the use of separate interventions often does not work or even has the opposite effect.

Children who move through the school, are in different places and also gain learning experiences in all those places, receive a more consistent education, support and

guidance in a school with a school-wide approach (see figure 3). The students also learn how you support each other as a group, how you are strong as a collective and how you take care of each other. We also speak of caring classrooms. Such an environment gives children space to relax and be themselves. This creates space for their personal development and learning. But it is especially important that there is appreciation for the difference in qualities and talents of the students by the teacher and the students themselves.

In addition, we know that students feel better about themselves when they have the chance to influence their environment and experience a degree of self-efficacy. This is why a school-wide approach works if it focuses on the influence of students on the school setting, their learning and the learning environment. Research also shows that an approach works better when there is a lot of attention for teachers themselves, both the training of teachers and attention to their well-being. The involvement of parents and the caretakers of children is an essential component as well.



Figure 3: Model of a whole-school approach on wellbeing

A first step that needs to be taken when working on a whole-school approach is to have a clear and shared vision within the entire community on the general school climate. A climate in which all children are seen and recognized and where social-emotional development is recognized as a first basis for learning. And where there is specific attention for children with special needs (for example) because their development has been compromised, because of a complex home situation, or because they do not come from a mainstream culture.

It is necessary to build a climate in which asking questions, raising difficulties and asking for help is accepted. So there needs to be a school-wide consensus on

this climate for it to work. This also requires skills that support these views within the entire school population. It is also important to invest in the climate in the classrooms. How do you build a caring classroom? How do you contribute to an inclusive classroom where everyone feels at home? For this you can study Part 2 of this Unit.

#1.3 Who are your partners with whom you work?

As mentioned, the power and effectiveness of a whole school approach is important to various parties. A child's development does not depend solely on personal factors. A child strongly develops under the influence of the environment. In the model of Bronfenbrenner (see figure 2) different layers in which children develop can be distinguished.

EXERCISE: The Ecological System in which you move as a professional.

Draw your own ecology, from the inside out:

1. You as a professional in your professional context (in the centre)
2. Who do you work with within your school (1st shell)?
3. With which educational partners do you work for the school (2nd shell)?
4. Who do you work with outside of school and in society and internationally (beyond 2nd shell)?



Part 2: Empowering the Teacher & Well-being of the school staff

Attention to the vitality, involvement and wellbeing of school staff is a precondition for jointly promoting the development and wellbeing of the students.

Motivated school staff who feel seen and recognized have more job satisfaction and more space to shape education in relation to students. Attention to the vitality, involvement and well-being of school staff is a precondition for jointly promoting the development and wellbeing of the students.

Using the framework of Viac and Fraser (2020), various influencing factors that are important for the wellbeing of the teacher and the school staff are discussed, such as the complexity of teaching, the pedagogical tools a teacher has and the role they play in promoting wellbeing for both students and teachers. Viac and Fraser (2020) introduced a framework that can specifically look at the well-being of teachers within the school system. The framework identifies four different aspects related to the wellbeing of teachers: these aspects are: cognitive, subjective, physical and mental, and social wellbeing, and are always interrelated. The framework helps to gain insight into the well-being of teachers in a school-wide context. Working conditions influence the well-being of teachers. The four aspects mentioned can also be viewed separately and associated with, for example, the risk of increased stress, an increased risk of dropping out or leaving education. In addition, the framework also makes a connection with the wellbeing of students. Using this framework, school staff can reflect on how they relate to these aspects in their school organisation.

In the search for well-being at school level, reference is made to 'vital teaching' or 'the vital school'. This vitality is characterised by:

- making connections: commitment to work, students and colleagues,
- having autonomy: shaping one's own role and dealing with boundaries,
- inspiration: being able to work on ambitions and dreams, and
- achievement: achieving success together with others.

Research into the vitality of teachers has connections with wellbeing. Research by Freude and colleagues (2005) shows that consciously creating settings in which people think about vitality and well-being are important for the proper functioning of teachers and the prevention of dropout.

A predictor of the teacher's wellbeing is, among other things, the pedagogical skills that this teacher possesses, as a result of which he creates a good pedagogical climate for students and therefore also for himself. Strong pedagogical skills such as being able to make connections with students, having an eye for students, and getting to know the students, promote the pedagogical climate in the classroom,

which increases the well-being and vitality of those involved. Teachers can, as it were, fill their 'toolbox' by consciously working on well-being and social competences with students and with each other. The image the teacher has of the relationship with students forms the interpersonal identity standard. Van der Want (2015) discovered that the way you interact with students can be developed. To discover your way of interacting with students, you can use the matchmaker analysis, which provides insight into your relationships with students and what meaning you give to these relationships.

#2.1 How to work on the wellbeing of the school staff

Promoting well-being is also a task and responsibility of the school leader: school employees who know that they are heard and seen in their working environment. Gu and Day (2013) argue that teachers' well-being increases when they are less exposed to:

- demands and pressure,
- increasing administration,
- behavioural problems of students, and
- long working days.

Knowing this, it is important for the school leader to see how attention can be paid to the above aspects in the school context. A school leader who pays attention to the well-being of school staff prioritises, instils confidence and creates safety.

Teachers who can do their work based on moral conviction, have a purpose, can discover themselves more and more in their work, and can express creativity and feel connected, will continue to do their work with conviction. Leadership in the school constantly encourages employees to hold on to the meaning of good education. For this you have to be able to feel good as a teacher, as a person in the school context and beyond. This occurs when a teacher knows and feels valued.

To promote school well-being among school staff, school leaders should aim to make sure (Cann et al., 2021):

- The teacher's voice, the teacher's work and their efforts are valued;
- Professional development that is meaningful to the teacher is facilitated;
- It is made possible for teachers to have sufficient expressiveness when decisions have to be made or when change is about to happen

Listening to teachers implies collaboration with school leaders. This requires appropriate communication and connection- communication that builds and encourages collaboration and works from a shared vision.



Part 3: Striving for educational equity

#3.1 Introducing educational equity and intersectionality in the classroom

Despite the emerging interest in addressing diversity and inclusion in education, international studies show that biases and disparities remain widespread in schools. These biases and disparities have led to an achievement gap which continues to persist among certain subgroups of students. Schools seem to often perpetuate inequalities instead of promoting educational equity.

Educational equity refers to the actions directed to ensure that every child has an equal chance for educational success. Promoting educational equity requires understanding the particular needs and challenges faced by individual students and their communities in order to provide them with the most adequate support to overcome their challenges.

Being aware of intersectionality is crucial for achieving educational equity in schools. The term intersectionality was originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, although it didn't come out of nowhere for her; black feminists (contemporary and before her) had already discussed this in their writings. Nowadays it is seen as a theoretical framework, a methodology or a lens. It is a very useful framework that helps us to understand how a person or a group of people are affected by different disadvantages. This framework explains the ways in which systems of oppression (social, economic and political) connect and influence each other. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are all assigned multiple social identities. Within each category, there is a hierarchy - a social status with dominant and non-dominant groups. As with race, dominant members can bestow benefits to members they deem "normal," or limit opportunities to members that fall into "other" categories. A person of the non-dominant group can experience oppression in the form of limitations, disadvantages, or disapproval. They may even suffer abuse from individuals, institutions, or cultural practices. "Oppression" refers to a combination of prejudice and institutional power that creates a system that regularly and severely discriminates against some groups and benefits other groups. Society's institutions, such as government, education, and culture, all contribute or reinforce the oppression of marginalised social groups while elevating dominant social groups. This results in the discrimination of certain groups of people due to their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, presence of disabilities, religion, language, nationality, refugee status, migration background, and other identity markers. Oppression and privilege are also tied to a time and place.

Practice activity in groups - Check yourself (adapted from Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit, UN Women office, 2021).

Intersectionality acknowledges that we all bring personal values, interests and beliefs based on our own unique lived experiences. In order to develop an intersectional approach in the classroom, we need to start by reflecting our own subjectivity and the power dynamics affecting our students. You should consider:

- The different areas of your life and work where you hold power and areas where you experience disadvantage.
- Your personal values, experiences, interests, beliefs and political commitments.
- How these might influence the knowledge, values and biases that you bring to the classroom.

I **DO NOT** have privilege in these identities:

Socio-economic _____
Sexual Orientation _____
Religion _____
Gender _____
Gender Identity _____
Employment _____
Physical Ability _____
English speaking _____
Ethnicity _____
Geographic location _____
Nationality _____
Education _____
Modern Utilities _____
Age _____
Other: _____
Other: _____
Other: _____

I **DO** have unearned privilege in these identities:

Socio-economic _____
Sexual Orientation _____
Religion _____
Gender _____
Gender Identity _____
Employment _____
Physical Ability _____
English speaking _____
Ethnicity _____
Geographic location _____
Nationality _____
Education _____
Modern Utilities _____
Age _____
Other: _____
Other: _____
Other: _____

Not all children have equal opportunities in life. Indeed, equality is not the same as equal opportunities or equity. Some children just need a little more to reach the same opportunities. This also means that the professionals working with these children sometimes need a little more time or a different approach than with other children. They need to understand each case, so that they can evaluate the child's needs, which are sometimes more time, a different approach, or a different sensitivity.

In order to promote equity in our learning environments it is of utmost importance that teachers develop a good understanding of the lived experiences and needs of their students, including 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). This exercise could help us to develop more inclusive and culturally responsive schools in which all the students can thrive. When teachers are able to build these inclusive environments from the first school years, they can better prevent the stigmatisation of children that are considered 'different'. One of the goals of intersectionality is an admission that everyone is different, one of the first steps is thus to also stop with labelling some children as such; inclusive environments can not only prevent stigmatisation but also the labelling itself.

School teachers in disadvantaged communities often recognize that children do not have equal opportunities and that this demands more from them than 'just teaching'. For instance, in this context children are more likely to start school with a language delay, and their families are more likely to struggle financially and to suffer social isolation. Moreover, not all children grow up in a supportive parenting situation of the social system doesn't allow for this to take place. When parents have to invest all their energy to ensure that the basic needs of the family are fulfilled (i.e., when living in poor socioeconomic conditions), little time might be left to support their children's school attainment. Having to grow up in poverty or other stressful situations can be detrimental to the development of children in these communities.

Practice activity in groups:

Recognizing identity and intersectionality in the classroom

Reflect on your students identities and try to explain how they relate to privilege or discrimination in the classroom. If you want, you can provide examples of your own practice.

Specific commitment to well-being, involvement and equity within school is then necessary to reduce, solve and prevent delay in children's development. This places a heavy burden on the teachers and demands much more from them than "just teaching". With this it is important that policies are created that provide teachers with tools to better handle this burden. Indeed, research shows that when students

feel good about themselves, they learn better. Paying attention to well-being and equity in school, has a positive effect on health and on learning abilities. For instance, it leads to better learning performance, improvement of concentration, and less behavioural and emotional problems. Specifically for refugee children, feeling 'at home' in school leads to a lower chance of depression, anxiety and PTSD. Also, children who sometimes do not acquire social emotional skills at home sufficiently benefit from attention to wellbeing at school.

Don't miss the bigger picture

Intersectionality can help us to understand how some students face different forms of exclusion in school and how to respond to their simultaneous needs. For instance, a refugee student with learning disabilities, a Black student who is adopted, an LGBT student with behavioural disorders, a migrant student with a trauma experience... are all cases that require comprehensive services to respond to their complex needs in today's schools. Responding only to one category is missing the point!

#3.2 Recommendations for teachers

Here we present you with six actions that every teacher can tackle to promote educational equity in their school.

- 1 Reflect on your power and privilege:** As a teacher, it is important that you consider your own privilege (and your own oppression) in relation to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and that you reflect on how your own identity impacts the interactions in the classroom.
- 2 Gain a better understanding of oppression:** Only when you recognize the sources of inequality faced by minoritized students will you be able to act appropriately to challenge it (for instance, improving school policies, practices and curriculum). Sometimes this requires rethinking what you have taken for granted for many years.
- 3 Remain sensitive to cultural differences:** 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.
- 4 Develop culturally responsive practices and create a caring classroom:** For instance, by elaborating a culturally inclusive curriculum that ensures 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.

5 Develop a clear and effectively communicated policy to address episodes of discrimination and harassment in your school. For example, develop and implement anti-bullying policies and procedures that seriously address racist or xenophobic bullying in your school.

6 Listen to families and communities: Families from marginalised communities might experience challenges to make their views heard in educational settings. We must ensure that schools are inclusive to them and avoid further marginalisation. Moreover, teachers can learn a great deal by listening to their experiences and collective stories.

#3.3 The case of “Abdullah”

(Adapted from Roxas and Roy, 2012)

The case for analysis is that of Abdullah (adapted from Roxas and Roy, 2012), a Somali Bantu high school student who had recently arrived to the US as a refugee. He had left Somalia as a one year old child due to safety concerns for the family and had only arrived in the US at age 12 with his father and other children.

Prior to emigrating to the US, the family had lived in Kenya, where Haji (Abdullah’s father) worked odd jobs including translation services in English for NGO’s working with refugees, and tutoring students in mathematics. Because of Haji’s work, the family was processed for refugee resettlement. It is then that Haji and his father moved to the US, although he’d be separated from the rest of his family for 3 more years.

When the rest of his family arrived, Abdullah arranged to be transferred to a different high school to be closer to his biological mother, which he did without the help of his father, who was not aware of this. This new school had limited school funding, issues with truancy, discipline and low student morale, and teachers there had little professional development.

This same year, Abdullah took a guided tour of the community college and connected with the guide to enquire about resources available for him at this college. Through this, he acquired a pass to the computer labs so he could work on his school assignments. However, he began to struggle with school in his second and third year of high school, as he had poor grades and was suspended twice for fighting. His teachers said that Abdullah missed work, class, and was earning low grades. His grammar teacher stated to the interviewer she “did not have the time to attend to a student who didn’t put in the time”. Abdullah continued to struggle,

sleeping in class and getting lost during lectures, where his teachers could not help due to struggling with class management.

Abdullah would later explain the reasons behind not handing in work, as his strategy was to prioritise which work he would do based on the weight of the assignment for the overall grade in his course. When asked, Abdullah attributed his low grades to his own ability.

Abdullah and other Somali Bantu students attempted to assimilate into the African-American population at school. They wore baggy clothing and adopted interactional discourse patterns to appear “tough”. However, they were not accepted in friendship groups with US- born students.

Abdullah also began to skip classes due to a change in policy which caused some lunch periods to overlap with classes, so that oftentimes students (including Abdullah) would not share their lunch period with their friends. Thus, students would skip class in order to see their friends in that period. Abdullah was suspended for skipping class for 2 days right before exams, and missed class revision because of this.



SECTION 3. Slides

This section consists of a powerpoint divided into 9 parts. It is possible to use the presentation as a whole, or to use only certain subsections, depending on your objectives, the learning context and the type of audience. Some subsections contain suggestions for group work and case studies.

- # 1 What is a community at school
- # 2 Well-being at school
- # 3 Social emotional development and well-being
- # 4 The school staff's role
- # 5 Opportunities and privilege
- # 6 Educational equity
- # 7 Intersectionality
- # 8 Case study
- # 9 References



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Slides for this unit are provided in Annex 2.1

UNIT 2.2

The school as a community

How to develop inclusive schools where
everyone counts





Introduction

The school has the responsibility to favour the integral development of its students. It is necessary to create a space of well-being and good cooperation where the needs of each child or adolescent are met. Likewise, as an educational community, it must promote an optimum level of communication between students, teachers and families, and have protocols and action plans that facilitate appropriate responses to complex situations, both in the classroom and in other areas within the school context.

In order to be able to carry out this work, multiple aspects and areas must be taken into account such as: student welfare; teaching team; family and school relationship; playgrounds and other school spaces; circle of influence. This section will address all of these layers, to provide tools apt to foster the overall wellbeing of children and develop among them not only cognitive and performative skills, but emotional and relational ones as well.

This Unit 2.2. is composed of three sections:

- Section 1. *Learning Unit Reference Sheet*: an overview of the unit summarising the key content and learning objectives. At the same time, it provides a possible structure of activities useful for working on the topics to be addressed.
- Section 2. *Contents*: here you can find the content needed to structure the information to be conveyed during lessons and other teaching activities.
- Section 3. *Slides*: these slides, which are already organised by topic, support the lectures



SECTION 1.

Learning Unit 2.2 Reference Sheet

Key contents

- Student wellbeing (Addressing whole class: classroom climate, creating a cohesive classroom, classroom dynamics)
- Teaching team. Circle of influence (wellbeing of the teaching team, looking after yourself and your team).
- Working with families
- Playgrounds and other school spaces

Learning goals

- By the end of the lesson, participants will know how to create and maintain a cohesive and safe classroom environment, applying different classroom dynamics and enhancing the development of students' emotional competences. This needs to Take into account that for some students, such as those who have experienced early adversity, it can be difficult to feel accepted and the whole class needs to accept this situation with assertiveness and patience.
- Be aware of the importance of activities in playgrounds and other spaces in the development of students, in promoting peaceful coexistence and equal opportunities for the enjoyment of playground activities, encouraging positive interaction between all.

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
1	Welcome	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Individual work, exhibition <i>Tools:</i> slides presentation	20'	Classroom
2	Greetings and farewells	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Emotional education	Daily. 3' on arrival, 1' on the leave	School entrance
3	Group cohesion dynamics	<i>Teaching and learning methodss:</i> cooperative learning <i>Tools:</i> according to the dynamic to be carried out	20'	Classroom or open space
4	Mainstreaming diversity in the classroom (gender, ethnicity, functional, etc.)	<i>Teaching and learning methodss:</i> Participatory and collaborative <i>Tools:</i> viewing of videos and lectures related to each of the diversity topics to be addressed	15'/30' (depending on the activity)	In the classroom and visits to environments related to the subject being covered
5	Sociogram	<i>Tools:</i> group sociogram at the beginning of the course and at the end of the course from the first year onwards, individual sociogram from 3 to 6 years old. Daily intervention in the classroom, tutoring and other spaces to compensate for possible difficulties that may be observed.	60'	Classroom
6	Considering students' mental health and emotions in the classroom	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Individual and participatory (respecting privacy and without exposing students). <i>Tools:</i> Individual and group diary	Weekly. 10'/20'	Classroom

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
7	Safe space	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i></p> <p>The teaching team seeks a “protection space” and a reference person to whom the child can turn when they experience a strong lack of emotional regulation (on their own initiative or asked by the teacher). This space can be located out of the classroom, but it can also be a quiet space inside the classroom where one can take refuge if needed. Depending on the age, it can be a space with cushions and relaxing lights, a small hut or tepee, a space with paintings and plastic material to express emotions.</p>	<p>Searching for and adapting the “safe space” in the school and the “calm space” in the classroom.</p> <p>Faculty meeting at the beginning of the school year (30’). Adequacy of the spaces throughout the course</p>	Classroom corner, some place out of the classroom
8	Organising the schoolyard. Brainstorming	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods::</i> teamwork</p> <p><i>Tools:</i> text document</p>	360’	Schoolyard for teamwork
9	Teaching staff brainstorming	<p>Teaching and learning methods:</p> <p>A teacher will present the teaching team an example of a student’s attitude when presented with a class activity in which they have to talk about their family in front of the rest of their classmates and this student’s response is: “I don’t have to talk about my life” and slams the table.</p> <p>How can this particular situation be solved?</p>	120’	Teachers’ room

Welcome

The future teacher welcomes the students with a short introductory presentation. It is important that our students get to know us, know something of our personal life, feel us close and human. All this helps to create a climate of trust and closeness necessary for them to feel safe.

For this purpose, a presentation will be created with text, images and videos, containing the following:

- Personal information about the teacher, interests, tastes, etc.
- Clear information about the area, what is to be learned, in what way, how the course will be organised and how it will be assessed.
- It is also a good idea to bring something personal to show, a book, a record, a family photo...

You will have 15 to 20 minutes to give your presentation in the classroom, this presentation will have to be prepared in advance.

Group cohesion dynamics

One of the first elements of the curriculum that must be considered in order to achieve student well-being is the methodology used in the classroom. The use of inclusive methodologies is the most effective means of creating safe and cohesive classrooms, combating discriminatory attitudes and making the school a truly welcoming community. Project work and cooperative work are two of the most widely used tools in the school environment, favouring the inclusion and participation of all pupils, taking into account their diversity and favouring the adaptation of content to the level of each child. Cooperative or project work requires the continuous and regular use of cohesion dynamics. These dynamics help pupils to get to know one other, create group awareness and, crucially, lead to the personal development of each child's sense of belonging. Moreover, through these dynamics we can increase students' motivation, help them develop a positive sense of self, give them security and confidence and increase their chances of having a more serene attitude towards any situation. It is important to regularly carry out cohesion dynamics with the class as a group and also in small groups. In this way, the relationship between the students is favoured and they get to know one another. Some dynamics that may be of interest:

- The spider's web
- The target
- The travelling suitcase
- The protagonist of the week
- Making a notebook - Who am I?

Mainstreaming diversity in the classroom (gender, ethnicity, functional, etc.)

This will be an activity carried out periodically (depending on the possibilities of finding and preparing material, scheduled visits, availability of human resources).

Possible activities:

- Creation of an awareness-raising video
- Interviews/visits with people and entities from diverse backgrounds
- Prepare an activity of what they have learnt so they can present it to their peers of the same age or lower level.
- Make a small dossier on the different countries of origin of the pupils (traditions, curiosities, gastronomy).
- Introduce, in a cross-cutting manner, images and resources that make all students and their diversity visible.

Considering students' mental health and emotions in the classroom

The activity will be carried out periodically. One day a week (for 15-20 minutes), each student will write in their diary the emotions, feelings and worries they have at that moment, and once this first part, which is personal to the student, has been completed, the teacher will award the students the opportunity to voluntarily express what they have written, in order to get an understanding of the emotions, feelings, worries, etc. that the group as a whole has, and as a result of this group activity, a diary of the classroom can be written.

- Creation of an individual diary
- Creation of a classroom diary
- Suggestion box (students can write something that has happened to them or worries them, if they feel embarrassed they can read it anonymously and look for solutions or the teachers can be made aware so that they can look for a solution).
- Hold assemblies.

Playground Organisation Plan

Prospective teachers should draw up a playground organisation plan. To do so, they will have to organise themselves into teams of 3 to 4 people.

The first thing they will have to do is to visit a school or institute to see what the playground is like and the activities that take place there.

After the visit, a document will be drawn up in which the current situation of the visited playground will be described: A small schematic plan of what the playground looks like, the approximate number of pupils in the playground, the

number of teachers in charge of the playground, the activities that are carried out there.

Then, in the same document, a proposal for improving the organisation and activities in the playground shall be drawn up, which shall include, at minimum, the following aspects:

- Proposed physical organisation of the playground, creating new spaces if necessary.
- Tasks for which the teachers in charge of the playground are responsible .
- Activities to be carried out in each of the spaces, to facilitate the coexistence and integration of students, taking into account the diversity within our student body.
- Integrate families into the new plan.
- Student responsibility for the functioning of the plan.
- How to make the playground a safe place for everyone, paying special attention to pupils with special needs.
- Proposed solutions to conflicts with coexistence that may arise.
- Evaluation of the plan.



SECTION 1. Contents

In this section topics regarding well-being at school, inclusiveness, respect for diversity, emotional expression and relational understanding will be addressed. Creating spaces of wellbeing refers both to emotional and relational skills that need to be developed through emotional education. However, the way the physical environment is organised is important as well and suggestions will be provided in this regard.

Topics are presented in self-contained sections. This way the material lends itself for use as a whole, but also to customised use by the trainer.

#1. Dealing with complexity

The school has the responsibility to favour the integral development of its students. It is necessary to create a space of wellbeing and good treatment where the needs of each child or adolescent are met. Likewise, as an educational community, it must promote an optimum level of communication between students, teachers and families, and have protocols and action plans that facilitate appropriate responses to complex situations, both in the classroom and in other areas within the school context.

In order to be able to carry out this work, the following aspects must be taken into account:

- Student welfare
- Teaching team
- Family and school
- Playgrounds and other school spaces
- Circle of influence

Below we present several scenarios related to the above-mentioned contents. They will serve as a reflection for the subsequent development of each one of them:

1. Alina is a 6-year-old girl of Russian origin who has just been adopted. It is February and her family is coming to the centre to enrol her. You are the school counsellor.
 - Factors to take into account
 - How you would approach their schooling process

Assumption: team work

2. You are the teacher of a 4-year-old preschool classroom. One of your pupils, Lucia, is Chinese, adopted when she was 12 months old. The other children laugh at her because she can't draw a house yet. She only scribbles.

Assumption: student welfare

3. You are looking after the dining room, and there has been a fight between two 5-year-old boys. Pedro is an adopted child from Ethiopia and he has bitten Javier. Of course, Javier keeps insulting Pedro, calling him racial slurs.

Assumption: Playground and other spaces

4. Djeneba is in the 4th grade of primary school. She is a good classmate and a hard worker, but teachers complain that she does not stop moving and that her constant activity slows down the rhythm of the class. The science teacher thinks that she does it because she wants to and sends her out of class every day. She thinks it has nothing to do with her life history (adopted at the age of two). You are the tutor, what would you do?

Assumption: The teaching team

5. You have an initial interview with Surat's family, a child of Indian origin, adopted at age five. He comes from another school and you were told he has some emotional regulation problems. What information do you think is relevant and how would you take it into account?

Assumption: family and school

6. Victor is in a foster family. On Wednesdays, he is nervous, irritable and has conflicts with his classmates. His foster family explains to you that Wednesday is visiting day with his birth mother. How can you help him?

Assumption: welfare in care

It is important to have resources to deal with these situations and not to overlook them. Addressing them with respect, tolerance and assertiveness will help to create a safe school climate and enhance the well-being of the whole educational community. Here is the importance of addressing the key contents mentioned above and set out below.

#2. Student welfare

Making the school a safe space is a task that has to involve the whole educational community. It is not only a matter of making it safe, but also of being perceived as such. How does a child build a safe world?

- To achieve self-regulation, they first need external regulation.

- To achieve self-esteem, they first need to feel esteemed.
- To take others into account, they first need someone to have taken them into account.
- In order to control their emotions, they need someone to have held back their emotions when they needed to.
- To show interest in others, in relationships, they need to have felt that someone has taken an interest in them .

It will be external security that provides internal security.

In order to promote school safety, a number of variables need to be taken into account:

- Each person is unique and needs to feel unique. Children and adolescents who have experienced early adversity have a special need to feel considered.

In the family, in society, we greet and say goodbye. At school, dedication to the curriculum has been normalised, without spaces to generate affective bonds, so that the children can feel that they have a sense of belonging. Greeting each child in the line individually , before entering, favours closeness and first affective contact. At the same time, it allows us to sense their emotional state.

- Prioritise socio-emotional development: People cannot just appear and disappear without saying anything. This generates insecurities. To this end, we suggest saying goodbye with a conclusion that includes not only the curricular, but also the affective. E.g. "I liked the fact that we were able to talk about... ecosystems/rivers/animals. When you participate with enthusiasm, we can learn and have fun at the same time".
- Establish times when it is possible to establish links with other people - adults and peers-: Assemblies, promoting participation in the classroom or cooperative learning are some of the proposals.
- Generate security in relationships: agree on the rules of coexistence in the classroom, resolve conflicts between the whole group through dialogue. Avoid threats, punishment, and blackmail as 'recourse'. We can promote security by helping to appreciate the natural consequences of one's actions on others and on oneself.
- The emotional state and affective experiences of each teacher sometimes influence and sometimes determine the way they relate to their students. Knowing and recognising this will favour the creation of the classroom as a safe space.
- Change of outlook: Faced with the same situation, our responses can be very different depending on our own life background. Knowing and transforming our reactions to the situations that arise in the classroom into thoughtful responses,

as well as looking inwards, towards our own emotions, will allow for a suitable classroom climate.

Despite this, there will be times when the child or adolescent feels a situation as threatening, regardless of whether or not it is threatening in the eyes of the adult. Faced with this, the possible responses left by the 'emotionally hijacked' brain are flight, attack, or blocking.

In the school environment, this can translate into inhibition, isolation, or disproportionate responses. We must anticipate possible alternatives so that we do not leave room for improvisation, since in situations that may generate some tension, we must avoid a reaction on the part of the adult that generates greater uncertainty.

A healthy affective and bonding development that favours an adequate relationship with other people requires that the ingredients of permanence, predictability and empathy are always present. Children need to have some certainty at this time, to have affective security both in the family and in their relationship with teachers. What should be the basis of this necessary response in situations where there has been an emotional outburst or an inhibition potentially born from a lack of certainty?

- To disapprove of the behaviour is not to disapprove of the person. The formula "at the same time": "I don't like ... what you have done, at the same time, I will help you do it better, because I care about you". We must avoid labelling, disqualifying.
- Appropriate limits favour development. Being appropriate implies the limits are: adjusted to the situation, anticipated, reasoned and functional - not arbitrary -, stable.
- Permanence: It can be interesting to have a key person in the school who can provide support when a child needs it, who they can perceive as permanent in those moments when they need it in order not to get overwhelmed. This person can act as support, who can pause the programmed activity to respond to these needs.
- Predictability: Responses should be consistent, the same type of response to the same situations, regardless of the teacher at the time. This will require dialogue between teachers.
- Empathy: Behaviours speak. Children who have experienced early adversity may have difficulty expressing their feelings, sensations, concerns or fears. Sometimes they may not even be able to recognise what is happening to them. A double reading will help us to develop our capacity for empathy: What does their noise or their silence tell me? What does their emotional explosion or their inhibition tell me? What do they need affectively at this moment? What can I do to return them to a serene, safe state? How can I create a protective space?

The wellbeing of pupils requires the creation of safe spaces, protective spaces, environments in which they can grow emotionally and be respected in their

emotional development. To this end, the complicity of the teacher will be the key to closing and uniting this safe space, creating a classroom climate that is characterised by responding to the emotional needs of the children, such as: respect for themselves and others, personal growth, identity and self-esteem, satisfactory coexistence and teacher assertiveness, among others.

In order to create the class group, it is important that the pupils can get to know each other, to unite the class group, to organise the classroom into safe groups, to create a good learning climate and to establish basic procedures for learning together.

As teachers, we must keep the objectives in mind so that students can participate in the activities, experiences and work they develop in the classroom:

- Group creation in an environment that facilitates learning. Assemblies for common dialogue, consensus with the group on class rules and the resolution of conflicts through dialogue.
- Getting to know the class better and having more fluid communication: Listening spaces that bring us closer to their needs, tastes, fears, interests; promoting active listening on the part of the whole group.
- Promote a model of Respectful Education, which validates the emotions and feelings of pupils, which establishes guidelines and limits based on respect, empathy and the natural consequences of each situation, away from models based on reward/punishment and the continuous judgement of the adult, thus “infecting” a model of Respectful Communication among pupils.
- Break with routine and establish a different class rhythm. The “flexible routines” formula can be used; this environment will be favoured by routines that provide stability and security and allow for predictability of what is expected at any given time, and sufficient flexibility to allow for the introduction of motivating activities.
- Respect students’ differences and promote them. Diversity enriches. Adjust educational practices to the different types of student learning, to their needs, to their personal characteristics and to their differences; avoiding the reverse approach (that it is the students who have to adapt to a single teaching model).
- Assertiveness and patience with pupils who find it more difficult to participate.

Before reacting to certain situations, it is important to actively listen to the child and take into account both verbal and non-verbal language.

In order to achieve these objectives, one of the fundamental aspects to take into account at all stages of schooling, essential in the creation of a suitable classroom climate, is Emotional Education. For many of the boys and girls who have suffered early adversity, many of the approaches and activities that we prepare to achieve wellbeing in the classroom, create a safe space, work on cooperation, etc., in addition to not helping them, often provoke emotional reactions contrary to what we

intend. This is because these dynamics act as triggers and threats to the “pseudo-safe” world they have created for themselves in order to survive emotionally. We meet students who:

- Do not identify the source of alarm. Usually happens when they experience traumatic memories (sensations, no verbal content).
- Are aggressive towards those who try to help them.
- Present with Attention deficit and hyperactivity

These are children and adolescents who, depending on the level of impact of the adversity suffered, will present different types of attachment:

- Pupils who cannot ask for help: AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT

The avoidant attachment style is characterised as a self-protection mechanism that consists of avoiding or inhibiting the behavioural elements that seek proximity to the attachment figure. The inhibition of their attachment behaviours, as well as everything related to their emotional world, will provide them with a sense of pseudo-security.

These pupils usually feel protected by physical and emotional distance: Focus on homework and school achievement.

- Pupils with fear of separation. AMBIVALENT/RESISTANT ATTACHMENT

Anxious-ambivalent insecure attachment disorder is characterised by the experience of deep anxiety about being loved and being worth enough, as well as a preoccupation with the interest or disinterest and emotional availability of others towards them. The child will develop feelings of ambivalence towards attachment figures due to unmet affective needs. Therefore, the pseudo-security strategy will be to increase attachment behaviours as a way of maintaining proximity to the attachment figure.

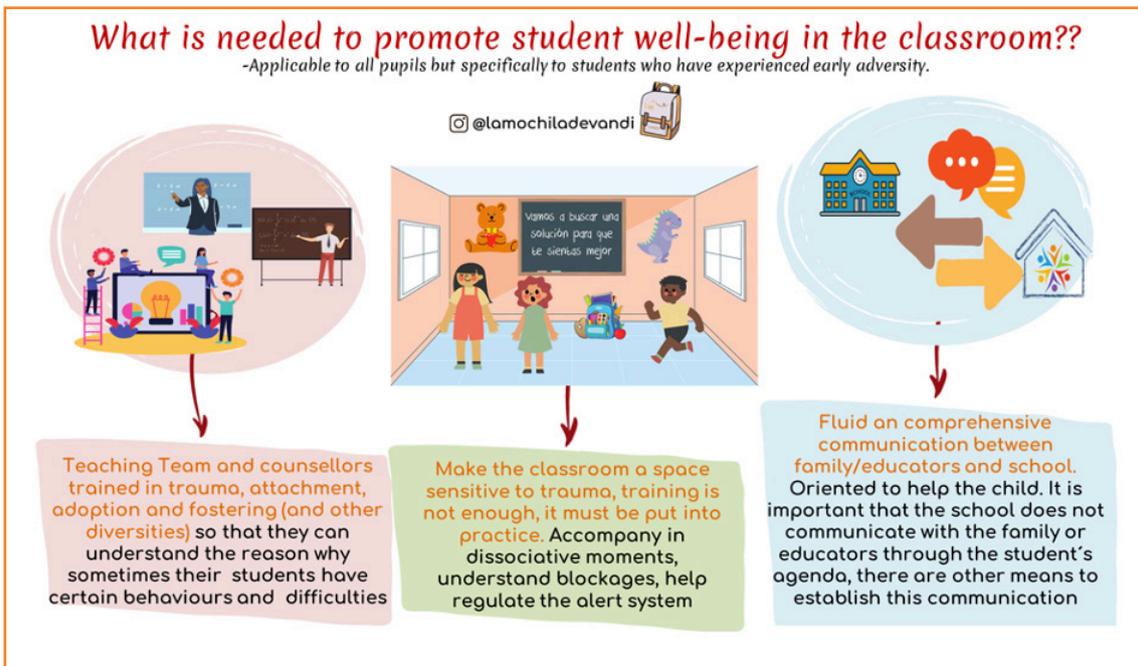
The attachment system is activated most of the time whereas the scanning system is deactivated.

- Pupils of most concern. DISORGANISED ATTACHMENT

Children with avoidant or ambivalent attachment organise their behaviour in order to experience closeness to their attachment figure by inhibiting or reactivating themselves. Children with disorganised attachment styles have such painful and chaotic early relational experiences that they cannot even organise themselves to respond in a regular and characteristic way in their relationship with their caregivers. Their defensive strategies collapse.

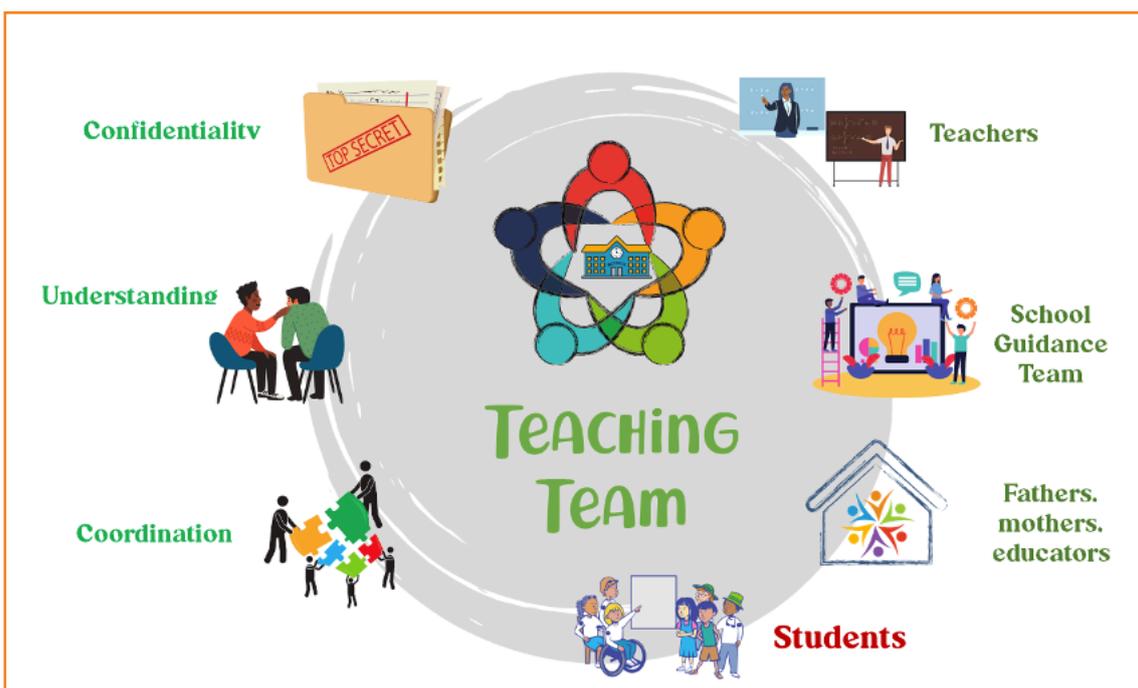
What dominates their behaviour is a desperate attempt to have some control over their environment, particularly their relationship with their caregivers. This need for control manifests itself through violent behaviour, but also

through care and complacency towards others in order not to lose them, styles that are hardly comprehensible to the uninformed observer.



3. The teaching team

Good teachers have an academic culture and convey information confidently and eloquently in class. Fascinating teachers go beyond this goal; they try to understand the workings of their pupils' minds, to get the best out of them. Each student is not just another number in the classroom, but a person with unique needs. (Dr. Augusto Cury).



“The experience of early neglect or situations of neglect are NOT harmless to the human being. Therefore, a RECOGNITION (first) and an awareness (afterwards) of the harm is necessary”.

According to the definition, the teaching team is the team made up of teachers and/or professors, all of them with their respective specialisations and who normally intervene in the same class group. However, the real professional challenge is to offer a school environment adapted to the individual needs of children and adolescents. To achieve this objective it is essential to work together with the family or responsible people with a common goal, to ensure that students fully develop both at a learning and personal level.

It is the family or responsible people who can best inform the school about the experiences, characteristics, details of the child and possible reactions that the teachers may not understand, as on many occasions the behaviour of these boys and girls, their attitude towards learning, the difficulties they have and the relationships they establish with adults and their classmates are often misinterpreted.

Educational staff, teachers and counsellors in educational centres should receive specific training in their university curricula on the needs of children and young people who have suffered trauma due to early adversity. In this way, they will have the appropriate tools to respond to the specific needs that these students may present and they will implement the necessary measures as soon as possible, avoiding negative consequences of not addressing them in time.

In general, the resources and diagnoses used in schools are those used with the population that has not experienced early adversity and are extrapolated to the population that has. This often results in harmful strategies for dealing with difficulties. Classical behaviour modification or time out can worsen the behaviour of these boys and girls.

Taking into account that the way these boys and girls are in the world is a consequence of their adaptation to an adverse reality, we will have to use different resources and much more time to dismantle all these physiological reactions and the neural networks that they have been weaving. It must not be forgotten that at the time, all these strategies were effective for them.

Making demands on an abused child based on his or her biological age is a grave injustice, as well as an unhelpful working strategy. In order to repair, it is essential not to stunt development.

It is very important to measure how the child is affected by the harm in order to identify needs and to have strategies to address them. In order to do this, it is necessary to take into account the following fundamental aspects:

- **Development:** Abandonment, maltreatment, neglect, abuse, institutionalisation... cause development to be disrupted, profoundly impacting development in both brain structure and functioning.

- **Attachment:** Because attachment disorders are actually adaptive protective strategies, the attachment relationship is not the mere satisfaction of the child's biological needs but a process of modelling the child's neurobiological and physiological functioning through the significant figure.
- **Trauma:** An emotional injury that the brain cannot repair and can cause neurological damage. Developmental trauma is the most common and important example of complex trauma.

What and how?

Anyone who has had the pleasure of seeing and listening to the Swan Lake ballet has been moved by the synchrony between music and movement, by the rhythmic steps, by the emotion generated by the spectacle, by the final result. This final result is none other than the end product of a precise choreography in which each person follows the steps of the others, imprinting their own character, their own emotion on the dance.

What can, what must the Teaching Team do to achieve this choreography?

Team building. Synchrony of movements

Attention to pupils who have suffered early adversity (including general pupils) requires a perfect synchrony of movements. To achieve this synchrony we will differentiate between before and during.

Before the arrival of the child in the classroom, the management team, the guidance counsellor or the tutor (depending on each community):

- Gathers the necessary information, taking into account their motivators and stressors and their specific needs.
- Designs strategies to respond to possible emotional imbalances, needs for accompaniment, relational needs with communication and social skills with adults and peers. If necessary, help will be requested. Listening to the family in their assessments will facilitate what these needs are.
- Coordination: They will meet with the rest of the teaching team in order to communicate those aspects that are essential and necessary for the educational task. Taking into account the previous history, they will present the strategies planned to be put into practice by the whole team: measures for attention to diversity, curricular adaptations or school accompaniment programs together with the guidance service, tutors.

This task will become more complex as more people are involved in the educational process. Using the same strategies will provide the child with security and help him or her to feel the school as a safe space. A good result, (a good choreography) depends not only on the skills and attitudes of each teacher, but also, and to a greater extent, on the synchrony between their movements.

Throughout the time that we take responsibility for that child we will be mindful of the following:

- Assessment of the effectiveness of the strategies used and reformulation and adjustment when necessary. Again, it should be kept in mind that this will be done with the commitment of all teachers involved in the process.
- The tutor will be the person responsible for transmitting the intervention strategies used to the rest of the teaching staff. The strategies used with the rest of the students do not necessarily have to be effective with children who have suffered early adversity, in some cases they can even be negative.
- We will avoid uninformed advice and we will transmit this to the whole teaching team. We will seek specialised help in adversity, trauma, adoption and fostering that, through different associations or services in each community, will help us to make the most appropriate decisions.

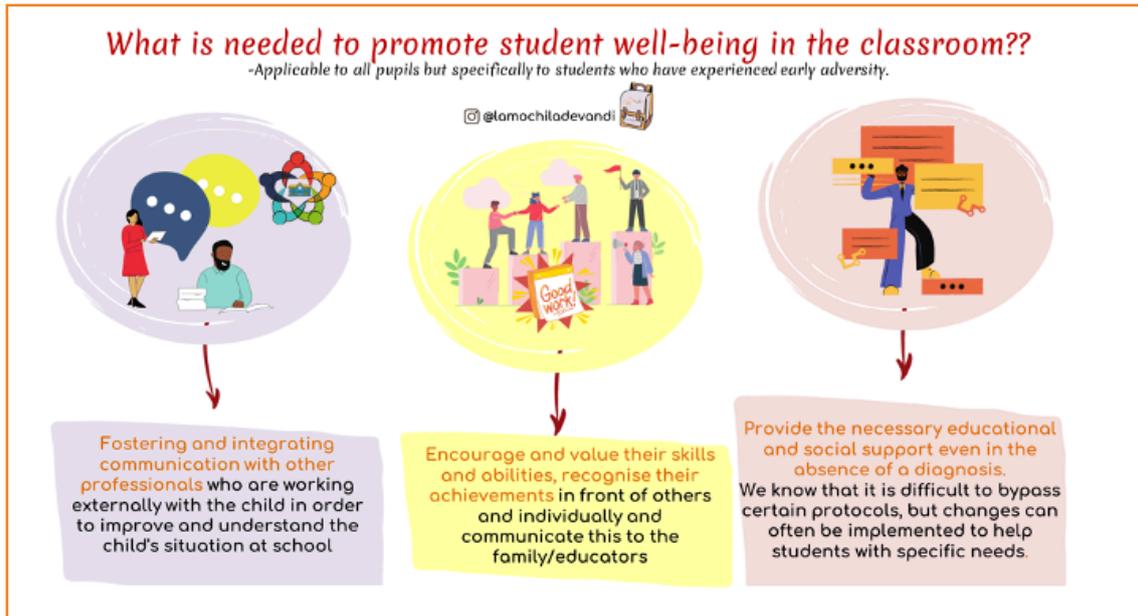
Just as the strategies used cannot depend on the will or training of the individual teacher, neither should they depend on the emotional baggage of the individual.

Each change of year or school stage cannot mean a new beginning for these children and adolescents. Coordination between grades will be essential to ensure continuity in the process, in the strategies and to avoid unnecessary setbacks in their development.

For some of them, the change of reference person will be a great difficulty:

- They have to adapt to new ways of working, new procedures and routines. This is directly related to executive functions, in which some of these people will have significant difficulties if they do not have the necessary guidance. Simple things such as reminding them what to write down in the diary or making the implicit rules of the class explicit can be of great help.
- They have to manage the change of reference figures. This is directly related to the losses they have suffered throughout their lives. Likewise, our three pillars are shaken: permanence, predictability and empathy: the reference figures change (permanence), they are unaware of the new functioning (predictability) and initially, and until the child becomes familiar with and accustomed to them, the adult's capacity for empathy is likely to be more distant.

Thus, it is necessary to understand that changes of class and teachers will have a negative impact on their emotional security and therefore on their learning, unless there is again adequate communication between the teaching staff and an adaptation of teaching-learning strategies that prevent the abrupt break.



Care and self-care. Choreography of emotions

Teaching is a complex task, in which knowledge of the subject to be taught, pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of the psychological development of students and knowledge of the different special needs that may arise in the classroom have to be combined at a professional level. On a personal level, a teacher needs certain psychological skills, among which we will highlight: active listening, negotiating agreements, interpreting verbal and non-verbal language, containing emotions (one's own and others'), self-criticism and large doses of positive realism.

In this context, maintaining a good health and mental state that allows us to face the challenges and adversities that may arise will prevent stress, anxiety, depression, personal dissatisfaction or loss of self-esteem and other consequences associated with burn-out.

Working with people who have suffered early adversity can be emotionally draining:

- due to emotional overload in certain situations
- due to a sense of incompetence, a lack of resources
- due to situations that arise that confront teachers with their own fears, their own insecurities
- due to the attachment styles of children who have experienced early adversity, which can mirror the attachment styles of the teacher.

What measures promote care and self-care? Caring for the teaching staff can be promoted by incorporating some practices:

- Evenly distribute the emotional needs of pupils in different classrooms so that the teacher does not feel overwhelmed by them.

- Pay attention to the demands and signals of the rest of the teaching team, offering support and active listening in those situations in which caring for a child or adolescent involves great difficulty on an emotional level.
- Provide the necessary assistance in such situations, requesting modifications to timetables or work plans if necessary.
- Plan individualised support inside or outside the classroom in the classes in which they pose the greatest difficulty.
- Having a “safe space” for students with these needs, where they can go when they need support and accompaniment. A member of the teaching staff who feels qualified for this accompaniment will be able to provide this support in times of crisis. It is not possible to carry out the task of support and accompaniment at the same time as attending to the class group. Dividing the two situations can be a relief in difficult situations.

Self-care can be promoted by incorporating some strategies:

- Analysing and knowing one’s own limits. Seeking help to approach complex situations in the classroom.
- Setting achievable short-term objectives, so that the result can be perceived as possible.
- Allowing small “time-outs” of 4-5 minutes, at times when you do not know how or cannot handle a situation, to ask for the collaboration of another colleague. This should be planned in advance.
- Adjust the level of curricular demands to the needs of the students. Emotional security is a key to learning. If the child’s brain is hyper-alert or “disconnected” from the moment, learning will not be possible. This can lead to frustration for teachers.
- Practising meditation, mindfulness or any other strategy that favours emotional control will help to better cope with complex situations in the classroom.
- “Humour is a management element with liberating effects” (B.Cyrulnik). Using humour (not irony) in stressful situations will help to release stressors.

The teacher comes to a classroom in which each person has their own emotional state, with their own. These strategies can favour this choreography of emotions necessary to create an optimal learning climate and to care for and take care of oneself.

Internal coordination and external coordination. Behind the scenes

Internal coordination includes not only the teaching team involved at a given moment, but also those who have participated in the process in previous years in order to facilitate an adequate transfer of information from one year to another, the tutor and the guidance team play a fundamental role in this sense.

Some boys or girls who have suffered early adversity go to different services (associations, psychology...). Others, especially those in foster care, have been able to go to different schools. Coordination with all the professionals who intervene or have intervened will be part of the “behind the scenes” work necessary for the success of our choreography.

Circle of influence: Staging

Schools can choose between being a reflection of society or a vehicle for change. Teacher’s great power is generating a circle of influence that allows their actions to be imitated, their way of perceiving a given situation to be assumed, and the way of dealing with emotions in the classroom to be transmitted to the students and the rest of the educational community.

4. Working with families

The family is the basic nucleus of society, hence the importance of involving families in the integral education of children.

Concept of Family

One of the first aspects to be addressed in the classroom in relation to the family is the very concept itself. When we talk about family, we cannot stick to the concept of the traditional family: father, mother and son or daughter. We have to go further, as this traditional family does not correspond to the reality in which we live or, of course, to the realities of the classroom in schools. The concept of the family must embrace the diversity that exists in society, take into account the different possibilities and talk in these terms with our students.

It is important to make them see that, when referring to the family, the range is very wide, it can be: biological, adoptive, foster, homoparental/homoparental, monoparental/monomaternal, interracial, reconstituted, there can be pupils for whom their family will be the people they live with in a residential centre... or other models that we have to integrate into the reality of our classroom, always from a normalising perspective.

When talking about the family in classroom activities, we must take into account the realities of our students and be sensitive to the situations they may be experiencing. We may find children who actively participate and we can count on their families to come to class to talk about their experiences. We may also find students who are not ready at that moment to be exposed to others. What must be made clear is that all children have the right to have a family, to use language that is appropriate to the different realities of the classroom and that, of course, implies respect for each and every one of them.

The family of origin in adoption and foster care

Adoption as it occurs in most cases (closed adoption) and in many cases foster care (mainly permanent foster care) implies a complete break between the family of origin and their child. Especially in adoption, the new bond of filiation requires a break with the previous bond. This is in contradiction with the child's right and need to know their origin. The new legal situation does not contemplate that in adoption and foster care, we cannot speak of a single filiation.

On an emotional and personal level, we must keep this family model in mind. The child or adolescent has a biological family, a family of birth, which occupies an important place in their life, in the construction of their identity, in their own recognition. We therefore speak of an adopted person, a biological family and an adoptive family. This triad needs to be kept in mind, and respect for each and every member of the triad is essential. This implies avoiding value judgements about the biological family. No one is authorised to make any judgement about it, except the adopted or fostered person.

Often, the past of the family of origin is not evoked, either because of a lack of information about it or because of the difficulty that the adoptive family may sometimes have in recognising that the history of their son or daughter is a shared history, and in treating it with respect and integrating it into their daily life. This can generate tensions for the adopted people because of their feelings towards the family of origin and the adoptive family. Adolescence, complex for all people due to the search for their own identity, will be much more complex for adopted and fostered persons. Integrating this duality will facilitate the creation of a healthy and positive identity for these children.

Today's society has a representation of victims-victimizers-saviours, associated respectively with the adopted/fostered person, birth family and adoptive family. This social imaginary greatly damages the integrity and self-perception of adopted persons.

What should the school do?

It is not the school's role to deal with, give an opinion on or assess these situations, which should be dealt with within the family. However, it is concerned with the need to talk about the adopted person, the family of origin and the adoptive family with respect, bearing in mind that harm - intentional or not - to any of the members of the triad, means harm to the child/adolescent.

The topic of family is likely to be present in a variety of school activities, from those that are part of the curriculum (in the first school grades: the family, the family tree; in higher grades: reproduction, migration, to give some examples) to those that are present in the hidden curriculum (films or texts in which orphanhood, child abandonment or stories of step-mothers and abuse are used). The use of these themes in films and literature is common, as is the fact that they are loaded with prejudices. In the educational context that we promote, the school as a safe

environment, has no place. Something as simple as changing or modifying these tasks will help to ensure that every student feels involved without exclusion. For example, changing “the family tree” for “my family”, “photo of when I was born” for “my photos” would be some examples. It is to these activities that the school must pay special attention, presenting alternative models or modifying those that are essential, so that all pupils are included.

Diverse families

Especially (but not exclusively) in intercountry adoption, interracial families are frequent. This adds a new nuance that we must take into account. It is therefore essential to respect family diversity, diversity of origin and racial diversity. Every child must feel validated and represented in the different classroom activities. The situations of discrimination they may suffer are similar to those of other migrants, the fundamental difference being the mostly white European environment, and that their family, in general, will not serve as a biological mirror that provides security or a model of response to situations of racism or discrimination. We will also keep family composition in mind, so that we validate, through our interventions and materials used, all types of families. A useful tool will be specific texts on family diversity.

Students who have experienced early adversity are more vulnerable to discrimination or bullying and have fewer strategies (primary resilience) to cope with these situations. They may, for example, not express situations of discrimination for fear of disappointment, exclusion and rejection. We need schools that are attentive to any kind of discrimination.

It will be important to review the materials used, looking for inclusive materials, avoiding activities that involve micro-racism (disguises of Chinese or black people, stereotypes of gypsies, etc.) or other types of discrimination (children’s literature in which the figure of the “orphan” or the stepmother is used in an insensitive and stereotyped way).

It will be important to review the language used. Language reflects our thoughts and transmits beliefs. Analysing the use of terms such as “the flesh-coloured paint” “your real mother” or colloquial racist phrases will enable or hinder the well-being of pupils. The school should also have a reception plan and an anti-racism protocol to respond to possible situations that may arise. There is a clear need for teacher training and pedagogical updating on the diversity of families, presenting the different family models in order to avoid the labelling of children and to favour diversity by building a fairer and more tolerant society, where any type of discrimination is rejected.

Family-school communication

First of all, it is necessary to analyse why it is important to establish good family-school communication or why it is important to share information:

1. We must make the child feel that the school and the family are working together to help them, that they are moving in the same direction. When certain situations arise at school, for example, do not report complaints in front of the child, use other mechanisms such as an agenda or notebook when they are young or look for other channels of communication together, teachers and family, in which the pupils are not in front of them.
2. On many occasions, families hesitate to communicate at school the fact that our children have been adopted for fear that the teachers will label the children or attribute some behaviour to adoption (for example, the overprotection of parents towards their children, the teachers' false idea that the condition of early adversity experienced by the children "disappears" with the arrival of the child in the adoptive or foster family, etc.). Interchanging information is necessary. There are fundamental steps such as: observing, participating, sharing and intervening. Such information is needed so that teachers can be sensitive to their needs and understand that they may face challenges that other peers do not. It is also important to facilitate better school adjustment. It is essential to create an atmosphere of cooperation between the families, who know the most about the child, and the teachers, who are not only experts in academic education but also important agents of socialisation. Observing pupils in different contexts and sharing observations gives us a better understanding of how they are doing and what they need. Families should be part of the activities carried out at school by collaborating with teachers and providing relevant information to improve any situation that may arise in the school environment. It is important that families perceive that their contribution, knowledge, preparation and experience of early adversity is recognised, because they have experienced it first-hand and it serves to help and guide teachers and thus jointly achieve appropriate solutions.
3. Planning goals together, school and family, should be one of the main objectives. Among others, the following should be highlighted:
 - Agreement on what level of autonomy the child will be asked to have, what values and what educational guidelines, taking into account the child's maturity and not the chronological age.
 - Provision of resources and methods for families to help them with homework and recommended time.
 - Provision of security for the child in their new environment.

Having clarified the importance of establishing good family-school communication, point out what the **basis of this communication** should be and what it should include:

1. Mutual respect and teamwork.

A fluid relationship should be sought, based on respect, i.e. respecting the roles of both parties, family and teacher, without interfering in each other's work. Collaboration is fundamental: confrontation leads to nothing.

It is important that families actively listen to what the school has to say about their child because they will have more clues to better understand the child. Additionally, it is important that they take an interest in the topics that will be taught in the classroom related to family or genetics and reflect together on how these activities or the language used may affect children from non-traditional families.

2. What information should be provided to teachers?

Details that give them clues to relate to the child, e.g. if the child was institutionalised, what brought them to the institution.

Children's stories are their own and they decide how to tell them, when and to whom. Teachers must be clear about the privacy of this information. Family and school should share information that is considered relevant to the child's overall development.

3. Information of provision of resources to families on a regular basis on diversity issues, through infographics, press clippings, scientific articles, recorded talks, etc.

4. Value and acceptance of the resources provided by families. Sometimes families will have at their disposal a wide range of resources related to adoption and fostering and valid strategies at school. Uninformed advice should be avoided, as the consequences are often fatal.

5. Knowledge from associations or places specialised in adoption and foster care about talks, workshops and other activities to which they can go to support children and their families in their needs.

Communication tools

School agenda

Supervision by both the teacher and the family is necessary so that the student learns to use it. It is important to avoid using it as an exchange of criticism and negative aspects of the child's behaviour or performance. When there is a need to communicate to families about aspects of behaviour or performance that need to be improved, it is preferable to request a tutorial. Other communication tools would be the corporate platforms used in the administration at the ICT level such as e-mail, telephone or face-to-face tutorials.

Workshops for families

An interesting initiative to address this issue are workshops or family schools, in which different aspects of children's education can be reflected upon and at the same time the most appropriate educational principles for each stage of development can be discussed from the point of view of positive parenting.

Family diversity must be taken into account in such workshops, as the techniques that can be applied cannot be generalised to all types of families, for example:

- When talking about emotions with children, they are asked to know how to regulate these emotions when sometimes there are children who are not yet able to identify these emotions, and therefore cannot regulate them either, which can be counterproductive, due to the stress it causes them. Possible parent workshops, which should be attended by professionals with expertise in each of the topics to be addressed:
- Positive parenting workshops with the aim of modifying parenting patterns: ways of establishing rules and limits, understanding children's behaviour, promoting autonomy based on the child's specificity.
- Attachment theory workshop:
 - Knowing the different attachment styles and knowing how to identify them
 - Tools for parents to learn about and promote secure attachment with their children.
 - Relationship between early adversity and attachment.
 - To assess and analyse the prevalence of attachment styles among children who have experienced early adversity and children who have not.
- Emotion regulation workshop:
 - Talk about the importance of emotional regulation on the part of parents, in order to subsequently be able to co-regulate with their sons and daughters.
 - Provide techniques that can help children identify their emotions.

4. Playgrounds and other school spaces

The playground areas are large spaces for relaxation and socialising among the pupils of the schools, to which they have access every day. In the playground, pupils have an open space where they can freely choose who they want to play with, while having a good time and forgetting about schoolwork for a while. However, as an element outside the curriculum, its educational and pedagogical function is usually forgotten. The teacher becomes a mere watchdog of the pupil to ensure that he/she complies with the rules. Teacher interventions in the playground are mostly linked to

conflict situations and conflict is seen only in the most explicit cases: in the form of student complaints, in the form of fights or in the form of accidents; other situations are not even considered as conflict, as they do not require adult attention.

In these unstructured contexts, pupils who are victims of early adversity can often suffer harassment, discrimination, integration problems, among others, and this can have a very negative impact on their socialisation and learning process. Playground time should become another opportunity to get to know and support our pupils, a place where we can observe the relationships that are established between them and where the availability of the teaching staff is total and absolute, thus making it a safe and trustworthy space. If we can achieve this change, it will be an important achievement for the whole education community, but especially for those students who need the most support.

Positive relationships with peers require mastery of certain skills that may be compromised in those who have suffered from poor or abnormal interaction in social relationships, which are aggravated when there are difficulties in self-regulation and impulsivity. In these cases, they are often the protagonists of conflicts and tend to bear the brunt of them, as they have no resources to resolve them and act reacting to the provocations of others. Typically, the following situations, among others, are encountered:

- Most of the conflicts that originate at school happen at break time: fighting, swearing, discriminating against a classmate, not sharing toys, breaking the rules of the games, showing excessive competitiveness incompatible with a relaxed enjoyment of the game, playing rough games...
- There is little interaction between boys and girls at recess.

Many of these conflicts are similarly reflected in other areas of the school not supervised by teaching staff, such as school canteens. In this case, the care of children is delegated to monitors from outside the school, but who also, on most occasions, often act in the same way as mere watchers.

In the case of external monitors, they tend to have little communication with the teaching team and in most cases know little or nothing about pupils who suffer from some kind of early adversity. Due to a lack of knowledge, they often act in ways that are inappropriate for this type of pupil.

During the meal, if there is warmth, this is a time that provides, more than the food necessary to function, occasions for positive learning, taking advantage of the social exchanges that forge the socio-affective relationship with peers and adults, access to sensory experimentation through food; discriminating flavours, smells, colours, textures, development of motor skills such as postural control, coordination, manual dexterity... This is why we must give it the importance it deserves and, also, give the dining room its place as an educational space. In the case of canteens, the following situations, among others, arise:

- Some pupils who come to school from other countries and have problems incorporating new foods into their diet are forced to eat foods that are difficult for them, often missing recess because they are not able to eat all the foods in the school diet.
- There is little or no communication from the educational team to the external monitors who attend the canteen about the different problems presented by the pupils who attend the canteen.
- In many cases monitors are not sufficiently trained to deal with the complexity of situations presented by students with early adversity.

Based on this reality, we should take into consideration that playgrounds and canteens, in addition to being settings for leisure and entertainment, should have other pedagogical interests and should favour the development of behaviours that help socialisation and promote the emotional, intellectual and social development of children. As for school playgrounds, a rethinking of daily educational practices in school playgrounds and a careful observation of the relational dynamics between pupils in school playgrounds is necessary in order to make them inclusive.

If what we seek is to have a safe environment for all students, a way to reduce the inequalities manifested in the playgrounds and to ensure the inclusion of all students, families, teachers and the environment, we must reconsider the schoolyard as an educational space, and this means evaluating the current situation and intervening based on educational principles and objectives. Therefore, we should set some goals for ourselves, to make the playground a safe place and an educational space. Some of these goals could be:

- Raising awareness among teachers and monitors about the importance of playgrounds and other places and the impact on pupils' development.
- Achieving the commitment of teachers and monitors, to ensure that the playgrounds are spaces for interaction and safe social enjoyment for all pupils.
- Offering new leisure and entertainment proposals to students in order to facilitate their personal development, taking into account the development of social and emotional skills and interpersonal relationships...
- Paying special attention to children who present early adversity in these places, where it is most difficult to integrate.
- Organising playgrounds in a balanced way, in such a way as to encourage interaction between boys and girls.
- Promoting peaceful and safe coexistence. Our goal should be to improve coexistence by minimising the risks and conflicts that arise during breaks, but also by promoting skills for the constructive and peaceful resolution of conflicts that arise (mediation).

- To value the importance of caring for the environment: looking after the environment and cleanliness, encouraging recycling, raising awareness of the importance of looking after the school together.

For canteens we should also set some basic objectives to be met:

- Communication between teaching staff and monitors, so that monitors are aware of children with early adversity and can act accordingly.
- Train canteen monitors to be able to resolve conflicts that arise in this environment and ensure the well-being of all pupils.
- Be more flexible in addressing the needs of students with early adversity.
- Try to place them at the ends of the table, where they can move without disturbance.
- Make it easier for them to go out into the yard, if they finish early, as their need for movement is usually greater.
- Take into account the diversity of our students and understand that not all students are able to adapt to the school menu. To this end, the staff responsible for the canteen should have a registration of pupils, in which they have a variety of information regarding, for example: nationalities and cultures as well as information that is considered relevant so as to encourage respect and diversity rather than discrimination.

We should also take into account other often uncontrolled areas of the school, such as the toilets, where serious incidents sometimes occur and where there is often no supervision by teachers.

In order to ensure the well-being of all pupils in the centre, it is necessary to count not only on the teaching staff and monitors, but also on the pupils themselves and their families. Students must be involved in this task, they cannot be mere witnesses to intolerant situations of harassment, racism, discrimination, etc. They must get involved and not be mere spectators of these situations without doing anything about them. In this sense, we should educate them and train them to know what to do in these situations. In short, it is important to educate students about their role in avoiding and stopping situations that do not favour a good coexistence. In the same way, we must involve the families and request their participation.

To deal with any type of bullying, the school should have a good Coexistence Plan, which above all tries to prevent these situations as much as possible and if they occur, to resolve them as soon as possible, trying to repair the harm caused to the victim and focusing on the pupils who have caused this situation in order to intervene with them so that they understand the damage caused, and so that this type of situation does not happen again. Train teachers, monitors and students and families, so that the whole educational community is involved and that there is Zero Tolerance to this type of situation..

“There are situations in which the characteristics of the victim make a sporadic aggression much more painful for her than for anyone else who is not in her situation, even if it is not repetitive”. This is the case for pupils with early adversity. “For example, when an adopted child is called names (...), they don’t receive it in the same way as any other child where there is no other mother or father in their head. In adopted children, their biological mother quickly pops into their mind, and everything that has to do with her abandonment. In addition to these there are other insults that adopted children hear “on the quiet” (...).

We can understand the pain and suffering that this produces and the types of reactions it provokes: on the one hand, it can cause the child who hears it to close in on himself, feel sadness, stomach aches or headaches, not want to go to school. or any of the symptoms that bullying generates, or it can provoke attacks of rage against the person who has insulted him, pouncing on him, hitting him, shouting at him, etc.”.

“I also see desperate parents on a daily basis because they see the harm their children are suffering from the constant insults (...) and they do not find enough support from the teachers at school, they consider such insults as any other, they label the mothers as overprotective, they claim they are “childish”, etc. In short, they do not protect the child”.

Montse Lapastora (clinical psychologist and adoption specialist)

That is why it is important to insist that the damage generated by the same insult is not the same for everyone. Adopted children suffer from double discrimination, because of being adopted and because of being different, but they also do not have the same security base or the same psychological resources as other children who live with their biological families. It is difficult to control all bullying situations since most of them occur in the anonymity of the aggressor, but we must all make an effort, and know that this is being done by most of the people involved in such situations (parents, teachers, carers, headmasters, etc.) in order to stop it.



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SECTION 3. Slides

This section consists of a powerpoint proposing different activities that address the topics of this section. This part of the unit deepens the experiential dimension, so that the theoretical concepts can be adapted into people's real lives. It is possible to use the presentation as a whole, or use only certain subsections, depending on your objectives, the learning context and the type of audience.

- # 1 Equity and cooperative learning
- # 2 Diversity in the classroom
- # 3 Working teams
- # 4 Emotional education
- # 5 Effective and respectful communication

Slides for this unit are provided in Annex 2.2

UNIT 3

Adverse Childhood Experiences





Introduction

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences? How can they impact a child's development? In this session, we will analyse the concept of ACEs from a psychosocial perspective that goes further into what happens in the household. We will also critically review different theoretical perspectives such as the Attachment Theory and Neuroscience approach that aim to answer what are the mechanisms by which ACEs influence development at different levels. Then we will reflect on how an ecological perspective is useful both to assess the impact of early adversity and the ways to address it.

This Unit 3 is composed of three sections:

- Section 1. *Learning Unit Sheet*: an overview of the unit summarising the key contents and learning objectives. At the same time, it provides a possible structure of activities useful for working on the topics to be addressed.
- Section 2. *Contents*: here you can find the content needed to structure the information to be conveyed during lessons and other teaching activities.
- Section 3. *Slides*: these slides, which are already organised by topic, support the lectures.



SECTION 1.

Learning Unit 3 Reference Sheet

The proposed Learning Unit 3 is divided into three parts:

The first activity (Icebreaking) proposes to discuss what ACEs are, what we understand by ACEs, in discussion groups and then put them together in plenary. This allows us to get to settle a common ground on the meaning of early adversity and to work on it from a broader perspective, internalising what it means in children's lives from a critical and reflective approach.

A second more theoretical activity (Expositive Lesson) presents the different theoretical models on issues such as attachment, resilience and other variables that play a central role in the approach of ACEs are also discussed. The purpose of this second activity is to put early adversity in context and to move away from the prototype of the "traumatised child" in order to understand that each child, also depending on their socio-familial context, may have tools and strategies to enhance in order to cope with this early adversity. Putting together a body of theory is important not only to give solidity to the activity but also to better understand potential effects of early adversity on children.

In the third and four activities, it is proposed a case analysis and a guided fantasy. The concepts and theoretical models seen in the two previous activities can be worked on the basis of concrete cases. This makes it possible to move from theory to practice and to thinking in action. Approaching case analysis from a broader perspective allows us to get to know concepts and theories better, and will therefore help us to build more solid tools and dynamics.

Key contents

- Conceptualisation of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Early Adversity
- Theoretical approaches to the effects of Early Adversity
- Potential challenges derived from ACEs and Early Adversity

Learning goals

Knowledge

- Discuss current research related to Early Adversity and children.
- Understand comprehensive theoretical models on Early Adversity.

Skills

- Identify potential challenges derived from ACEs.
- Critically use analytical tools to describe and respond to behaviours and emotional reactions of children who experienced early adversity.

Values

- Acknowledge the diversity of children who have experienced Early Adversity, their needs, and their experiences in various (socio-cultural) contexts.
- Be aware of the consequences of Early Adversity for children in the school context.
- Express awareness of values and ethics working with children who have experienced Early Adversity.

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
1	Icebreaking “What do you consider adverse childhood experiences?” Students are asked to break into small groups and list different forms of ACEs. In the plenary, teachers should make sure that the list includes a variety of experiences, including physical and emotional abuse, neglect, caregiver mental illness, and household violence, but also loss of primary caregivers, forced migration and poverty.	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> small group work, plenary discussion <i>Tools:</i> Whiteboard, paper, pens	30’	Classroom with mobile seats
2	Lecture (could be substituted by reading texts of each approach before the class, and then discussing and comparing different approaches). Topics: - How experience models ourselves - Research findings on ACEs - Different approaches to the ACE’s effects (Attachment Theory, Neuroscience, Toxic Stress, Resilience)	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Expositive lesson <i>Tools:</i> slides	45’	Classroom

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
3	<p>Case study: Watch the TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and in group answer the questions below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the “single stories” you grew up with? • Has anyone ever used unique stories about you? • How has this thing shifted your relationship to yourself, to people around you, and to the world you live in? • Do you have ever used unique stories? <p>The group reflects on the use and effects of unique stories and appreciate human diversity in all its richness and complexity.</p>	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> group work <i>Tools:</i> https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story</p>	30'	Classroom
4	<p>Guided fantasy To understand the feelings and possible reactions of foster and adopted children.</p> <p>The activity is presented and a suitable environment is created to develop the fantasy. The story “the mover” is read aloud, respecting the times and pauses included. A few seconds are left to return to the normal situation. Each participant is asked for one or two words (brainstorming) that describe the feelings that they have experienced both physically and emotionally. These will be noted on the board and discussed together. The activity ends with a brief summary highlighting the feelings and changes that foster and adopted children experience and that we must take into account when dealing with them.</p>	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> guided fantasy <i>Tools:</i> whiteboard</p>	30'	Classroom



SECTION 2. Contents

This section explores the didactic use of guided fantasy, with the specific aim in this case of putting participants “in the other’s shoes”, delving into the emotions, cognitive and causal processes that characterise the experiences of loss encountered by minors who have been adopted, in foster care and with a migration experience without the presence of their family. Furthermore, the section develops the ACEs topic.

#1. Guided Fantasy¹

The activity is presented and a suitable environment is created to develop the fantasy. The story “the mover” is read aloud, respecting the times and pauses included. A few seconds are left to return to the normal situation. Each participant is asked for one or two words (brainstorming) that describe the feelings that they have experienced both physically and emotionally. These will be noted on the board and discussed together. The activity ends with a brief summary highlighting the feelings and changes that foster and adopted children experience and that we must take into account when dealing with them.

Brief initial explanation:

The move to a new home, regardless of how the attachment to the people left behind was, is a sensitive time for children. The losses associated with separation from their birth family, their foster family or the institution in which they have lived for a time involve losses that will affect them and their families or caregivers.

A loss is always a painful experience and often difficult to understand. All of us have gone through separations or break-ups. Think, for example, of a loss you have yourself experienced. Think about the feelings you experienced during that time.

Separations and transitions are inevitable elements in the trajectories of children in alternative care and adopted children. Understanding the feelings that this produces will be fundamental in helping these children to cope. To do this, we are going to use guided imagery. We are going to tell you a story and you should place yourselves in it as the main characters.

Appropriate atmosphere:

Turn off or dim the light to create a suitable environment.

Make sure that the participants have understood that they should experience the fantasy as adults and not as children.

Advise them to close their eyes to be able to concentrate on the fantasy.

¹ Adapted and translated from: Palacios, J.; León, E.; Sánchez-Sandoval, Y.; Amorós, P.; Fuentes, N.; Fuentes, J. (2006). Programa de formación para la adopción nacional (pp. 142-150). Junta de Andalucía. Consejería para la Igualdad y Bienestar Social.

“The Moving Man” story:

(To be read aloud, respecting set reading times and pauses)

Let's imagine how it feels when we have to separate from people with whom we have emotional ties and when we have to live with strangers.

You have a home. Think about your home and your life there. Perhaps you have a favourite place where you spend most of your time. Go to that place and sit down in a place where you feel comfortable. (Pause for 3”).

Think about the people who live with you. Maybe you live with your partner, or maybe with a friend; maybe you have children, maybe parents, or maybe you live alone. What do you like most about the people who live with you? Is it the way they behave, the support they offer you, their affection? (Pause for 3”).

Now think about your home. What do you like most about it? Is it the decor, the location, the neighbours? (Pause for 3”).

There are things you probably don't like about your home. Think about some of these things in relation to the people who live with you. Is it some habits or manners, some feelings, the way they are? (Pause for 3”).

Now think about your home. What things don't please you? Is there work that needs to be done, a room that needs to be painted or a piece of furniture that could be replaced? (Pause for 3”).

How do you feel in your home with all these things that you don't like? (Pause for 3”

While you are thinking about those things you would like to change, imagine that there is a knock at the door. You open the door and find a man standing in front of you. This gentleman is a person with the power and authority to move people from one house to another. He does this whenever someone is unhappy for some reason at home.

This man tells you that today you will have to go to live with a new family and in a new house. This new home will be better for you. You won't find anything there that you didn't like about your home. The members of this new family are sure that they can make you happy. How do you feel? (5” pause).

You may partly like this idea (can you imagine getting rid of all those things you didn't like about the current situation in your home?) You may partly not like this idea (after all, even if you thought you didn't like some things about your family and your home, it's your family and it's your home!) In any case, you have to go with this man. He is going to give you 15 minutes to pack your luggage. You can take everything you can fit in a travel bag, and you can't take animals or people. What would you put in the bag= (10” pause)

Now you are leaving your house. You're leaving. Wait! Your family and some of your friends have just arrived. They see that you have packed some of your belongings

and are leaving with a stranger. What would you tell them? How would you explain to them what is happening? (Pause 3"). How do you feel? (Pause 3")

As you walk away from the house with this man, you turn and look at the faces of your family and friends, of all the people you are leaving behind. How do you think your family and friends are feeling? What feelings do you think they have in reaction to the fact that you have left so suddenly? (3" pause).

Now you have left your neighbourhood by car. You are heading to an area where there are bigger houses. It seems as if you are going to get to a "fantastic" place, much better than your home. What would you ask yourself? What would you want to know about the place you are going to? (Pause for 5").

Although you have many questions and issues that you would like to know, you are angry and afraid to ask. The man tells you that any information you would like to know about your family or friends, or your new family, he will be able to give you, but since he has to move a lot of people, he doesn't have much time for you. He continues to talk, but you are too wrapped up in yourself and confused, and you stop listening to him. He stops talking and you remain silent. How do you feel? (3" pause).

You are now on a street you have never seen before. You approach a big house. This is the house where you are going to live. You get out of the car slowly. The man is carrying your bag with your things. You walk slowly to the front door. The man knocks on the door. Think of the word that best describes your feelings. (3" pause).

The front door opens. Your new family is standing here: a new wife or husband, new children are waiting for you. They are smiling. They are very happy about your arrival. They have been waiting a long time for this moment. They want you to be part of their family. They are sure that they can make you happy. How do you feel? What would you like to do at this moment? (Pause for 5").

Maybe you don't think this situation is happening to you. Or maybe you are angry with yourself for seeing yourself in this situation. Maybe you weren't really happy at home and you are relieved that you don't have to put up with the things you didn't like. But you are probably also worried about the people you left behind. How long do you think it will take you to want to see the people you have left behind? (Pause 5").

Whatever your feelings are, here you are. The house is nice and those people seem to love you, like you and try to make you happy. But you miss your family, your friends and your own home. You wonder when the man who took you away from home will come back. You need more information about your current situation, about the people you have left behind, about your new family, etc. (3" pause).

A week passes. Two weeks pass. Three months go by. You wonder why it is taking so long for this man to come back. How do you feel? Think of the word that best defines what you are experiencing. (3" pause).

Brainstorming and discussion:

Allow a few seconds for participants to open their eyes and return to normal. The lights are switched on.

Brainstorm by asking each group member to come up with one or two words that describe the feelings they have experienced both physically and emotionally. All of them are written down on the board.

Rationale that may help the discussion:

If you feel tired, sad or depressed after imagining this situation for a few minutes, imagine how children and families currently going through a similar experience might feel. When a child is separated from their family to move to a new family, there is inevitable anxiety, even if the move is made under the best of circumstances.

On the other hand, it is good that you have experienced these feelings, as they are feelings that can arise when faced with an unfamiliar world. As adults, you may have personal resources to cope with new situations. Children have fewer personal strategies to respond to these situations. As teachers you will have to try to put yourself in the children's place, doing your best to make the transition as smooth as possible and trying to understand and adapt to their reactions.

The activity ends with a brief summary highlighting the feelings and changes that foster and adopted children experience and that we must take into account when dealing with them.

#2. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The idea that traumatic experiences in childhood can have lasting consequences on people's health, social adjustment and well-being is widespread. Film and television fiction, for example, are full of examples of socially maladjusted people who experienced difficult situations in early life.

Starting in 1994, a large study conducted in the United States with a sample of more than 17,000 individuals found a clear association between the accumulation of experiences of adversity before the age of 18 and negative outcomes in terms of physical and mental health in adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998).

The authors coined the term ACEs to identify those experiences that could have a negative impact on people's development and thus on their health and well-being throughout life. Initially, ACEs were classified into 10 categories grouped along three axes (Anda & Felitti, 2010):

- Abuse: Emotional abuse, Physical abuse; Sexual abuse; Household Challenges; Mother treated violently; Household member was an alcoholic or drug user; Household member was imprisoned; Household member was chronically depressed, suicidal, mentally ill, in a psychiatric hospital; Not raised by both biological parents

- Neglect: Emotional neglect; Physical neglect

The concept of ACEs was later expanded to include other contextual or social variables as well, such as exposure to bullying, community violence, neighbourhood safety, racism, poverty and living in foster care. Some authors, especially those working from Ecological Systems Theory, prefer the term “early life adversity” (ELA) which, as we will see later, includes family functions, socioeconomic factors, social supports, neighborhood characteristics, and other factors.

#3. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and its critiques

Research on the prevalence and impact of ACEs has highlighted:

- the high prevalence of ACEs in the general population: in the initial study, with a sample of over 17,000 individuals, 67% had experienced at least one ACE; 12.6%, one in eight, had four or more;
- that the accumulation of ACEs during childhood is a strong predictor of physical and mental health problems in adulthood: the higher the number of ACEs, the greater the likelihood of experiencing chronic depression, suicide attempts, risky behaviours, incarceration, premature death.

This is why in many countries the concept of ACEs has informed public policy. However, it is important to note that two children who experience the same type of adversity may respond in distinct ways: one may recover quickly without significant distress, whereas another may develop posttraumatic stress disorder or have their wellbeing seriously affected in the long term.

While the very concept of ACEs has contributed greatly to identifying and making visible early experiences of adversity and their possible effects, there are also a growing number of critical voices. There are two main axes of criticism:

- The assessment and identification of ACEs focuses on individual and household aspects. While it is true that the incorporation of other social factors in what we have called the expanded concept of ACEs opens the focus to structural, social and cultural aspects, in practice, household-centred questionnaires are still mostly used for assessment.
- Identifying the relationship between early adversity and certain situations in adulthood often leads to a deterministic and fatalistic view of people, which ignores their capacities, potential and agency.

Quantitative studies measuring the prevalence of ACEs in the population and their correlation with difficulties in adulthood do not provide an explanation of how ACEs influence people’s development and adult experience. In the following, we will look at the main approaches that try to answer what are the mechanisms by which ACEs influence development at different levels.

#4. ACEs and the Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was first formulated by John Bowlby (1969) and has been one of the most important, guiding, persuasive theories of the 20th century until today. Attachment theory has shaped child psychiatry, psychology, child care and the understanding of various problems of children and adolescents.

The central idea of the theory is that primary caregivers who are available and responsive to an infant's needs enable the child to develop a sense of security. According to Bowlby, it is based on the establishment of affective bonds, of early relationships between infants and their caregivers that allow for a good psychological and healthy well-being, which will affect the person's development in infancy, childhood and adult life.

The theory proposes that during the first year of a person's life, the attachment between the baby and his or her caregiver is established, which enables the child to feel secure. The attachment bond is defined as permanent and allows for the establishment of a relationship of closeness between the people involved. The following graphic shows how the attachment cycle works during the first months of life.

Attachment theory emphasizes the impact of primary caregivers and children relationships on psychological functioning. It states that it is through this relationship that children form an idea of themselves (as competent and worthy of love or as incompetent and defective) and of others (as potential supporters or threats), as they develop an 'internal working model' (or template) for subsequent relationships. Children then automatically implement these models when engaging in everyday circumstances.

Ainsworth and her colleagues (1978) identified 3 patterns of **attachment behaviour**: (See the video [The Strange Situation; Mary Ainsworth, 1969](#)).

- **Secure attachment** is most often fostered by consistently sensitive and responsive caregiving. Securely attached children are able to regulate their distress and know they can show their needs and feelings and won't be rejected. They are attached to their parent or caregiver and enjoy being with them, but are secure enough to explore the world.
- **Insecure avoidant attachment** tends to occur when the caregiver finds it difficult to accept or respond sensitively to the infant's needs, and caregiving fluctuates between responsive and rejecting. Children come to see themselves as neither loved nor loveable. Anxiety that any show of need or emotion may drive their caregiver away leads them to shut down their feelings and stop seeking closeness or expressing emotion.
- **Insecure ambivalent attachment** is linked to inconsistent caregiving that fluctuates between responsive and rejecting, and where love and affection

are inconsistently given, based on factors the child does not understand. This generates high levels of anxiety and insecurity in the child. Children with this attachment style may seem clingy, and more frequently seek the attention of their parent or caregiver, yet may reject that attention when it is offered.

- A fourth style of attachment was added later to the list: the **disorganised attachment**. This form of attachment is attributed to atypical caregiver behaviours that often exhibit contrasting and unpredictable reactions. It usually comes from situations where caregivers are mentally ill or erratic, and is linked to verbal, physical, or sexual abuse. The child is emotionally and physically dependent on someone who is also a source of distress or fears. The child then acts conflicted towards their caregiver. They may at first run to them, but then seem to change their mind and either run away or act out against their caregivers.

Despite being one of the strongest theories used in social sciences, the way it has been applied in some interventions and clinical practice has some important limitations:

- **Monocausality:** Attachment theory seems to reduce the parent-child relationship to one dimension, that also is connected to a casual relation with specific psychiatric pathologies. The child's attachment to the caregiver (the caregiver as a "secure base" who provides safety and security) is only one specific component of the caregiver-child relationship. This can overshadow or dismiss other aspects of the parent-child relationship such as the child's temperament and biological constitution, the cognitive stimulation she/he has been provided, the caregiver's modelling of emotion regulation and impulse control, disciplinary techniques they use, etc. In addition, it fails to recognise the influences of other factors, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and culture on personality development. These factors can be as significant as the quality of the early attachment.
- **Determinism:** The theory reproduces an essentialism based on the idea that something that happened to us, often when we were very young, can have such a profound effect on our later personality and behaviour. Some studies have shifted the focus from the cause-effect relationship in the maternal bond to how the latter has been symbolically constructed by the subject in adulthood (Waters et al, 2002).
- **Multiplicity of attachments:** Attachment theory usually refers to the primary attachment figure, usually the mother. However, children have attachments and interact with other people other than their mothers, and these relationships have an important impact on the children's lives as they get older (Saunders et al., 2015).
- **Dynamism:** Attachment and the styles resulting from it are not fixed, but are constantly developing with time and experience (Mercer, 2006). It was assumed that an individual's attachment style remains stable across the lifespan, however,

there is no evidence of continuity from infant attachment classification to adult attachment classification (Groh et al., 2014). Most of the studies have focused on children under 6 or 7 years.

- **Cultural differences and attachment behaviour:** It is necessary to bear in mind that attachment types vary substantially between societies. In recent years, although many researchers around the world have applied these scales in their societies, the results were quite contrary to those reached by both Ainsworth and Bowlby.

#5. ACEs in the light of neurosciences

Neuroscientists use another approach to explain how children exposed to ACEs early in life are at increased risk for developmental difficulties, affecting both cognitive and emotional adjustment. Neuroscience is the scientific study of the nervous system (the brain, spinal cord, and peripheral nervous system) and its functions. It aims to understand the properties of neurons and neural circuits.

Neuroscience has been interested in understanding the long-term negative consequences of child neglect on behavioural and physiological development. Neuroscientists consider there is clear evidence that ACEs are associated with enduring effects on the structure and function of neural stress-regulatory circuits such as the hippocampus or the amygdala and alter stress sensitivity and emotion regulation in later life.

The prolonged exposure to a stressful environment has been a primary concern for developmental perspectives. When a child's stress response systems are activated within an environment of supportive relationships with adults, these physiological effects are softened and brought back down to baseline. The result is the development of healthy stress response systems. However, if the stress response is extreme and long-lasting, and softening relationships are unavailable to the child, the result can be damaged, weakened systems and brain, with long-term repercussions.

We can distinguish three kinds of responses to stress: positive, tolerable, and toxic (see figure).

- Positive stress response is the body's response to temporary stress. For example, the first day with a new caregiver or receiving an injected immunization might lead to this kind of response.
- Tolerable stress response activates the body's alert systems to a longer and more serious stress, such as the loss of a figure of reference. When there is support to, the body can return to the normal state more easily.
- Toxic stress response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect,

caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support. This kind of prolonged stress can harm the body and brain, and cause lifelong health problems.

When toxic stress response occurs continuously, it can impact on the growth, development and physical and mental health. The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and later health problems. Research also indicates that [supportive, responsive relationships](#) with caring adults as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the harmful effects of toxic stress response.

#6. The ecological approach

The social ecology models provide a wider frame both to assess the impact of early adversity and the ways to address it. The classical ecological theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) allows consideration of factors that impact on development and the life course, positively or negatively, beyond the family unit. Bronfenbrenner's model depicts four systems:

- **the microsystem:** comprises the interactions and relationships within the household, day-care centres or playgrounds.
- **the mesosystem:** is the interlinked system of microsystems in which a person participates—for example, linkages between family and school.
- **the exosystem:** refers to other environments that affect the child indirectly (where the child is not an active participant), like the parents' work environments, sibling's school, or local government.

the macrosystem: encompasses broader social characteristics, including norms, customs, beliefs and political structures.

Ecological theory allows us to understand how children's development and wellbeing depends on multiple factors, some of them outside the spaces they inhabit. It also helps to conceptualise early adversity not as something definitive and irreparable, but as part of a universe that can be repaired or integrated by the rest of the elements of the system. Thus, for example, suffering experiences of early adversity in the family unit (microsystem) is different when there are or when there are no public or educational policies (exosystem) that facilitate the repair and overcoming of its possible effects.



SECTION 3. Slides

This section consists of a powerpoint divided into 5 parts and an introduction. It is possible to use the presentation as a whole, but also only certain subsections, depending on your objectives, the learning context and the type of audience. Some subsections contain several suggestions for group work and case studies. A list of scientific references to deepen the subjects is also provided.

0 Introduction

1 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

2 Adverse Childhood Experiences and its critiques

3 ACEs and the Attachment Theory

4 ACEs in the light of neurosciences

5 The ecological approach

6 Working together



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Slides for this unit are provided in Annex 3

UNIT 4

Connection between well-being and learning





Introduction

Children and adolescents who come from the protection system have a history forged from difficult and/or traumatic experiences that make them remain constantly alert, predisposing them in a special way to fight and survival. These attitudes develop in the child unconsciously, extrapolating to any environment and/or situation, including school. In this sense, this chronification of stress that a generalized state of alert implies, limits those who suffer from it when facing new learning and even when following the development of school dynamics (including periods of rest and interaction with colleagues) in a standardized manner.

The fact that the student reaches a state of optimal well-being in which anxiety and stress are reduced will contribute to a better predisposition towards the contents proposed in the classroom and the learning processes required by them. We present this section to delve into how the school environment and the teaching team can achieve this goal.

This Unit 4 is composed of three sections:

- Section 1. *Learning Unit Reference Sheet*: an overview of the unit summarising the key contents and learning objectives. At the same time, it provides a possible structure of activities useful for working on the topics to be addressed.
- Section 2. *Contents*: here you can find the content needed to structure the information to be conveyed during lessons and other teaching activities.
- Section 3. *Slides*: these slides, which are already organised by topic, support the lectures.



SECTION 1.

Learning Unit 4 Reference Sheet

Key contents

- Safe environment (physically, and emotionally)
- Stress neuropsychology
- Wellbeing

Learning goals

- To identify the elements at the school that can stress children (materials, spaces, topics and other triggers)
- To identify the alert signals of stress in teachers and pupils, specifically coming from the protection system
- To develop strategies, dynamics and tools for teachers in order to: Build a safe environment; and Keep individual and group wellbeing

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
1	Icebreaking	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i></p> <p>Group dynamic</p> <p>Brainstorming about well-being and stress in the classroom. Exchange of possible personal experiences</p> <p><i>Tools:</i> Whiteboard</p> <p><i>Video</i> https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZoukYZHpDMrpbWl1cgu2qEMgc4Zt-6Qk1/view</p>	15'	Classroom
2	Expositive lesson	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i></p> <p>Expositive lesson on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What's classroom wellbeing? - Items that may be stressful - Neurobiology of stress - Attachment & Learning - Interaction between stress and learning - School as a resilient factor <p><i>Tools:</i> Slides</p>	30'	Classroom
3	Practise	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i></p> <p>Group work (small group of 3/4). Practice exercise to reflect together about the group cohesion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevance of the primary intervention. Creation techniques and group cohesion to apply from the first meeting. Strategies for evaluation and maintenance of group cohesion through all academic experience. <p><i>Tools:</i> Whiteboard</p>	10'	Classroom

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
4	Expositive lesson	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i></p> <p>Expositive lesson on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional intelligence applied to school work. Tools that allow teachers and students to evaluate each of the activities based on difficulties, challenges and strengths. <p>Before presenting the last slide of this part is needed to ask students about how they will ask to children aspects related with their lives. What are the sensitive topics and how we can ask for them?</p> <p>Later we can present the last slide to show the good way.</p> <p><i>Tools:</i> Slides</p>	30'	Classroom
5	Case studies	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i></p> <p>Group work. Three groups to work in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To identify disruptive behaviors, the student's sources of stress and anxiety, - To try to associate the behaviors with factors from the student's previous history - What are the possible solutions - What the teacher should do to manage the own feelings that generates that situation <p><i>Tools:</i> Slides & cases</p>	40'	Classroom



SECTION 2. Contents

In this section, the main topics of well-being and learning are addressed in a simple and effective manner. Basic knowledge of the traumatic effects of early adverse experiences is provided, enabling the framing of disruptive behaviours and supporting resilience processes, both from the perspective of pupils and teachers. Topics are presented in self-contained sections. In this way the material lends itself to use as a whole, but also to customised use by the trainer.

#1. Recognising emotional patterns

When students have lived through traumatic experiences, they have learned hypervigilance patterns that make them constantly alert to any possible adverse change (Cáceres et. al., 2017; Mesa-Gesa & Moya-Albiol, 2011). In this sense, many of these children develop seductive or disruptive behaviors as a mechanism of evasion and dissociation in the face of the fear generated by uncertainty. However, these unexpected, inappropriate or inconsistent behaviours are considered by adults as a provocation instead of as an alarm symptom (Espinoza, 2006).

For example, a child who have experienced the loss of affective referents feels threatened by an unexpected change of teacher or a classroom change. In these cases, all the warning mechanisms are activated in the student involuntarily (C) explains that when students are deregulated, begin to secrete different substances such as cortisol and adrenaline which predispose them to fight, to defence and to survive. All these turn into attention difficulties to follow simple instructions, and into hyperactivity that prevent them from staying seated following the class. These mean continuous movements in the chair, repetitive strokes with the pencil on the table, continuous interruptions with topics incongruous with the content being worked on, noises, masturbation, ... because they cannot pay attention but they need to let all the emotional tension loose that is overwhelming them (Spangenberg, 2015).

On the other hand, from attachment theory we can also observe how this unexpected change alerts children or adolescents about a possible loss, even if it is only from the routine that facilitates predictability and therefore security (it can be a party, a trip...) (Guerrero, 2020). Faced with this situation, students feel fear and take a warning behaviour in an attempt to anticipate the pain that this uncertain situation may cause. They prefer to boycott themselves so that the loss is based on their disruptive attitudes and behaviors and not about qualities of themselves that they cannot change or in unforeseen events that are beyond their control (Espinoza, 2006). The typical behaviour related with that is: you don't leave me, I leave you. Let us remember that they are children or adolescents who have experienced continuous loss as well as neglect or abuse. For that reason, in a mistaken attribution, they blame themselves and they need to continually feel that they are in control of what may happen.

These types of attitudes are also common when students face new social relationships in which they want to fit in and feel accepted. But it also happens in the face of the acquisition of content that is especially complex for them and for which they are afraid to fail. Students, given their emotional insecurity, anticipate their own failure and they associate that with a social rejection and from the affective environment. So, they prefer to disconnect from that area: they do not write down the tasks, they lie about what they have to do, they do not answer the exams not to be mistaken,... (Rodríguez, 2014). These behaviors are often confused with a lack of interest or carelessness. Although it may be possible in some cases, it is usually the result of the learning difficulties that students present as a result of their ACEs and their own emotional insecurity. Guerrero (2021) explain that Generating a safe environment in the classroom and establishing a good emotional bond between students and the teacher where children and adolescents feel protected, will predispose students to positively face new challenges and learning.

#2. The school as a resilient factor: the Academic Resilience Approach

Resilience is used to describe the positive mechanisms of an individual, group, material, or system that, in the face of an adverse situation that affects their integrity and stability, allow them to endure, cope, recover, and emerge stronger (Vaquero, Urrea & Mundet, 2014). This includes various processes such as the good recovery from an adverse situation, and / or that adversity does not limit a person's development. Therefore, a resilient child is one who recovers after experiencing an adverse situation and / or develops properly despite continued exposure to risk (Gilligan, 2000).

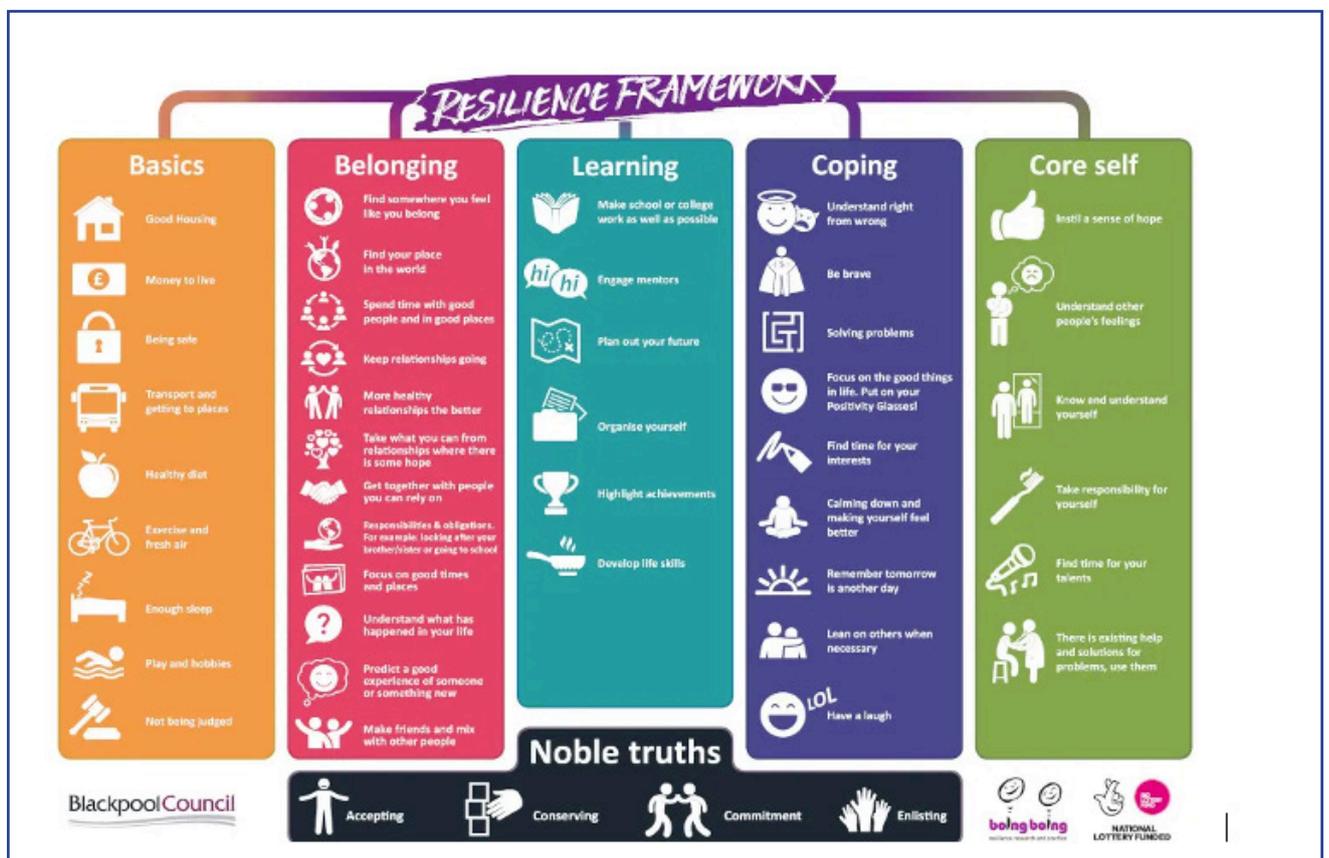
From an ecological point of view, the factors that make a person resilient are both the person's personal characteristics and social and contextual factors. That is, the person's resilience is also influenced by the child's experiences and how he or she integrates them into his or her development. In this sense, the school plays an important role in promoting the resilience of students as the positive experiences lived in this context will be a factor of protection against adverse situations experienced or that may occur.

The school based on resilience focuses on the abilities and potential of students and develops educational practices that teach students to face difficulties in a positive way, to have a life project, to develop their potential, something which will allow them to better deal with adverse situations.

In order to incorporate resilience into schools, we propose to adopt the Academic Resilience Approach - ARA. This is a whole-school-based community development model that aims to provide schools with tools to help students overcome adversity and improve their educational outcomes (Boingboing, 2017). It implements the

Resilience Framework as a cross-cutting element that must be considered in the daily activities of the school. The Resilience Framework (Figure 1) consists of five basic pillars related to the areas of life of children and adolescents and is transformed into:

- Actions that involve addressing the **basic needs** of children and young people. It would be impossible for some students to start undertaking anything without first solving them.
- Actions related to **belonging** in order to make students feel united and connected with people and places in the environment, with whom they can have healthy relationships. The idea is that they can keep up good moments, make new contacts, and find people they can trust.
- Actions related to **learning** that allow students' educational routine to work as well as possible, bearing in mind that learning is not only given in the classroom but also in contexts such as the playground or outside the school. We need to make sure they are developing their interests, talents or skills for life.
- Actions that help to develop **coping** skills that help children and adolescents to solve problems, to defend their own points of view and beliefs and to change challenges of daily life.
- Actions aimed at developing **intrapersonal aspects**, in order to encourage children and adolescents to understand who they are, to know their thoughts and beliefs about themselves and to develop their personality.



To develop these actions, the Resilience Framework proposes the need to take into account four principles:

- **Acceptance.** It involves accepting the situation or the problem, focusing on what you want to happen from now on, and taking action to achieve it.
- **Conservation.** It means preserving the good things that are happening in the lives of students, identifying them, if necessary, and reinforcing them.
- **Commitment.** It is important to stay focused and be consistent in promoting resilience as it is not a quick fix.
- **Enlisting.** It means involving other people in the educational community or outside the school who can support children and adolescents.

To incorporate the ARA, we can start by proposing short and simple actions such as creating a space within the school where students enjoy a calm atmosphere so that they can talk and think calmly about their concerns. Other recommendations proposed by Hart, Fernández-Rodrigo, Molina, M.C., Izquierdo, R. and Maitland (2018) are:

- Incorporate the ARA in the **framework documents of the school** where they define its educational and organizational principles in order to integrate it as a cross-cutting element in the school.
- Review **daily actions** to redefine or incorporate new ones, taking into account the Resilience Framework.
- Include ARA in the school's **Coexistence and Educational Success Plan** or develop one to empower the educational community about coexistence and positive conflict management in accordance with the resilience approach.
- The **whole educational community** should know what resilience is, its importance in student development and how school helps to improve it.
- In order to support students in the face of an adverse situation, the principles of the Resilience Framework (acceptance, conservation, commitment and enlisting) play an important role in the **role of the tutor**.
- It is proposed to **give children and adolescents the opportunity to express** their opinions and proposals, based on a relationship of trust, in which co-responsibility in decision-making is developed to respond to their concerns and their perceived needs.
- Proposal of **specific activities** that are related to the curriculum in subjects such as Citizenship Education that include content such as knowledge of one's own identity, responsibilities, maintaining healthy relationships or empathy.

#3. Emotional Intelligence

The ability that human beings have to relate in an appropriate way with others is one of the specific intelligences that Gardner (1983) detailed within his theory of Multiple Intelligences: Intrapersonal Intelligence. This intelligence is closely related to another that the author called Interpersonal Intelligence and which refers to the personal skills that each individual owns to effectively identify and control their own emotional states.

Daniel Goleman, in 1995, publishes “Emotional Intelligence” combining both to and thus allude to the ability of a subject to identify and efficiently manage both their own emotions and those of others, in such a way that social relations would suppose a great success compared to those other people unable to recognize and manage them properly.

In this sense, and referring to the situations in the classroom described in the previous section, it can be affirmed that the capacity of the school staff when it comes to preventing, detecting and redirecting any possible destabilizing emotion in students as well as its trigger to grant the teacher the power to manage in an efficient and emotionally safe way a good group management as well as a good development of the academic contents (Birknerova, 2011).

However, to Jeloudar, Yunus, Roslan, and Nor (2011), it is not always given adequate relevance. In this context it is essential teachers will always be able to detect what their emotions are like. It is also important for teachers to be aware of when they become emotionally deregulated and why. That is, what events trigger them (especially if they are related to the behaviors and/or attitudes of a specific student) as well as of which elements will help them regain calm and control of themselves.

In the same way, López & López (2018) explain that if the teacher is sensitive to understanding that the same thing happens to the students and that these emotional destabilizers are associated with their personal history and/or experiences, the teacher will be able to depersonalize any provocation and/or disruptive behavior of the students avoiding significant emotional distress on your part. In addition, in this way the teacher is given the ability to seek and implement effective solutions in each possible case that return to the classroom an environment conducive to learning (Vesely-Maillefer & Saklofske, 2018).

For example, to Geddes (2021) it is likely that a student who comes from the protection system will be restless and disruptive in the classroom when an activity related to origins such as the family tree or certain geography topics is being worked on when there is some type of movement in their history migratory or racial difference, or when talking about reproductive issues when they have suffered some type of abuse or their genetic load is unknown. That is why, faced with the possibility of this situation happening, the teacher should be sensitive and anticipate that this dynamic may affect the student in order to prevent and/or alleviate any

possible damage by adapting content and/or giving it different approaches so that it results more inclusive.

This author said that It is true that, on occasions, teachers do not know part of the student's history and face situations in which the student is deregulated without understanding the reason. Given this fact, teachers must apply those tools that they know in advance that work with the student, such as leaving the classroom with the excuse of running an errand or lending a hand in another class, changing activities, including a break that involves physical activity in the playground,... For this it is essential that teachers can meet with families to delve into what emotional strategies are successfully applied at home to be able to use them in the classroom as well.

In this sense, it is key that teachers are able to depersonalize each and every one of the student's disruptive behaviors, thus ensuring that they do not experience it as a personal attack but nevertheless feel that they are a source of solution to any possible difficulty that the student may have. The student can go through and for this it is essential that they have a high knowledge and self-control of themselves and their emotional responses (Vesely-Maillefer & Saklofske, 2018).



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SECTION 3. Slides

This section consists of a powerpoint divided into 5 parts and an introduction. It is possible to use the presentation as a whole, but also only certain subsections, depending on your objectives, the learning context and the type of audience. Some subsections contain suggestions for group work, while an entire subsection is solely devoted to case studies. A list of scientific references to deepen the subjects is also provided.

0 Introduction

1 Stressors

2 Attachment & Learning

3 Academic Resilience Approach (ARA)

4 Emotional intelligence

5 Case studies

Slides for this unit are provided in Annex 4

UNIT 5.1

From behaviour policies to a relational approach

**How to develop inclusive schools where
everyone counts**



Introduction

- Section 1. Learning Unit Reference Sheet: an overview of the unit which summarises the key content and learning objectives. At the same time, it provides a possible structure of activities useful for working on the topics to be addressed.
- Section 2. Where you can find the content needed to structure the information to be conveyed during lessons and other teaching activities.
- Section 3. Slides: these slides, which are already organised by topic, support the lectures.



SECTION 1.

Learning Unit 5.1 Reference Sheet

Key contents

- To acknowledge and understand the variety of expectations that schools may use
- To acknowledge the different behaviour that challenges
- To understand the impact of a behavioural approach versus a relational approach

Learning goals

- Understanding what the term 'behaviour' means
- Recognise behaviour which they find challenging
- Identify the culture in which a school may operate.
- To produce mini policy

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
1	Lecture on school environment and behaviour policies	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> lecture, think-pair-share, Q&A time <i>Tools:</i> slides		Room with mobile seats if possible
2	Open discussion about which behaviours the trainees find challenging. Have specific examples ready to share with the students *Health warning to students that some of materials and discussions about challenging behaviour can elicit feelings in us – self-care in the learning process, sharing what feels comfortable – taking a break if necessary	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> working in small groups to produce list of challenging behaviours <i>Tools:</i> whiteboard, post-it, markers	20'	Classroom with mobile seats
	Analysing school behaviour policies. Outlining a mini behaviour policy.	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Direct students to read typical school behaviour policies and ask students to work in small groups to compare them: - Are they clear and easily understood? - Are they too long/ short. - Are they behaviourist or relational? Nominate spokesperson to feedback finding. <i>Tools:</i> whiteboard, paper and pens	30'	

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
4	Outlining a mini behaviour policy.	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> whole group/ breakout group work, discussion of feedback.</p> <p>What would they like to see in a policy?</p> <p>How does this policy meet the needs of the child?</p> <p>How will we evaluate the policy and learning as a whole school approach to check what is working and what isn't?</p> <p><i>Tools:</i> flip chart, paper and pens</p>	20'	<p>Room with mobile seats if possible</p> <p>Classroom with mobile seats</p>



SECTION 2. Contents

#1. Assessing the School Environment:

The role of school in understanding the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and how the school environment, its ethos and behaviour policies affect this.

Many children who are adopted or in foster/community care can find school difficult, either some of the time or most of the time. These difficulties can start in primary school and for some young people this can be their “whole” school experience. We know that teachers and schools have vital roles to play in supporting adopted and care experienced children and that this support is much wider than educational attainment.

As well as supporting young adopted and care experienced people to raise their attainment their wider needs social, emotional and mental health needs must also be considered. Schools and educational facilities are organisations made up of a diverse group of people which include staff, children, young people, parents and governors. The likelihood is that the starting point for each person will be different in terms of their experience and understanding about the needs of these young people.

The tone set in school by senior leaderships is therefore key in both understanding and recognising the impact school can have on those children with attachment and relational trauma needs. We know from our experience that when parents, carers and professionals talk about having positive school experiences this is often not just about what has been done for their child, but is in a more broader context about the ethos within the school and the value and validation it places on those who come to school with additional and complex needs based on early life experience.

It is important therefore when we are thinking about the tone/ethos of the school that it is important to understand that adopted, care experienced and children from complex backgrounds with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are more likely to use behaviour as a way of communicating based on their experiences. It comes from that they have learned and not a desire to be naughty, mean or defiant.

This is a crucial aspect for any school or education provider to understand as this ensures that there is a clear and common understanding from the outset about how life trauma can manifest itself in a school or education setting. Without this prior knowledge the relationships between schools, teachers, pupils and families are likely to emerge from a place of misattunement.

It is important for us to both understand and accept that when working with children with adverse histories that their difficult behaviour is coming from a place of fear and adversity. This lack of understanding as to where this behaviour stems from and for many teachers/schools and those who care for children from such backgrounds can be experienced as oppositional, defiant, challenging and disrespectful.

Again this reinforces the importance of why understanding what we mean when we talk about attachment and trauma is crucial. Why the ethos of the school is critical for children to be successful and why prioritising relationships is a key component in this in ensuring that interactions between staff and children are validating and empathic. To achieve ethos the ethos, system, and procedures set within the school reinforce the importance of this.

We also know that traditional systems within schools around behaviour policies such as isolation/inclusion/planner comments etc. often have a negative impact on adopted and care experienced young people. This is because children who have experienced trauma are more likely to have learnt from their early experiences that.

- They are rubbish/unworthy/unlovable
- Adults cannot be trusted
- The world is an unsafe place to be in

What this often translates to in behaviours is a child who needs to be in control as they have had to rely upon themselves to keep themselves safe and so the behaviours that were utilised in their previous environment are now viewed as challenging or defiant within their school/education environment.

We know that many schools and education environments attempt to shape a child's behaviour based on a their internalised system that uses rewards and punishment as a consequence of behaviour.

At this point, you can divide the students into small groups and ask them to reflect on their own experiences in school, as professionals (if they are experienced teachers) or even as students. The aim is to reflect on behaviour policies and a "one size fits all" approach:

- Are there any common themes that emerge from sharing policies from different educational organisations?
- Are there aspects of school's behaviour policies that they think:
- Affect positive change in a student's behaviour?
- Impact the student negatively and don't consider the "whole" student?

Alongside the "top down" impact of the tone set by senior leaders within a school is the commitment and motivation of the staff cohort who also recognise the importance of:

- Commitment and motivation to drive forward change (either based on personal and/or professional interest
- Are involved enough within the day-to-day functioning of a school to model effective change to peers/all
- Key personnel who are skilled at connecting and bringing others alongside to also model change.

#2. Behaviour as communication

Thinking about behaviour as communication is key for teachers, educators and school staff to understand that those children who are so often viewed as naughty are in fact dealing with many complex issues which can only be addressed through whole school understanding and different approaches. These children do what they do from experience and from what has been learned, not because they feel like being naughty or mean which can so often be the interpretation. We must accept difficult behaviours as coming from a place of fear and adverse childhood experience not from intentional or wilful behaviour. When there is a lack of understanding as to where this behaviour comes from teachers and the school so often misinterpret the child as being oppositional, defiant and rude. Many of the children displaying these behaviours probably won't be aware that these behaviours are the things they are feeling and thinking. If we are curious and open to exploring what might be underneath these behaviours we can help start to develop an awareness for themselves.

School are complex organisations and so often teachers who are managing classes of up to thirty pupils understandably can get caught up in logging and reacting to these behaviours rather than exploring what the child might be telling us through their behaviour what their needs are. When we are thinking about these behaviours we need to ask ourselves: (1) What the behaviour tells us about the child's unmet needs such as their emotional and social needs? (2) How can we change/adapt the school environment to reduce any of the triggers which may cause the challenging behaviour? (3) How do we adjust how we respond to the behaviour which is more helpful to the child?

Here are some examples of the behaviours you might recognise from your work with adopted or care experienced young people:

- Continually talking, asking questions or making noises
- Sexualised behaviours
- Outbursts of frustration or anger
- Withdrawing or zoning out

These behaviours may be a way of the child expressing or communicating to you their feelings and though they might not understand them they may not be able to articulate what they are:

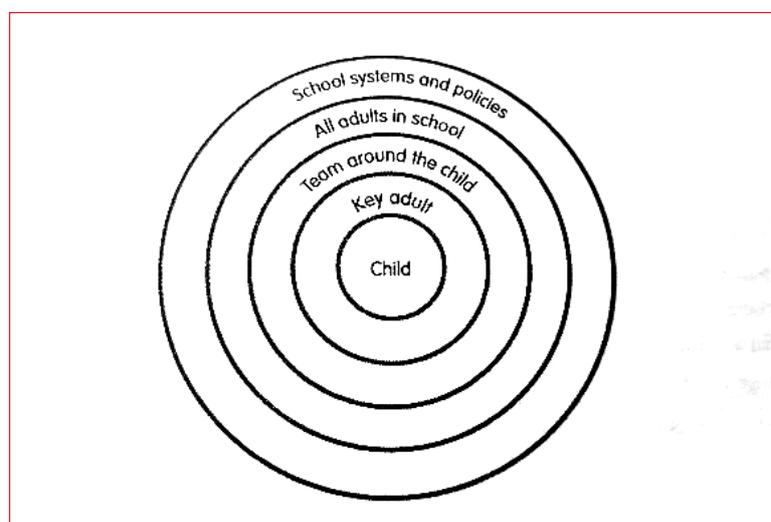
- I don't feel safe
- I don't trust you or any other adult
- I can only rely on myself – I need to be in control at all times
- I don't know who I feel

- I feel rubbish or stupid
- I have a lots of muddles
- I have some really big feelings/I can't cope with how I feel/I feel overwhelmed
- I feel scare, anxious or frightened
- I feel sad
- I feel threatened
- I feel angry
- I need to escape
- I need to protect myself/keep myself safe
- I don't know if I still exist
- I don't have the skills to do what you are asking me
- I need to be in control to feel safe

Many of the above behaviours can elicit strong feelings that the child is “attention seeking”. Everyone has a button that can be pressed and for many teachers/parents/carers alike what they deem as attention seeking can lead us to get stuck in our responses. If we reframe this and think about the child seeking attention in order to have their needs met, because for so many adopted and care experienced children their early care seeking behaviours was not met, and we respond with consistent, predictable and repetitive, we respond empathically and with validation.

#3. Relational approach

Traumatised children need relationships that provide them with attachment (A), regulation (R), and competency (C). This is true whether we are providing individualised therapy, therapeutic parenting at home or a healing environment in schools.



Attachment - is the child's need for attunement and responsive care (CPR: Consistent, Predictable and Repetitive responses) which enables them to learn to trust other and that the world can be a safe place. Developing attachment in relationships when the early years of life have been affected by trauma and adversity can take a long time, as the messages learned in the first years of life are very hard to overwrite.

Regulation - is an important area of focus as many children have not had the opportunity to understand or connect with their own experiences. As described earlier what we often see in behaviour is a response to a thought or feeling they have no control over and no frame of reference to understand what this means. For many adopted and care experience children and young people they will become easily dysregulated and our experience of working with adopted and permanency families is that school is often the number 1 environment for this dysregulation to increase. When children do not experience being calm/regulation by an available adult they will not suddenly be able to regulate themselves. It is therefore important in school that children are supported by adults/teachers through the phases of development they have missed.

Competency - refers to the range of developmental skills and tasks that children typically master when they are in receipt of good enough parenting. Adopted and care experienced children are likely to have had fewer opportunities for play and will not usually have had adults who are available to teach them skills as well as opportunities to practice and strengthen those skills

This approach is true across all of the relationships that a child or young person will experience which includes a healthy and healing environment within the school. Within schools we need to support children and young people through the phases of development that they have missed to support them towards independence.

#4. Functional behavioural analysis chart

Using a functional behaviour analysis chart to consider the behaviours of a child/ children, but also taking into consideration how the behaviour policy/ethos within the school may be impacting this and what changes do we need to consider in terms of our whole school behavioural approach?

The ABC chart is an observational tool that allows to record a particular behaviour. It enables to consider the behaviour alongside the schools behaviour policy/ethos and how this might be impacting. It helps us think about what changes we might need to make in school in terms of taking a whole school approach. The aim of using an ABC chart is to help us better understand what the behaviour is communicating. They also include environmental factors that may also be impacting the child or young person negatively.

It is an observational tool that allows us to record information about a particular behaviour. The aim of using an ABC chart is to better understand what the

behaviour is communicating. They also include consideration of environmental factors within the school that may be also having a negative impact upon the child.

A. refers to antecedent

This can include any events, what the pupil was doing, what others around them were doing, who was there, the location, sounds, sights, and smells, anything about the setting or events leading up to a behaviour.

B. refers to behaviour

This involves an objective and clear description of the behaviour that occurred.

C. refers to consequence

This includes what happened after the behaviour, including the reaction of adults, the reaction of other children, and how this affected the environment.

It's a good idea to decide beforehand on a few target behaviours to look out for. You can keep the chart somewhere accessible and fill it out every time a target behaviour occurs until it is full or observe the child over a set period of time and record incidents that way.

When the behaviours have been recorded on numerous occasions, check for patterns in the antecedents which might be 'triggers'. Think about the following questions:

- When is the behaviour most likely to occur? Are there particular times or activities?
- Are there times or activities during which the behaviour doesn't occur?
- Where is the behaviour most likely to occur?
- Who is around when the behaviour occurs?

It is also important to think about what consequences might be maintaining the behaviour. Think about the following questions:

- What does the student achieve through the behaviour? What might the 'function' be?
- Does the student escape or avoid anything by engaging in the behaviour?
- Is the student somehow rewarded by engaging in the behaviour?
- What might the student be trying to communicate through their behaviour?

Once you have thought about the triggers for the behaviour and the consequences that could be maintaining it, you can use this to help you develop plans to better support the student. Think about the following questions:

- What changes could you make to the environment around the child to decrease exposure to any triggers?

- What strategies could you teach the student to cope with triggers better?
- What skill could you teach the student that would reduce their need to engage in this behaviour?
- What support can you provide to meet the student's needs and thus reduce the need for this behaviour?

To deepen the use of the ABC Chart, provide a case example that students can work on in pairs. In Anna A. Berardi and Brenda M. Morton's book, *Trauma-Informed School Practices*, you can find some of them, such as Ben's or Charlotte's cases. The book is available at: https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=pennington_epress

Once they have thought about the triggers for the behaviour and the consequences that could be maintaining it, ask them to use this to help you develop plans to better support the student. The following questions may be helpful:

- What changes could be made to the environment around the child to decrease exposure to any triggers?
- What strategies could you teach the student to cope with triggers better?
- What skill could you teach the student that would reduce their need to engage in this behaviour?
- What support can you provide to meet the student's needs and thus reduce the need for the behaviour?



SECTION 3. Slides

1 Behaviour Policies and Assessing the School Environment

1 School Expectations – Behaviour that challenges

2 Common responses in schools to challenging behaviours

3 Behaviour that Challenges

4 Adverse Childhood Experiences

5 Behaviour as communication

6 School behaviour policies

7 The ABC Chart

8 Establishing and maintaining a positive relationship



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Slides for this unit are provided in Annex 5.1

UNIT 5.2

From behaviour policies to a relational approach

Working with parents/caregivers



Introduction

Adopted children and those living in foster or community care or those who have experienced some form of estrangement from their original family unit may have faced traumatic experiences in their early years. Often the school meets them at a time when the traumatic situation belongs to the past, but their needs may be influenced by what happened. Experiences in the early years of life can have a lasting impact that can influence the child for many years. We therefore believe that teachers and schools have a vital role to play in helping these children emotionally, socially, and educationally by providing specific support, to raise their attainment and address their wider needs.

The teaching and parenting of traumatised children can place a huge amount of pressure on everyone within the support network. This can be hugely anxiety provoking and if the partnership does not establish an open, honest and supportive relationship from the outset at times of challenge there is the potential for division and blame.

This Unit 5.2 is composed of three sections:

- Section 1. Learning Unit Sheet: an overview of the unit which summarises the key content and learning objectives. At the same time, it provides a possible structure of activities useful for working on the topics to be addressed.
- Section 2. Content: here you can find the content needed to structure the information to be conveyed during lessons and other teaching activities.
- Section 3. Slides: these slides, which are already organised by topic, support the lectures.

SECTION 1.

Learning Unit 5.2 Reference Sheet

Key contents

- Building a “true” partnership
- Potential barriers to relationship
- Making space for all voices/expertise
- Communicating when things are going well
- Working to repair the partnership in times of challenge
- The needs of family

Learning goals

- Understand the importance of what a true partnership involves between parent and school
- Understand what potential barriers there may be within the relationship
- Ensure everyone’s voice is represented and heard (this must include voice of child)
- Communication is consistent when things are good and when they are more challenging
- Responding empathically to behaviour
- Plans to support child

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
1	The partnership school-parents/ caregivers	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> lecture, think-pair-share, Q&A time <i>Tools:</i> slides	45'	Classroom
2	Thinking about who will be involved in completing support plans and managing conflicting views whilst ensuring needs of child remains central	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> small groups to represent each voice (child/parent/s/teacher); Role play case scenario; Case example/feedback from each group representing the different participants <i>Tools</i> whiteboard, paper	40'	Classroom with mobile seats



SECTION 2. Contents

#1. Why communication between school and parents/caregivers is key

When traumatized children are experiencing difficulties, it can place a lot of pressure on the people who are supporting them. Everyone within this network of support can feel high levels of anxiety and we can then sometimes slip into a culture of blame. Parents and carers often tell us that they can sometimes feel to blame for their child's difficulties and struggles in school, perhaps because there can be a misconception that the child's difficulties have arisen from poor parenting. Schools, teachers and the "team around the child" can help such situations by acknowledging that a child's difficulties may be due to their early life history, not their adopted or foster family or even their adoption or care experience.

Partnerships between parents or care givers and school can be even harder when children don't appear to have any difficulties at school. The school may interpret this as the child being fine whereas the parent/carer knows all too well that the child is managing to hold it together in school and then coming home and letting the stresses spill out. Imagine a bottle of Coca Cola that has been shaken all day long and at the end of the day and after all of the shaking the lid comes off and the coke spills out everywhere. Many adopters and carers can relate to this analogy

Over compliance can be a particular issue for adopted children or children in alternative care. Their early life experiences have taught them that the best way to keep themselves safe is to be very very good, but what cannot be seen is the high levels of fear and stress that sit beneath the surface of this over-compliance.

Behaviours like over-compliance and pseudo-independence give the impression that the child is coping. These behaviours cause concern because they often stem from a fear of adults and a lack of trust in others. Such children will need help to learn to trust that others can support them and that they do not have to manage everything themselves.

All too often parents tell us that school report that their child's behaviour is excellent at school and that they try hard with their work and they have lots of friends. It takes a very knowledgeable, open, supporting and accepting school to recognise that a child is struggling behind their appearance. This can mean for those children who are compliant and who undertake the tasks given and are achieving are often "under the school radar" and so if there is no robust partnership between school and parents where there is a shared understanding all too often the social and emotional wellbeing of a child can be missed or misinterpreted.

#2. The communication between parents/caregivers and school

A true partnership between parents and school means that parents are informed, consulted, involved and engaged. Sometimes the school's interactions with parents/carers will be child-centred. At other times, they will revolve more broadly around the life of the school.

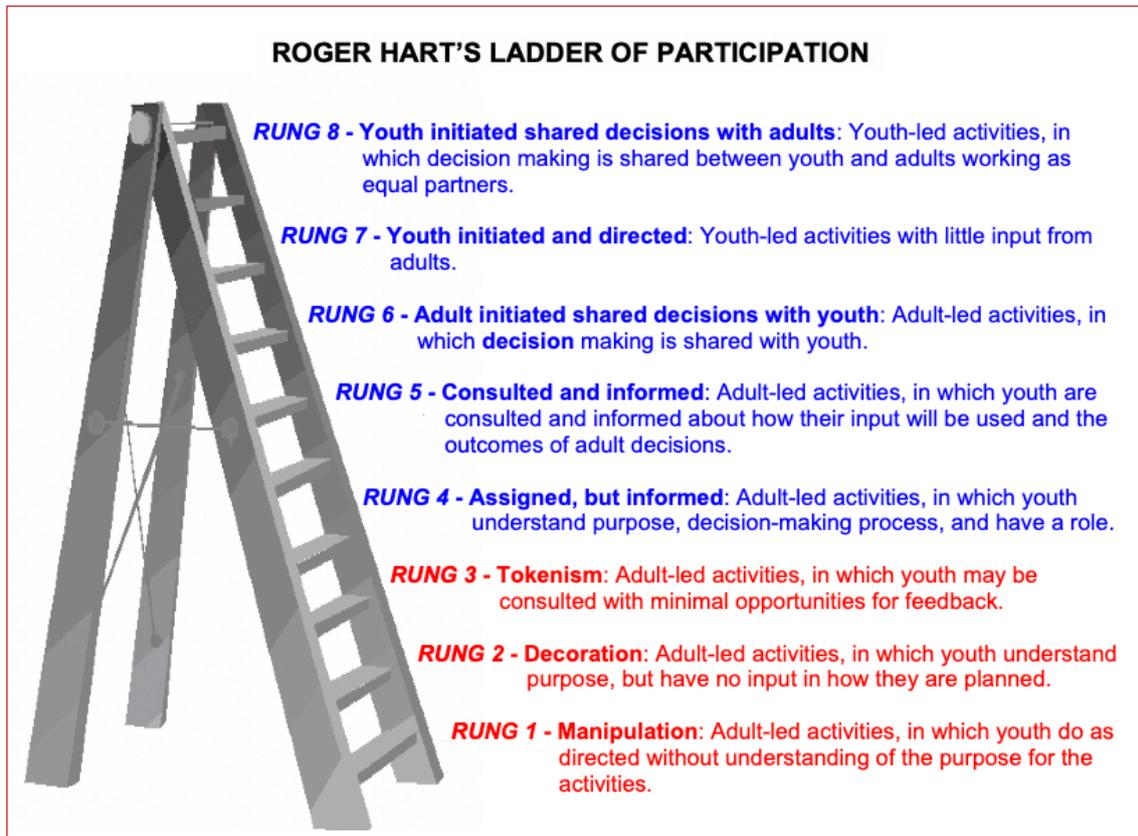
Schools can sometimes find it difficult if they feel they are being told what to do by parents. Parents conversely can feel "shut out" if their expertise is not welcomed. Sometimes schools and parents/caregivers relinquish their control to outside experts to try and help them through their difficulties. Successful partnerships however acknowledge that everyone's expertise is welcomed and is a necessary component around the table. The parent/caregiver is the expert in their child and often understands a lot more about trauma, loss and adoption and care experience issues. Schools are the experts in education and their own setting. The role of an external professional brings with it additional expertise such as psychology or speech and language.

Establishing some explicit points of agreement within the partnership agreement can also be helpful. For example, if you agree to make a call to the parent every Friday afternoon, updates done in this way can ensure that even difficult conversations are taking place and the "team around the child" is working well together to continue in their support to the child. Such agreements can ensure that conversations, even difficult ones, are held and that the 'team around the child' works well together to continue to support the child.

Maintaining relationships throughout the child's school life is very important and beneficial to the child. The partnership must recognise from the outset that there may be times when we report that everything is going well, but we must also be aware that sometimes we also have to share the difficult issues.

#3. The Ladder of Participation

Roger Hart (1992) designed the Ladder of Participation to explain the different approaches and practices that organisations adopt in involving their service users in decision-making. It can also be used to explain the involvement of parents and carers in school. And it can be adapted as follows to reflect on the participation of children in decisions that affect them:



#4. Support plans

Making support plans for children in school need to be done in a joined up and collaborative way. They should include key people in school, parents/caregivers and wherever possible the child or young person. The following are some ideas that can be helpful:

- Structure and routine are an important source of safety, as they make the world predictable. Staff should let children know what will happen in the day and week, using visual timetables and now-and-next boards. It is helpful to let parents and care givers know too, so that they can talk children through the day beforehand. When there are changes to the usual routine, it is important to let the child and parent/caregiver know in advance, so they can prepare for the changes.
- It is useful to create a safe space for the child in school, which they can use when they feel anxious or unsafe; this may be a designated room, or a pop-up tent in the corner of the classroom. The space should be used with the child's key worker, and

should not be experienced as 'sending them away' or 'time out.' Children may not be able to manage their strong feelings on their own. These children need adults to help soothe and regulate them. It is helpful to speak to parents/caregivers about what their child finds soothing and calming; options include using the five child's senses (e.g. lavender on a tissue; stroking a soft fabric; listening to a calming CD), doing calming repetitive activities (sorting coins or coloured pencils), or more physical activities such as 'stretching like a cat.' If children are intensely distressed, it may help to encourage them to do intensive exercise (e.g. running on the spot for a minute) or use temperature (e.g. squeezing an ice pack) to alter their body chemistry. The key worker and child can then develop a 'calm box' together with activities and ideas. Mindfulness is a very helpful way of grounding children in the present moment, as well as being effective at settling the whole class after moments of transition. These can be very simple activities, like asking a child to tune into all the sounds they can hear, or note all the green objects in the room. Children may also find it helpful to be physically grounded in the present, such as by carrying some heavy books to the school office, or having a weighted lap beanbag which gently weighs them down into their chair.

- Children who have experienced developmental gaps need us to meet them where they are developmentally (a common expression in the adoption world is "Think toddler!"). It can be helpful to use developmental tools to map out a child's development in each area.
- School nurture groups offer a developmental approach to children's learning. They provide children with enriched family-like environments, with plenty of opportunities to explore the world and develop early skills. Activities such as eating together, reading together and exploratory play are understood to be important for developing children's language, social skills, emotion regulation skills and play skills. All of these are important building blocks for learning.

Each support plan for each child will be different and needs to take into account their needs. Change doesn't happen over night and consistency, predictability and repetitiveness is key to any plan you put in place. Give it time to work and build in reviews perhaps 3 monthly or sooner if necessary to evaluate how things are going, make any necessary changes and continue. Working together, collaborating and involving children where possible in some of the decision making about how best they can be supported.



SECTION 3. Slides

This section consists of a powerpoint. It is possible to use the presentation as a whole, or to only use certain subsections, depending on your objectives, the learning context and the type of audience.

1 Working in partnership with parents and care givers

2 What does a true partnership involve? What are the potential barriers to the partnership?

3 The over compliant and pseudo independent child

4 Setting up the partnership

5 Ladder of Participation

6 Making space for everyone's voice

#7 Getting it right from the start

#8 Communication: what, when and how?

9 Communication in the partnership

10 Support Plans Measuring Impact and Outcome



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Slides for this unit are provided in Annex 5.2

UNIT 5.3

From behaviour policies to a relational approach

Sexualized behavior and child abuse





Introduction

A school is a fundamental place of socialisation for a child's growth and development. However, teachers are not always adequately trained to deal with the specificities that a young person with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) brings. A specific case is that of children who have been sexually abused. Encountering an abused young person can trigger complex emotional reactions in the adult that do not make it easy to understand the child's language, and thus the proper way of managing their behaviour and relationship with the class. In this unit, we will provide teachers with tools to frame and understand the meaning of some specific behaviours that these children may display, related to the sexualisation of behaviour, and develop effective ways of relating and intervening.

This Unit 5.3 is composed of three sections:

- Section 1. Learning Unit Reference Sheet: an overview of the unit which summarises the key content and learning objectives. At the same time, it provides a possible structure of activities useful for working on the topics to be addressed.
- Section 2. Contents: here you can find the content needed to structure the information to be conveyed during lessons and other teaching activities.
- Section 3. Slides: these slides, which are already organised by topic, support the lectures.



SECTION 1.

Learning Unit 5.3 Reference Sheet

Key contents

- The teacher in the face of child abuse and their emotional dimension
- What is child sexual abuse?
- The consequences of sexual abuse in the short, medium, and long term
- Physical indicators expressing inappropriate sexualisation
- Indicators of emotional distress
- Importance of listening to a child
- Importance of networking to activate a child protection system

Learning goals

- understanding the importance of one own's emotions when facing the issue of sexual abuse in childhood
- recognising indicators of discomfort with sexuality in a child in the classroom
- knowing what to do and what not to do when confronted with a child's sexualised behaviours
- gaining orientation about professional figures to ask for help, and how to communicate with them

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
1	<p>Brief introduction of child sexual abuse and consequences</p> <p>Physical and psychological indicators</p> <p>What to do and what not to do when confronted with children's sexualised behaviour in the classroom</p> <p>Listening to one's own emotions and listening to the child</p>	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Theoretical Lesson</p> <p><i>Tools:</i> power point presentation</p>	30'	Classroom
2	<p>Through the analysis of a practical case, students will develop their sensitivity to a practical situation in which a child in the classroom exhibits sexualised behaviour.</p> <p>Working in a group they will reason around these issues: How do I behave? How do I talk to the child? To whom do I talk? How can I activate a protection system?</p> <p>Ryan is 8 years old, a Moroccan national, and has been living with a foster family for a couple of months, after being removed from his family of origin. Rayan started third grade at a new school.</p> <p>At the beginning of the year, Rayan presents himself as an adequate and quiet child, seems to adapt to all situations, and shows difficulties in interacting with his classmates.</p> <p>After two months Rayan's behaviour changes: he begins to have difficulty concentrating, to be tired and restless all the time. When Rayan misbehaves in class, e.g. disturbs during the lesson, the teacher puts a note in his diary to report his unsuitable behaviour.</p>	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> case study, small group, plenary session</p> <p><i>Tools:</i> poster and post-it to sum up the discussion</p>	45'	Classroom with mobile seats

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
2	<p>After a short time, he starts to be aggressive with his male classmates and to engage in sexualised behaviour with his female classmates: he tries to touch their private parts and insistently asks to be touched. The teacher scolds Rayan in front of everyone, gives him detention, and continues to write notes in his diary. Nonetheless, Rayan's behaviour does not change, and the teacher continues to have great difficulty managing him.</p> <p>What can the teacher do to help themselves and the child, to better cope with this situation?</p>	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> case study, small group, plenary session</p> <p><i>Tools:</i> poster and post-it to sum up the discussion</p>	45'	Classroom with mobile seats
3	<p>Conclusions of the case study. Themes to highlight, from the case study to general guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – When/how to network to activate a protection system(do not act alone in complex situations)? – When/how are you creating a relationship of trust between the teacher and the child? – When/how are you listening and observing the child? – When/how are you listening to your own emotions? 	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> Theoretical lesson</p> <p><i>Tools:</i> poster and power-point presentation for conclusion</p>	30'	Classroom



SECTION 2. Contents

#1. Introduction

Outside of the family environment, children spend most of their time at school.

Consequently, the role played by the school and teachers is of fundamental importance for children's development, particularly for those who have experienced early adversity during childhood and/or find themselves no longer living with their family of origin.

For these children, the school environment and the relationship with the teacher become even more important. The teacher must be able to recognize and manage any signs of discomfort that the child may express through their behaviour.

Teachers can observe the children daily and build a relationship of trust with them, becoming repositories of their pleasant stories as well as their painful experiences. They can also detect the children's aggressive or oppositional behaviours, often signs of abuse, and take steps to assist them.

In many cases, children who have had traumatic experiences in their past may display strong emotional suffering. This distress may be expressed through inappropriate behaviour in the classroom, both towards their peers as well as their teachers.

Among the various forms of violence to which a child may be subjected, sexual abuse is the most difficult to detect and is also the most unthinkable for an adult to imagine. This is especially true because children often do not speak about sexual violence but instead express themselves through their behaviours.

For these reasons, when a teacher is confronted with a child who shows, for example, sexualized behaviour, they may feel cornered and not know what to do.

The teacher may experience a spectrum of emotions, from anguish and anger to a feeling of powerlessness or excessive emotional detachment. It is important to recognize that all of these feelings are valid, and that understanding them is the first step in the process of assisting the child.

What skills do teachers need to better cope with these sensitive situations? How can they successfully manage their feelings and avoid becoming harmful?

In order to help the teacher and the school organisation respond to these situations it is important to:

- recognise what child sexual abuse is and the consequences it can have in the short and long term;
- understand the indicators of discomfort that a child may exhibit: no child is born "bad", they can express inadequate behaviour as a result of the traumatic experiences they have gone through, and this child can be helped;

- recognise their own emotions and know how to manage them;
- learn that they should not act alone, and should instead share their observations with the school management and, if necessary, activate a support network (social services, school psychologist, or other professionals who already know the child or who could take care of them).

#2. What is child abuse?

Child abuse, in all its manifestations, is a public health problem, a serious violation of the individual freedom and natural rights of every child, regardless of the country in which they live, the specific legal framework, or the sociocultural perception of the phenomenon.

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activities, even if not characterised by explicit violence, by an adult who is almost always an authority figure for the child, either within the family or in non-family relationships (places of gathering, sports activities, school). Sexual abuse can also be perpetrated on the child through falsely playful and ambiguous ways, almost always by an adult who has a significant relationship with the child. The affective relationship is exploited by using sexual communication that is totally inappropriate and harmful to children.

Unfortunately, sexual abuse of children is a widespread phenomenon.

We are often led to believe that child abuse can only occur in multi-problem families and in disadvantaged socio-cultural contexts. On the contrary, it is a phenomenon that cuts across all social classes, regardless of ethnicity, level of education and economic conditions. It is always a confusing and destabilising attack on the child's personality and developmental pathway: any gesture of violation of intimacy certainly produces discomfort in the immediate term, but it will also have long-term consequences until adulthood (Finkelhor, 1992).

#3. The indicators and consequences of sexual abuse in the short, medium and long term.

The most widespread belief is that the abused child shows visible signs of abuse or violence. This idea is incorrect, as the abused child often shows no physical signs of violence.

The child often uses behaviour instead of words to ask for help and identifies people close to them to communicate the abuse they are experiencing.

The teacher is very often the adult of choice for the abused child and as such should have the ability to pick up on these signs, thus offering a first concrete response and request for help.

Below are some examples of child abuse indicators to look out for:

Early and improper sexualization

- Children's knowledge of aspects of adult sexuality, abnormal for their age;
- Tendency to eroticise relationships as a means of receiving and giving affection;
- compulsive pursuit of sexualised play;
- drawings with sexual content;
- compulsive masturbation;
- sexual requests to adults or peers

Emotional distress

- sudden crying, irritability and outbursts of anger, sudden mood swings, despair, anxiety, hyperactivity, insecurity, aggression;
- sleep disorders (e.g. nightmares);
- eating disorders;
- excessive and inappropriate fears;
- refusal to undress during sports activities;
- speech and learning disorders;
- sudden drop in performance, school phobia;
- self-harming behaviour;

Rarely, some physical indicators may be present, such as redness or pain in the genital and/or anal areas or difficulty walking or sitting.

A single indicator does not indicate a traumatic experience. A comprehensive reading of the child's situation is always necessary to avoid false alarms, confusion with other types of distress or underestimation of the seriousness of the situation.

In the short and medium term, the abused child experiences helplessness, confusion and ambivalence. The child is unable to recount the abuse because they do not understand it and do not know the words to describe it. Children often do not understand that they have been harmed by an important adult and need to maintain a positive image of the abuser. This process may lead the child to attribute a series of negative images to themselves, instead of to the abusive adult, together with feelings of guilt and shame. It is also possible that the child is unable to talk about the abuse because they believe that they provoked or deserved it and consequently feel ashamed.

The damages also manifest themselves in adulthood in the form of unhealthy personal or sexual relationships and can lead to more serious disorders such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, psychosis, alcoholism and addiction.

As demonstrated in the international literature, adverse events experienced in childhood can lead to serious social and cognitive fragility in children, and consequently, increased likelihood of developing psychopathologies in adulthood.

It is scientifically proven that the earlier the trauma is addressed with protective interventions, the more it will be possible to guarantee a healthy adulthood free of social health pathologies.

For these reasons, and because of the impact that these single indicators can have on the teacher and on the classroom context, it is of fundamental importance to know that they exist and that, behind these behaviours, there could be a traumatic event that the child has experienced in the past or is currently experiencing.

Furthermore, it is important to observe the child attentively and to collect all the indicators that could be worrisome and that could require a more incisive intervention.

Moreover, in the field of sexualization, there are so-called 'normal' behaviours such as playing doctor, imitation and role-playing games (kissing or flirting), confrontation between various intimate parts, up to occasional masturbation as an exploratory and/or consolatory act (Davies et al., 2000).

On the other hand, when children have been sexually abused or exposed to sexuality that is inappropriate for their age (e.g. by looking at pornographic sites or erotic games), they experience sexuality in an early and distorted way and can act on it through age-inappropriate behaviour. For example, strong early sexual knowledge, sexually oriented drawings, and/or sexualised behavior that creates embarrassment require specific attention from the teacher.

It is very important, in these cases, to recognize and manage inappropriate behaviours: at first it is necessary to "stop" and contain the child, and then try to create a space for face-to-face dialogue.

The adult's attitude must be one of empathetic listening, without judgment or blame, oriented towards offering one's attention and willingness to dialogue, within a relationship of trust.

#4. The emotional dimension of the teacher.

Sexual abuse is unthinkable: the adult usually reacts with emotions that are difficult to recognise and understand. It is difficult to imagine that a child can be sexually abused, even more so by an adult close to him. The emotions involved are generally painful and unpleasant. There are many feelings the adult may experience: distress,

feelings of inadequacy, frustration, helplessness, failure, anger, resentment, and disgust. Faced with these emotions, adults try to protect themselves through unconscious attitudes and defence strategies. These reactions are normal, but they can interfere with the possibility of being helpful to the child.

The following mechanisms characterise normal mental functioning but need to be recognized and processed.

Denial. The refusal to recognise the problem even when the signs are obvious, is certainly the main defence mechanism, used not only by the child's caregivers but also by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour ("it's not true", "I didn't notice", "it's not my responsibility").

Emotional distance, which manifests itself in indifference to what is acknowledged, e.g. "it's not us who have to deal with it, it happens, I have so many other problems to think about". It does not allow emotional sharing with the child and therefore the activation of an intervention.

Collusion is the alliance with the adult instead of the child, typical of abusers' partners. It is the illusion that makes one think "these parents will change, let's wait".

Identification with the victim occurs when the teacher is emotionally too close to the child and feels helplessness, despair, fear, anger of such a strength that he cannot perceive and act effectively.

Finally, the strong desire to do justice and protect the child can lead the teachers to step out of their role, creating confusing situations both inside and outside the school. The actions can be noble in intentions, but unsuccessful in outcome and counterproductive for the child in the medium to long term. Given the complexity of these mechanisms that can be activated when faced with the issue of abuse, it is important for teachers to recognise their own emotions and the need to reshape them to find the right distance from what is being observed.

Therefore, in cases of sexualised behaviour of a pupil, the teacher has to deal with a very complex situation: on the one hand, the child expressing the discomfort needs help, on the other hand, the teacher himself is faced with strong and problematic emotions. Moreover, in these cases, classmates are emotionally involved and may engage in inappropriate behaviour. For example, some classmates may isolate or target the child in question, while others may emphasise or imitate their problematic behaviour. Consequently, the teacher will not only have to address the child who manifests discomfort but will also have to address and manage the relationships that are created within the class.

#5. Support network.

When a teacher is confronted with a child in the classroom who is not well, it can be difficult to understand what to do, especially in cases of suspected sexual abuse.

For these reasons, it is crucial not to act alone.

Situations of suspected sexual abuse cannot be dealt with alone, both because of the emotional reactions that can arise and because of the complexity of possible protective interventions to be activated on behalf of the child.

In all these situations, the teacher can share the child's situation and their own difficulties in dealing with it with the school head in order to understand how to deal with the situation.

If the child is already being followed up on and known by other professionals or services in the area (psychologists, social service, etc.) it is equally important that the teacher can share their observations with these professionals and activate a network.

This collaboration can provide the teacher with useful operational tools on how to behave with the child, as well as on how to manage their own emotions, for example with regard to anxiety or frustration.

In some cases, through collaboration with different professionals, intervention strategies can be designed to help the child feel better. If the indicators are very worrying, the teacher can seek advice to make a report to the competent authorities.

When a child manifests severe distress, it is usually a cry for help. Therefore, it is necessary for the teacher to recognise the signs of distress and, if necessary, activate a support network to help the child.

By sharing information with the school management and liaising with professionals in the area (neuropsychiatrists, psychologists, social services, educational day-care centres), the teacher can be supported in their work and in dealing appropriately with pupils who show signs of distress.

This collaboration is necessary to build an integrated intervention solution to better assist and support children with traumatic experiences.



SECTION 3. Slides

This section consists of a powerpoint divided into 5 parts and an introduction. It is possible to use the presentation as a whole, but also only certain subsections, depending on your objectives, the learning context and the type of audience.

- # 1 The centrality of the school
- # 2 Behaviours as a language
- # 3 The teacher's feelings
- # 4 What is child abuse
- # 5 Consequences of the abuse and sexualisation
- # 6 Networking to deal with it



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Slides for this unit are provided in Annex 5.3

UNIT 6

The child's story at school





Introduction

School is a fundamental environment for children and youth's personal and social development, and for the construction of a caring and democratic society. The peer group offers challenges and opportunities to express one's subjectivity, to learn about oneself and the world, to strengthen trust in others and a sense of community. For the school to function adequately as an educational system, it is indispensable to be capable, as a whole, of recognising and valuing the variety of experiences, perspectives and potential that different young people express.

It is precisely this process of recognition, which is the basis of the educational relationship, that seems to be most difficult with some young people. The biographies of those who have experienced early childhood adversities risk not corresponding to the expectations of those who meet them, in terms of family choreography, behaviours, affective balance, and spaces of intimacy. In these cases, the adverse events, and the eventual protection paths taken, risk becoming identity markers and lead the complex process of mutual recognition back to the knowledge of the minor's personal history.

Traumatic biographical events then take on a specific salience, around which the perspectives of pupils, caregivers and school staff risk conflicting. This unit addresses precisely the challenges that these differences pose and, starting from a reflection on the non-adult-centred concept of privateness and guardianship, attempts to focus on the relational work necessary to build a space of open and respectful dialogue for the parties involved.

This Unit 6 is composed of three sections:

- Section 1. *Learning Unit Sheet*: an overview of the unit which summarises the key content and learning objectives. At the same time, it provides a possible structure of activities useful for working on the topics to be addressed.
- Section 2. *Content*: here you can find the content needed to structure the information to be conveyed during lessons and other teaching activities.
- Section 3. *Slides*: these slides, which are already organised by topic, support the lectures.



SECTION 1.

Learning Unit 6 Reference Sheet

Key contents

- Privacy policy between regulations and interpersonal relations;
- Personal stories in the classroom: spaces, tools, key issues;
- Sensitive topics for privacy;
- The process of co-creation of a privacy agreement with family/caregivers and the child;
- Appropriate vocabulary to talk about children with ACE;
- The child's involvement in the decision-making process regarding the ownership of his/her personal information.

Learning goals

- Raising awareness on the importance of privacy issues for children;
- Being capable of safeguarding children's privacy at school;
- Improving open and respectful communication strategies with the child's caregivers;
- Acquiring understanding and tools to adequately approach the child's story;
- Identifying ways to involve the child in decisions about communicating aspects of his/her family history;
- Developing context sensitivity to differently select the personal information to be shared from time to time;
- Acquiring tools to design the classroom environment as a safe and dialogic space.

#	Activities	Methods	Time	Space(s)
1	Presenting the activity, aims and methods; introducing participants to each other.	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> lesson, small group work <i>Tools:</i> Whiteboard, post-it, markers	10'	Room with mobile seats
2	Icebreaking When do I feel that my privacy is violated in my daily work? Participants are gathered in small groups to discuss the topic (15') In plenary session, answers are shared and ranked in agreement from 1 to 10. (15')	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> small group work; plenary work <i>Tools:</i> poster, post-it note	30'	Classroom with mobile seats
3	Lecture on: A. the meaning of privacy, policies of privacy from the national context to the professional ethics; different roles, different perspectives on privacy. B. Positioning the gaze	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> interactive and dialogic lesson <i>Tools:</i> slides, whiteboard	30'	Classroom with mobile seats
4	Group work on case studies. Everyday situations that pose critical issues are presented and the group should identify: tools for analysis and interpretation; to manage the moment; for short-term and long-term intervention. In plenary discussion, the whole group outlines a set of shared guidelines for contemplating personal issues and respecting personal stories.	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> small group work and plenary work. <i>Tools:</i> case, whiteboard, slides	75'	One or more classrooms (depending on the number of participants)
5	Lecture Making room for effective communication; language and stereotyping	<i>Teaching and learning methods:</i> interactive and dialogic lesson <i>Tools:</i> Slides	40'	Classroom with mobile seats



SECTION 2. Contents

In this section, the main privacy issues underlying traumatic personal biographies are addressed in a simple and effective manner. Basic knowledge and tools are developed on privacy policies and constraints, on how to build relationships of trust and collaboration between the multiple actors involved (pupils, school, caregivers). Through the “Whole Community Approach” frame, the aim is to provide interpretative tools useful for reading behaviours that might otherwise be mistaken as poor collaboration, if not open opposition. Topics are presented in self-contained sections. In this way the material lends itself to use as a whole, but also to customised use by the trainer.

#1. Privacy policies, normative and relational constraints

Within the EU countries, the right to privacy of personal data, private and family life is protected by a number of laws, which may vary from country to country. Similarly, there is a right to professional secrecy regarding information about health history and judicial decisions that affect people’s lives.

It is important then for professionals to be aware of the general legal framework ruling privacy issues of the country in which they work. Laws often constrain the professional role and are the basis on which the single institution defines specific policies on the matter.

It is also important to remember that the concept of privacy is culturally informed. For this reason, it is essential, especially with families or pupils with a migrant background, never to take for granted a shared understanding of its meaning, of the forms and boundaries that privacy should take, as well as of the practices to respect it. To this end, figures such as cultural mediators can be essential resources.

At this point, you can provide specific information about the normative situation of the country or the privacy policies applied in the institutions.

The right to privacy, however, is not only a legal obligation but also a pivotal relational tool for building interpersonal relationships based on trust. Due to this, confidentiality, and sensitivity in respecting private areas of personal stories are crucial skills to building an effective relationship with families and kids.

#2. Positioning the gaze

Awareness of how early adverse experiences can affect human functioning is essential for teachers to frame children’s behaviours and to develop sensitivity to the variety of needs. However, developing awareness and sensitivity to the role that early

adverse experiences can play in a child's life does not mean that it is necessary for every teacher or professional at school to know kids' personal history.

The actors involved in the educational relationship may have different perceptions about the salience of information, the proper boundary of respect for confidentiality, and the child's ability to decide for themselves.

Family members or caregivers may, for example, feel that it is better to select or even not reveal specific information about the child's life at all. As a result, it may be that the school does not know that a pupil has a history of adoption or fostering, or that information about the pupil's relational difficulties is not shared. There may be several reasons for this: distrust of professionals due to previous negative experiences, fear of stigmatisation, expectation that in a new context the child can "start again", etc.

The children themselves may show strong unease at the idea of strangers learning information that they themselves do not yet know how to manage. Children may feel shame, anxiety, guilt, aggression because of this, or the need to protect their families from external judgement. This need for privacy and control of one's own life can become critical in adolescence. In this phase of development, in fact, young people are engaged in the construction of adult identity, breaking with their childhood identity, and the demand for independence from the adult world is central. In such circumstances, the way of presenting oneself to the world becomes a particularly sensitive element.

Unlike children and caregivers, school staff may feel that knowing the details of personal stories is essential to protect the child and build a safe environment, feeling the need to share information with the educational team.

It is therefore important to create a climate of collaboration and integration between the school, caregiver and child, aimed at having precise and constant monitoring of the child's functioning and well-being in the school context. The focus of the information exchange is therefore not the personal story, but a description of the child's current functioning, with their vulnerabilities and strengths, where biographical elements provide a general interpretative framework of behavioural signals.

Navigating the different perspectives can be challenging, taking into account that collaboration with caregivers is crucial when the school encounters pupils who have experienced early adversity. Careful relational work is required by the school staff to build the trust necessary for open dialogue. Open and effective communication is essential to identifying highly individualised support strategies to shape realistic expectations and set shared goals within the child's reach.

It is however important to keep in mind that, in itself, knowledge of a specific traumatic biography does not automatically lead to the development of an awareness of the problem and a capacity for case management, and can instead create a counterproductive effect, supporting prejudices and stereotypes.

The choice to share parts of a traumatic biography, far from being a pure transfer of information, is an important and delicate moment in an educational relationship, in which the construction of a space of trust and recognition is at stake.

#3. Disclosing the private

There are many occasions when working in the classroom work when it is possible to call for the sharing of one's past and history. Teachers often have the best of intentions, but they have to keep in mind that their demands can make children with early adverse experiences feel helpless and expose them to forced disclosure of private matters that they are not willing to share.

This is a risk that a teacher must take into account when planning classroom activities. It is, therefore, necessary for them to develop a sensitivity towards issues such as gender, cultural diversity, adoption or child protection etc., so as to be prepared for the doubts and comments of children, intervening in a way that guarantees the privacy of those directly involved, but also without leaving room for ambiguity, evading the question.

It is normal for children to be curious and ask questions when confronted with classmates who have different somatic features or who describe family life they have never heard of before. These situations can represent a risk of painful intrusion in the child's private life, but also an opportunity to address, in the class group, issues that are important for building a climate of mutual respect and an inclusive environment.

For example, a child living in foster 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. Recognising the boundaries of privacy is a key lesson.

It is appropriate in these circumstances not to punish or blame the child who asks the question, let alone let it drop, even when the conversation is among peers. 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" is a way to legitimise the question and at the same time guarantee the right to privacy.

Teenagers may ask complex questions about the process of custody and other issues and teachers might 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.

#4. The whole community approach

Life experiences outside the classroom shape the context of students' school experience, filtering their perceptions of self, others, and the importance of fully engaging in school (Huebner et al., 2001). The potential impact of ACEs on student outcomes has been documented, ranging from academic achievement (Slade & Wissow, 2007) to behavioural and emotional well-being (Hunt et al., 2017). The author suggests that framing this work as "healing-centred" offers a critical shift that orients toward system-level, culturally grounded, and asset-driven work.

We propose an integrated whole child, culturally responsive, and healing-centred approach grounded in an ecological framework. Specifically, this integrated approach accounts for the adverse impact of ACEs, protective factors, and cultural factors influencing individuals and the environments in which they are situated to provide an opportunity for a more systemic approach to trauma-informed education. An ecological framework applied to a trauma-informed approach in schools interweaves whole school and whole community supports to enable a tiered system framework to support the whole child.

Trauma-informed school systems attend to service delivery at both child and school levels and are situated within community contexts that enhance service delivery to support the whole child and school functioning. At the school level, all staff understand their role in enabling a positive and inclusive environment and have the knowledge and skills to enact policies and practices that promote safety and connection, address issues of inequity, and avoid re-traumatization. At the child level, students are actively engaged in developing their social identities and self-concept through social-emotional learning, are provided opportunities to connect and strengthen protective factors, and have access to intensive interventions that heal and rebuild a sense of self. Together, related bodies of literature (e.g., exclusionary discipline, racism, social determinants) are integrated with ACE research in informing a complete system approach to trauma-informed care in schools. Such integration demonstrates how trauma-informed care is critical to articulated goals in education around inclusion, equity, and social justice (Ridgard et al., 2015). To accomplish this vision for integration, the continuum of strategies informing a trauma-informed approach must reflect an understanding of the cultural context shaping student life experiences. An emerging body of the literature suggests whole child support includes school practices that reflect the holistic engagement of students' social identities and account for cultural factors shaping their academic experience (Blitz et al., 2020; Jagers et al., 2019, Lewallen et al., 2015).

Current actions have been more heavily focused on the effort to build awareness and empathy around traumatic experiences than on understanding the contributions of school environments and enacting system change across policy and practice.

Organisational change requires alignment among the expected work of the organisation, the people within the organisation, the culture of the organisation,

and the structure of the organisation (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Challenges arise when there is a lack of congruence across components, thus potentially limiting the capacity to bring about desired change

Schools are embedded within community networks of support, services, and interfacing systems (e.g., health care, juvenile justice), all of which exert influence on policy and practice within schools. As such, schools encounter the need for both horizontal and vertical congruence to be fully responsive as a trauma-informed system.

We need an integrated whole child, culturally responsive, and healing-centred approach grounded in an ecological framework. Specifically, this integrated approach accounts for the adverse impact of ACEs, protective factors, and cultural factors influencing individuals and the environments in which they are situated to provide an opportunity for a more systemic approach to a trauma-informed education.

(This text is an excerpt from Chafouleas et al., 2021, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12310-021-09427-9>)

#5. Making room for effective communication

Communication with those with a history of early adverse experiences and their caregivers cannot take place spontaneously or randomly but needs to be thought out and planned. It requires the construction of dedicated and structured time-spaces. It is thanks to this constant exchange of information that teachers can orient their work, receive feedback and jointly evaluate its effectiveness.

The information that children and caregivers can provide is, for example, very important to assess the individual's levels of functionality and autonomy, regardless of abstract age-based references, thus helping to create a reliable and safe environment at school. At the same time, feedback on behaviour at school, and the time and manner of learning contents as well as social skills, can support the activities the child undertakes at home or in the community and the adults who care for them.

The alliance and collaborative climate created between the school and the family helps to create a space to "hold" the child, who thus perceives that the efforts of caregivers and teachers are moving towards common goals.

In order to foster the development of a good alliance between the subjects involved in the relationship, it can be useful to have some points in mind:

- Entering a new school can be highly challenging for children who experienced early adversity. In order to make them feel the school a safe place from the very beginning, it is recommended to arrange encounters with a reference person, before starting regular lessons. Having the possibility to get acquainted with the space, the people and the routines it is a good way to lay the foundation for a good connection.

- An essential element in building a relationship of trust with the child and their caregiver is the guarantee of confidentiality of details concerning their story. The child must be master and responsible for sharing their life path, at a time and in a way that suits them.
- Maintain an evolutionary mentality. The difficulties and vulnerabilities that children may show in learning tasks and social relationships do not complete their identity. Working on the development and consolidation of strengths and talents contributes to releasing the identity of these young people from trauma and pushing them towards a future of new developmental goals.

#6. Language and stereotyping

In order to provide a respectful and safe environment at school, the vocabulary is crucial.

For example, we talk about ‘early adversity’ or ‘trauma’ to describe difficult and painful experiences that pupils have undergone. These words are a kind of framework that allows teachers to recognise and make sense of otherwise incomprehensible and confusing behaviours, cognitions and emotions. The words trauma and adversity do not indicate a specific and unique experience but name a wide range of possible ones.

However, as the words circulate, they are loaded with other social meanings and so trauma often becomes an identity marker, encouraging 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 explain a specific way of functioning, but it does not define who a person is or who they will become. Focusing only on the past may obscure the enormous resources and skills that learners bring with them, and classify them as ‘needy’ individuals who are unable to make a positive contribution.

In more general terms, often the lives of young people facing foster care, out-of-home care, or forced migration are described in negative terms, as lacking something, so that expectations of them are minimal. Perhaps it is no coincidence that their educational success is significantly lower than that of the young population not leaving home.

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 like.

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 them. 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.

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 “mom” 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.

When raising their children, all families do similar things regardless of the way their family was built or its composition.

Emphasising that in general, families do similar things for their children and that families are a place where they can share feelings 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.



SECTION 3. Slides

This section consists of a powerpoint divided into 6 parts. It is possible to use the presentation as a whole, or to only use certain subsections, depending on your objectives, the learning context and the type of audience. Most subsections contain suggestions for group work and case studies.

1 Privacy policies, normative and relational constraints

2 Positioning the gaze for framing the complexity

3 Disclosing the private

4 The Whole Community Approach

5 Making room for effective communication

6 Language and stereotyping



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Slides for this unit are provided in Annex 6

ANNEXES

UNIT 1

Child protection system and the school



Key challenges: discussion in pairs

Noah, an 8-year-old child who recently moved into residential care, enters a new school. What are the main challenges for:

- Noah
- The classmates
- The teachers
- The caregivers
- The principal



Children's rights and child protection systems

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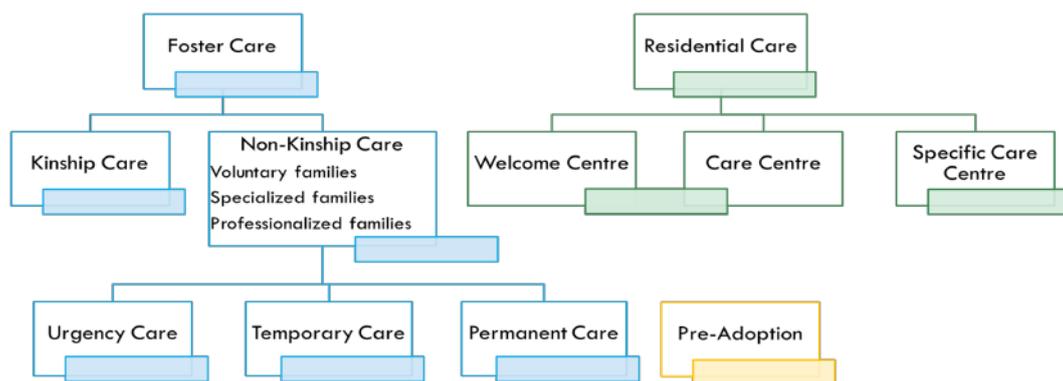
Why are children in the protection system?

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Children in alternative care

- Lower academic success (Flynn, Tessier, Coulombe, 2013)
- Lower job achievement in adult life (Hook, Courtney, 2011)
- Worse health conditions (Dixon, 2008)

WHY?

Interaction between individual factors (stress, motivation, self-esteem...) and social factors (school and caregivers expectations, (non)inclusive school policies, relations with peers and adults, care system, quality of interaction and responses...) (Sebba et al., 2015)



Quality of school environment makes a difference

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The rights of the child in an ecosystemic perspective

Right to be guaranteed the conditions for “physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (CRC, 1989).

How to support these conditions as school?

From an ecosystemic perspective, development occurs within an ecological system that promotes agency, learning, interaction through everyday “proximal” processes (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Key aspects:

- Interaction with primary caregivers and key actors in different contexts
- Affordances of the environments attended by the child and the caregivers
- “Ecological transitions” as key moments for developing agency and learning
- Sense of belonging and community relations as resilience factors

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Obstacles

- Current discourses surrounding students in alternative care, adoptees, refugee students are largely constituted in deficit ways (Uptin, Wright, Harwood, 2012).
- This positioning places the student in a frame of negative and deficit assumptions within schools (being traumatised, a victim and at risk). (Keddie, 2011)
- “Institutional narratives” that silence the students’ story and perspectives
- Implicit curriculum and school policy: competitive and standardized school environments, where some might fall out of the school’s bounds of acceptability as students
- The “good teacher” as only hope: *“September is...like the lottery. You cross your fingers and you pray for a good teacher. But it only happens once every many years.”*

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Resources

- Ensuring the best interest of children in all actions
- Building a structural partnership between school and child protection services (joint trainings, multi-professional teams...)
- Participation of the adults who are responsible for the child to the school community and other organizations
- Whole-school approach
- Promoting protection factors at individual and environmental level
- Legitimising children's stories and experiences, representing diversity in books and materials used in the classroom
- Preventing discrimination and avoiding stigmatization.

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NOTES

Children's rights and child protection systems

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 fulfil 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, the 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, a permanent solution such as adoption may also be considered.

Why are children in the protection system?

There are several reasons for the States to put into act protective measures towards children. In the EU, the States have the duty to support families to remove any potential obstacle which may prevent the parents from performing their functions aimed at ensuring their children's care, education and socialization. However, in some cases the family and the community where the child lives do not meet the child's basic needs. In case the family of origin of a child lives a situation of temporary difficulty that cannot be addressed by a family support at home; if the child is severely neglected; if the parents' behavior produces serious damage to the child and jeopardizes their safety and well-being, in order to meet the child's best interest the protection system is entitled to intervene with protective measures in collaboration with social and healthcare services. These protective measures can involve different forms and the literature

suggests that they are more effective when decided and defined in a collaborative way, involving the family of origin, other trusted people in the family's entourage, and social workers who already know the family and support them. Kinship care (when the child te.

When the child is in a condition that is assessed by the Court as a "state of abandonment", the child can be adopted.

Protection measures (to be adapted to your country)

Foster care grants the custody of a child to a family for a time, without there being an adoptive purpose. The purpose is to give children the opportunity to grow up in a more favorable family environment than the original one. According to the relationship between children and the foster family, the fostering will be: **kinship care** (foster with grandpaterns, aunts and uncles, siblings, or other relatives) or **non kinship care** (non relatives). In the latter case, there are three types: (1) *voluntary families*; (2) *specialized families* in which some of its members have the experience or training to work with children with special needs, these families do not have an employment relationship; and (3) *professionalized families*, in addition to the requirements for specialized families, there is an employment relationship between the foster parents and the public entity.

Foster care may adopt the following modalities depending on its duration and objectives:

- (1) **emergency care**: while the corresponding family protection measure is decided, it should last less than six months;
- (2) **temporary care**, while improvements are made for the family reunification. Its maximum duration should not exceed two years, unless the best interest of the minor advises the extension of the measure;
- and (3) **permanent care**, when it is confirmed that family reunification is not possible.

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The second protection measure is **residential care**. When the possibility of foster care is ruled out, the child will live in a center with other children in the same situation. Within this measure can be found: (1) **welcome centre** where care is immediate and transitory while the diagnosis of the situation is made to determine the measure to be applied; (2) **residential care centre** where children are offered an alternative resource to a family environment; and (3) **specific care centre** for children with some type of specificity, such as behavioral problems. The purpose of these is to provide the child with an adequate framework for his/her education and development.

Obstacles

Schools can also be spaces that restrict learning and social inclusion. They have the power to designate the identity markers that are most desirable and enable certain students to succeed in the institution and conversely these same social and cultural markers can very easily exclude difference. 'performatives that do not make sense in the discourses that frame schooling, or that are counter to prevailing institutional discourses, may fail or may act to constitute a subject outside the bounds of acceptability as a student' (p. 37). Therefore 'the refugee' can too easily stand outside these bounds of acceptability.

Where difference is identified it is often equated with marginality, deficit and lack, due to the (mis)recognition and misrepresentation of the student (Keddie 2011). This positioning places the refugee student in a strata of negative and deficit assumptions within schools such as being traumatised, a victim and at risk.

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Annex 2.1

UNIT 2.1

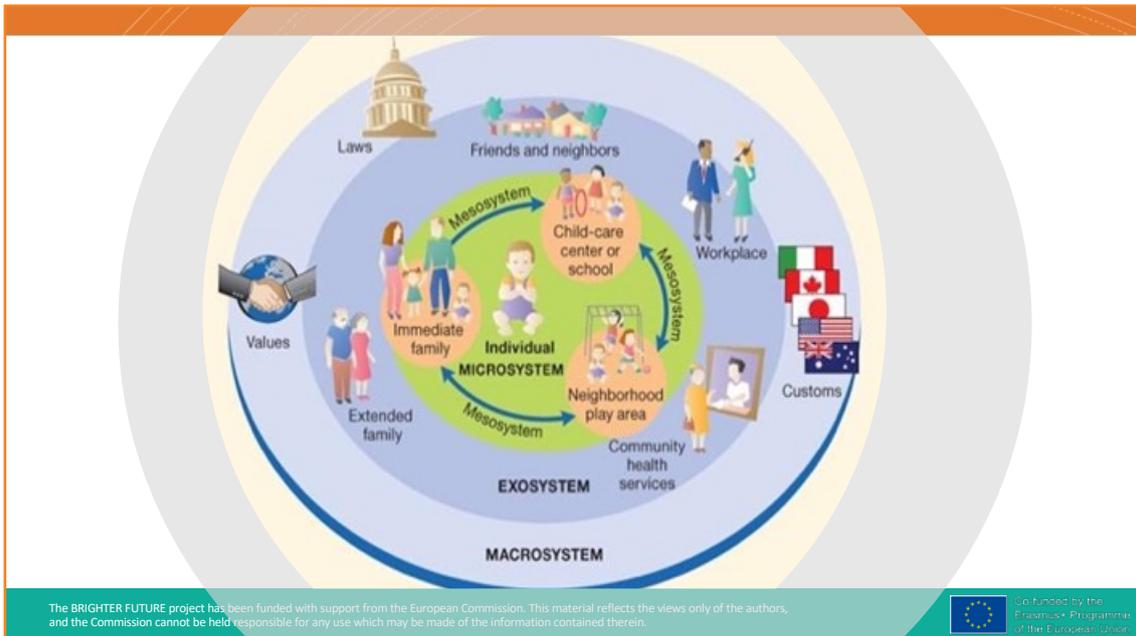
Whole school approach on wellbeing



Contents

- 1. The community approach**
Feeling and experiencing what is meant by a community approach
- 2. Creating a 'sociogram' of a school and its community**
Gaining insight in the possible stakeholders surrounding the school
- 3. The whole school approach**
Why does a whole school approach work?
Gaining insight in the various building blocks
- 4. Empowering the teacher**
The meaning of a teacher on the child's life path
- 5. Enhancing equality of opportunities**





Creating a 'sociogram' of a school and its community

To think about:

- Which partners / stakeholders within and surrounding schools should be included when working on the wellbeing of the students (and the staff)?
- What is important when working on a whole-school approach together with the community?

Official definition of wellbeing

By wellbeing we mean positive mental health, determined by optimism, self-confidence, happiness, vitality, sense of meaning, self-esteem, and knowing how to deal with one's own emotions.

Wellbeing is about growing up in an environment that contributes in a broad sense to the positive development into a healthy, social and independent person.

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What works best at school

An **integrated approach / whole school approach on wellbeing** (as opposed to 'separate' interventions) spread over a longer period, whereby:

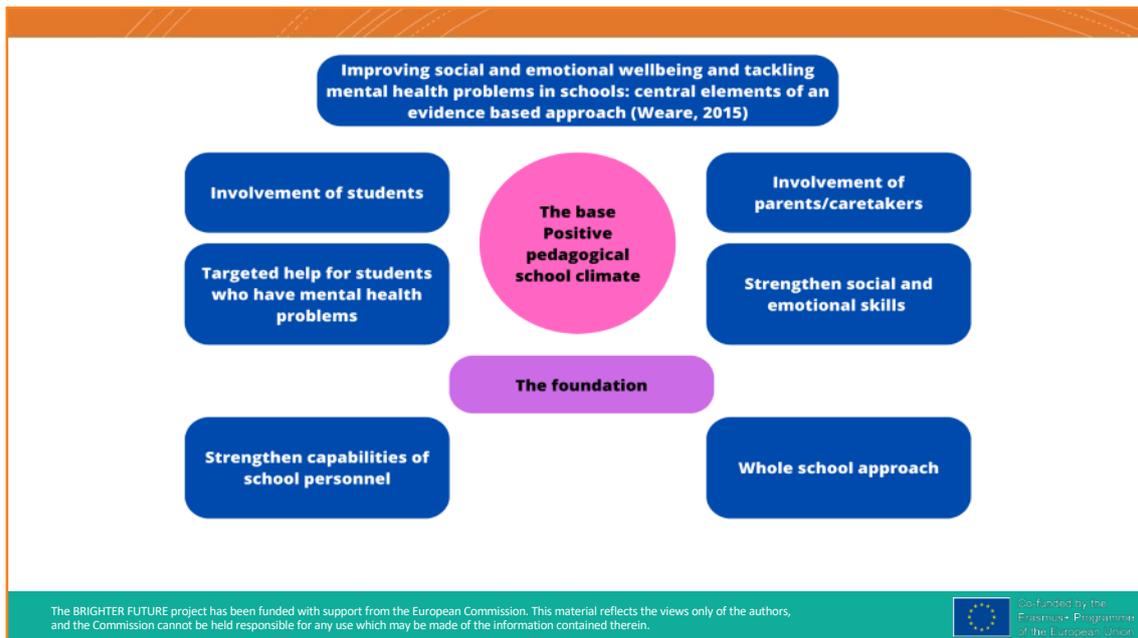
- Students are supported in social-emotional development
- Teachers get a good training
- Lessons require active student participation
- Parents become actively involved
- Investing in wellbeing (vision) is widely supported within the school
- Everyone* in and around the school is involved + has a say

* Everyone = school management, teachers, pupils, parents/educators, partners in care and support

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Effects of a whole school approach to wellbeing

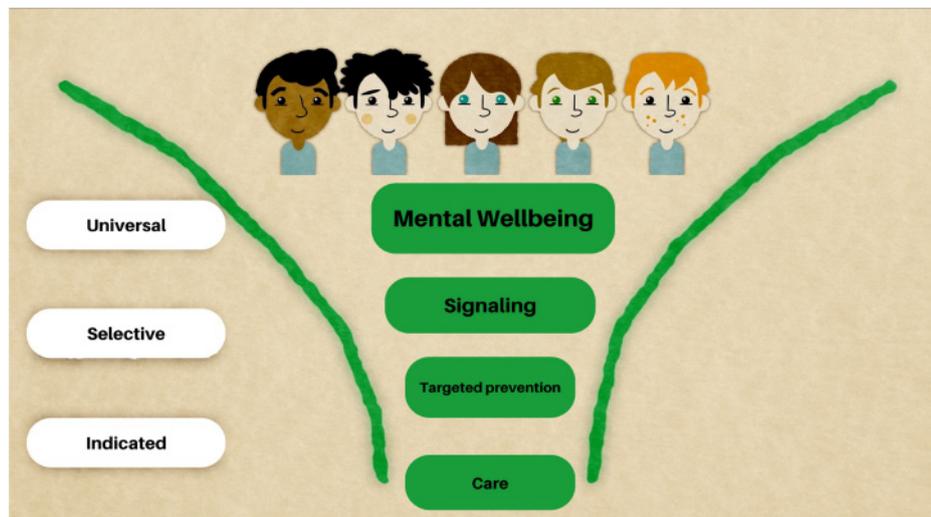
- Better learning performance
- Better social and emotional skills
- A decrease in problem behavior, anxiety and depression symptoms
- An improvement in working memory and concentration
- A more positive attitude towards school and teachers
- More motivation to learn
- Less delay in obtaining diploma
- Less school dropout
- A better starting position for social participation



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View of the school staff

1. Attention to SED and wellbeing is about building a positive environment at school
2. Strengthening SED and well-being of students cannot be captured in one module or one intervention or at one moment of the day
3. You don't learn skills from paper. Without space and time for the teacher, there is little chance that concrete tools will really help
4. Attention for SED and wellbeing is a matter of the entire school and the environment

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A school can think about what works...

- ... with these students
- ...with this school team
- ... with these parents/guardians
- ... at this school
- ... in this neighbourhood?

What are we already doing?
What works well and what can we do more?
Step by step, you don't have to do it all at once

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Empowering the teacher

To think about:

- What role does a teacher play in a child's life path and what meaning can he/she give to the child?

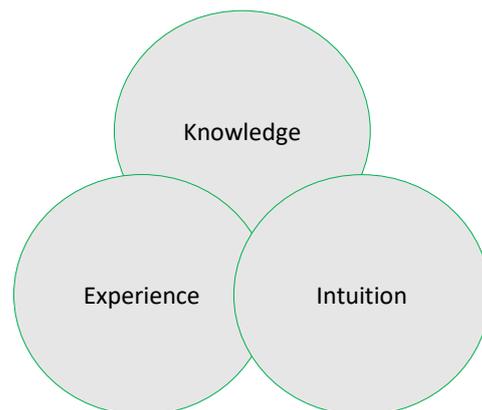
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The wellbeing of the school staff

Attention!
The wellbeing of the students starts
with attention to the school staff!



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Inequality of opportunity

Inequality of opportunity often starts in childhood:

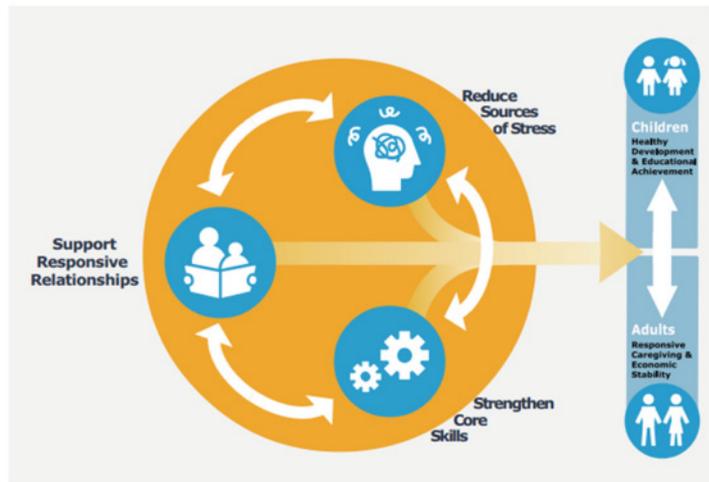
- Growing up in unfavorable living conditions or with unfavorable factors
- Mechanisms such as inequality of opportunity in education and increased stress
- Influence on development ☒ for example disturbed emotional regulation, disturbed relationship development, decreased confidence in one's own abilities (self-efficacy)
- Psychological consequences ☒ such as increased stress, mental problems (depression, anxiety, insomnia, anxiety and loneliness) and reduced mental well-being

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What can you do to increase equality of opportunity?

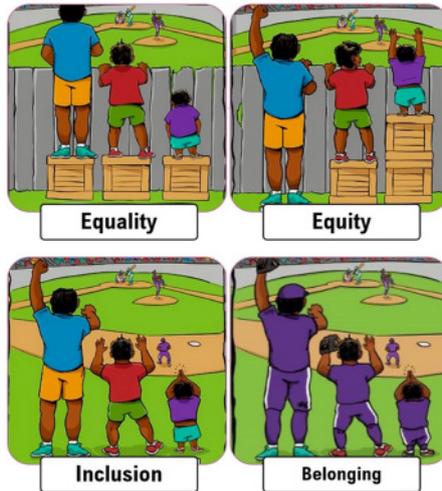
Is school a good place to work on the 3 principles



Source: Center on the Developing Child – Harvard University

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BRIGHTER FUTURE
Innovative tools for developing full potential after early adversity

UNIT 2.1

Whole school approach on wellbeing

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Equity

Secada (2012, cited in Carter 2018)

- Socially enlightened self-interest: engaging in a process for the benefit of society
- Social justice: “interrupting current wrongs, on undoing or rectifying past wrongs, and predicting and/or avoiding potential wrongs that have been or that may be visited upon whole groups of people”
- Fairness

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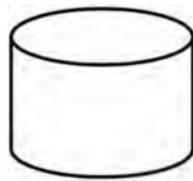
Educational Equity has two dimensions: First, it is a matter of fairness, which implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, socioeconomic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential. Secondly, it is to do with inclusion, which is about ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all

(Chapman & Ainscow, 2022, p.2)

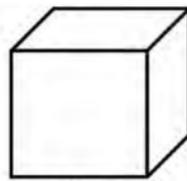
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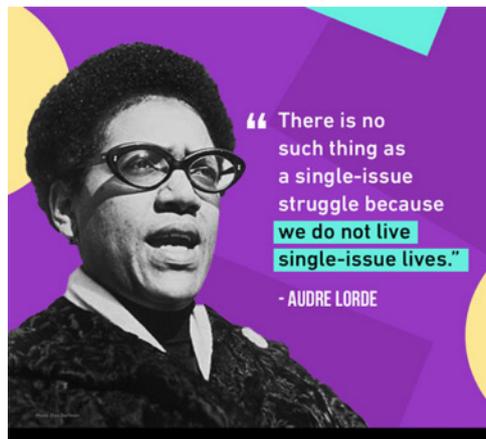


Gender



Race

Case, 2016



Intersectionality

Apple basket metaphor (Rodó de Zarate, 2022)



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A separate treatment of different systems of oppressions cannot account for the lived experiences of those who suffer them together

Rodó de Zarate, 2016

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In order to address intersectionality, our focus should be on accounting for how race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, etc can organize the dynamics of power and inequality in the social and individual levels. There should be a practical approach to this.

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Why do we talk about this?

- All individuals inhabit both positions of social privilege and social marginality when all identities are taken into account
(Jones & Wijeyasinghe, 2011)
- Intersectionality encourages those in education to see what is valued and who is privileged.
 - E.g. labelling and zero tolerance policies.

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- If we accept there are multiple levels of discrimination, there should also be multiple levels of protection.
- We can use intersectionality to study, understand and respond to how these factors intersect.

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- If we don't keep intersectionality in our approaches, we risk investing resources in single axis initiatives that may fail.
- "Schools, for instance, provide a child with disability services in relation to his/her disability, and a refugee child receives support with language learning or trauma experience. But what happens to the child who is a refugee and has a disability?" (Bešić, 2020)
 - Lacking support services
 - Achieve a uniform view of students
 - Narrows lens of support

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Case: Abdullah

(Adapted from Roxas & Roy, 2012)

- Where can we see the influence of privilege in Abdullah's experience?
- Where can we see the influence of the systems of oppression in Abdullah's experience?

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According to Cho and colleagues (2013, p. 795):

“what makes an analysis intersectional is (...) its intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power.”

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NOTES

Inequality of opportunity

The social-emotional development and mental resilience of children is a precondition for greater equality of opportunity, including with regard to good education and social opportunities in general. Investing in well-being at school is an essential part of being able to maintain control over one's own life. It is important that children and young people learn how to survive in today's society and in contact with others. Examples of unfavorable living conditions/unfavorable factors: low socio-economic position of view. Other traumatic childhood experiences such as abuse and neglect.

Granny Smith, Red Delicious, Pink Lady, Honeycrisp, Fuji, Gala, or Golden Delicious. Each apple has a certain colour, taste, texture, etc. All these and other properties are criteria according to which it is possible to broadly classify kinds of apples in everyday practice and knowledge. Every specific apple property (red, big, sweet) is analogous to social positions in intersectionality (man, white, gay). Positions are not mutually constituted; instead, they constitute the apple (or an individual). My age is the same if I am a woman or a man, just as my ethnicity does not change depending on my sexual orientation. What might change are the effects of those positions. So, the social consideration of my age may vary depending on my gender.

Intersectionality

Each person is a whole in which different properties can be distinguished, named and studied. Continuing with the basket of apples metaphor, we could focus on the different values that are given to the different apples in the basket. Those values are socially constructed and culturally and historically defined. Apples' colours or sizes have different meanings in different contexts, so their properties do not determine their value in a fixed way but rather change depending on the social context. Sweetness, for instance, is defined in relation to other fruits in a specific region, and some types of apples are more valued than others in different countries.

Why do we talk about this?

One problem is that disruptive or inappropriate behaviour is socially constructed, determined or interpreted by the observer, according to a particular lens. Labeling fails to account for the situation that gives rise to the action, or for the home environment where certain behaviours or responses are modeled or practiced. Another problem with labeling is that judgments made by teachers and school administrators are not consistent across classrooms, schools or communities.

Zero tolerance policies foster practices in schools that further exclude students already classified as having behaviour problems. Such policies establish firm and unbending parameters of acceptable behaviour for all children, irrespective of the circumstances.

Children who come from challenging home environments, who struggle with learning or who experience chaos in their lives are less likely to be able to conform to rules which are inflexible and do not accommodate the life worlds in which these children live.

Like labeling, zero tolerance policies and practices discount or downplay the context of the action, in favour of strict enforcement of the rules.

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Annex 2.2

UNIT 2.2

How to develop inclusive schools
where everyone counts



Contents

- Inclusive school and cooperative work
- Puzzles: making working teams
- Introducing yourselves
- Case study
- Conclusions



Inclusive Education

- Equity and equality
- Tools for change: Cooperative work

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From protection to inclusion. Creating more inclusive schools for children in alternative care and adopted children

Diversity in the classroom

- A. Some children have certain skills and others have different ones.
- A. Some of them are more capable and others are less.
- A. Some of them know what to do and how to do it, or ask for help if they need it, and others do not know what to do or how to do it
- A. Some students have learning difficulties, others fewer and others have less or none...

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Diversity in the classroom

- Some children have certain skills and others have different ones.
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- Some students have learning difficulties, others fewer and others have less or none...

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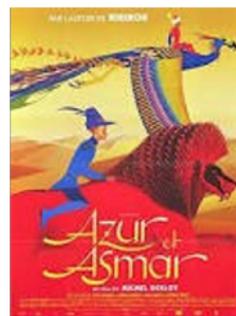
Working Teams



Tutor



Family



Therapist

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Case study

Alex is a 9-year-old boy, adopted from Ethiopia when he was 3 years old. He joined the school this year, after leaving a school where he had been attending since kindergarten.

In a conversation with the previous teacher, they reported that Alex showed some disruptive behaviour in class during the last term, and after a discussion with the family, they considered that the family was overprotective.

At the beginning of the school year, the family informed the guidance department that Alex was attending therapy.

We are at the end of the first term and the current teacher observes that this week Alex keeps challenging her. He interferes, makes jokes, gets up from his seat, disturbs his classmates, etc.

In addition, the dining room staff have mentioned that there has been a change of caretaker and Alex has started to have disruptive behaviours.

In the playground, a teacher observes Alex, pushing and attacking Rubén, while playing football together.

When he goes to separate them and asks what happened, Alex is speechless and doesn't answer. Another classmate comments that Rubén made a racist comment.

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Question 1

- **Teacher**

What would you do as a teacher immediately after the incident and what actions would you need to take next (playground)?

- **Family**

When you were informed of the incident in the playground, what steps would you take and what reactions would you expect from the teaching staff?

- **Therapist**

What suggestions would you make to the family and the school for dealing with similar playground situations in the future?

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What would you do: Suggestions

- Bring together those involved in the fight and try to clarify the situation.
 - "Who is in the wrong?"
- Empathise with the victim of racism, understand their anger and offer them alternatives to respond appropriately:
 - "I understand that you are angry, you have the right to feel bad but you can't attack."
- Decide on the type of sanction for the moment, which should be both constructive and aimed at having a positive impact.
- It is important that the teacher makes it clear that the victim of a racist attack is not guilty or responsible but a victim.
- These children experience these kind of situations more often than we realise. Most of the time they don't say anything because they feel ashamed or guilty.
- Promote activities that work on respect for diversity:
 - Invite speakers from other ethnic groups and origins to serve as positive references.
 - Look for positive role-models on social media.
 - Incorporate readings and activities where diversity is represented.

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Question 2

- **Teacher**
What would be the response to your student's behaviour in the class (He interferes, makes jokes, gets up from his seat, disturbs his classmates...)?
- **Family**
You are aware of the vulnerable moment your child is going through.
What should be the responses from the school to your child's emotional needs?
- **Therapist**
You are aware of the vulnerable moment this child is going through.
What should be the appropriate responses from the school to the child's emotional needs?

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Responses to emotional needs

- Keep calm and think that it is nothing personal. If we know their story we can understand the situation they are going through. Understanding their needs is the first step in our intervention.
- Do not argue, but try to get along, and if possible, have a phrase in mind that will engage them: "surely you have good reasons for acting like this" Do not get into a fight with him.
- If he calms down, we will talk to him later, individually, showing a legitimate interest in his situation.
- If he does not calm down... take the pre-established measures of the protocol (coexistence plan).
- Once he is calm, follow up on his behaviour, find out what the triggers are, and of course, in collaboration with the Guidance Team, have a meeting with the family.
- Provide child with new strategies to help him face situations that get out of hand. Give the child the time to acquire these skills and be able to manage his emotions.
- PPP strategy (unconditionality, predictability, presence and patience). The importance of our role as resilience coaches.
 - unconditionality: child has to know that, whatever happens, we are on his side
 - predictability: predictable people and routines are the key to making a child feel emotionally secure
 - presence: greeting the child, smiling, showing interest, are signs of being there for him.
 - patience: emotion regulation doesn't happen suddenly, we need to give him time and patience to acquire the necessary skills.
- Take into account that children who have experienced adverse situations are sensitive to unexpected changes and transitions.
- If with the measures taken, we see that there is no positive resolution or even that the conditions worsen, other external measures could be recommended...
- Work on emotions at group level.

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Question 3

• **Teacher**

Do you think it is necessary to involve families in the classroom?

What would be the main points to take into account in order to establish a good communication between the family and the school?

• **Family**

What would be the main points to take into account in order to establish a good communication between the family and the school?

• **Therapist**

What would be the main points to take into account in order to establish a good communication between you, the family and the school?

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Good communication

- Each party involved should try to aim for fluent communication, show respect towards others, trust and not interfere in each other's role
- Team work: With children who have experienced an adverse situation, teamwork is essential in order to set common objectives.
- We must be aware of the Privacy of personal stories. What information do you consider important to ask the family?
 - Relevant information that may help to support and accompany the children
 - Families should provide the necessary information in order for teachers to be sensitive to their needs and to understand that children who had suffered from early adversity may present additional challenges.
 - Involve children whenever possible.
- Particularly important is not reporting daily complaints in front of the children...
- Commenting on progress and being positive.
- It's important to search and use appropriate vocabulary related to familiar diversity.
- Be informed about how to work in the classroom, look for resources and information related to working with children who suffered from early adversity.
- Do not label, nor take for granted that everything is a result of adoption.
- Never forget that children who have experienced an adverse situation are first and foremost children.

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Final question

As future teachers/professionals working with these children,
do you consider training in this area relevant?

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Final remarks

- It is important that the parties involved work together and have fluid communication.
- The student should receive the same response from all parties involved.
- Try to create and maintain an atmosphere of cohesion in the group.
- Work on emotions with children



Annex 3

UNIT 3

Adverse Childhood Experiences



Objectives

- Conceptualisation of Early Adversity/ ACEs
- Theoretical approaches to the effects of early adversity



Adverse childhood experiences

BREAKING THE ICE

What do you consider adverse childhood experiences?

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Impact of ACEs in human's experience

Relationship between early childhood trauma and health and well-being problems later in life.

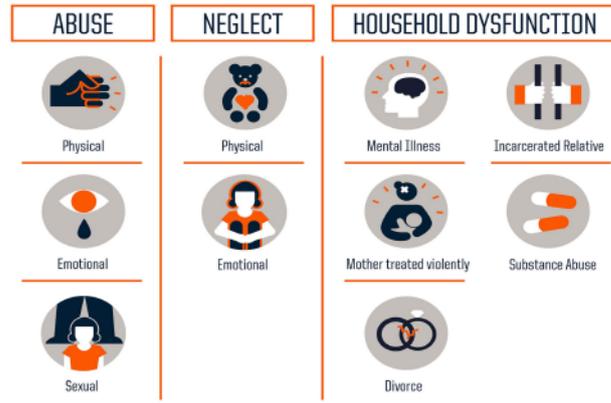
Source: World Health Organization



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Classic conceptualisation of ACE



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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Expanding the concept

“Human life cannot be studied without taking into account both how individuals are situated within and constrained by social structures and how those individuals construct an understanding of and impose meaning on the world around them.”

Dressler (2001: 455)

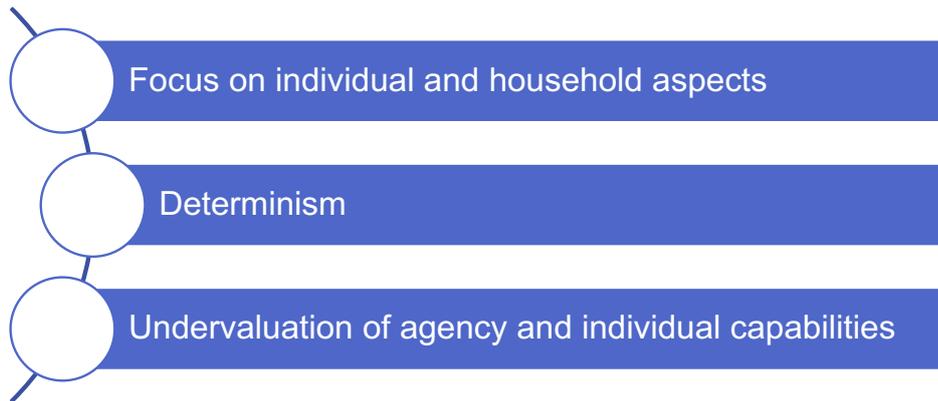


Source: Cronholm et al. (2015)

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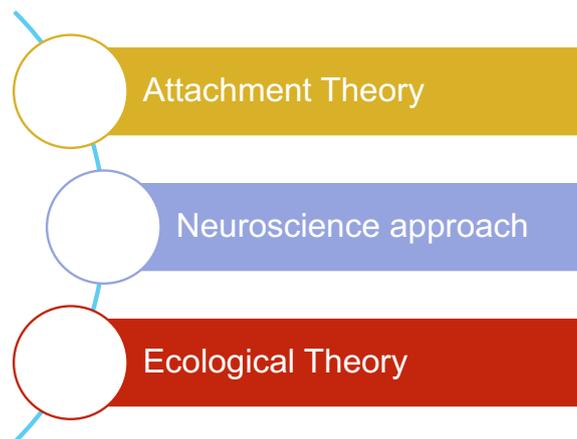
Critique to the concept of ACEs



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Approaches to ACEs

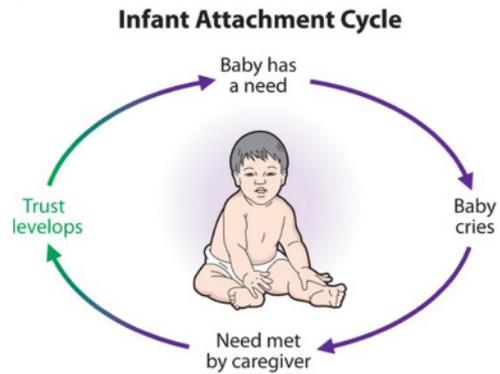


Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory

John Bowlby (1969)

The central idea of the theory is that primary caregivers who are available and responsive to an infant's needs enable the child to develop a sense of security. According to Bowlby, it is based on the establishment of affective bonds, of early relationships between infants and their caregivers that allow for a good psychological and healthy well-being, which will affect the person's development in infancy, childhood and adult life.



Attachment Theory

Attachment Styles

The Strange Situation (Ainsworth, 1969)





Criticism of Attachment Theory

1. **Attachment reductionism and monocausality**
(Korstanje, 2008; Waters et al, 2002)
2. **Determinism**
(Saunders et al., 2015)
3. **Dynamism of attachment**
(Groh et al., 2014)
4. **Cultural differences**

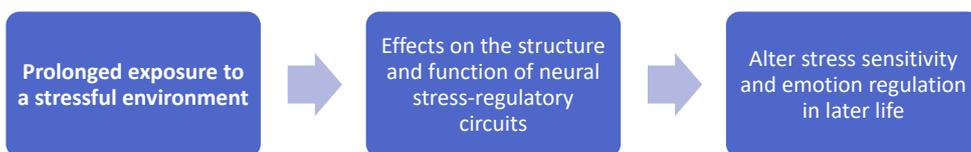
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Neuroscience approach



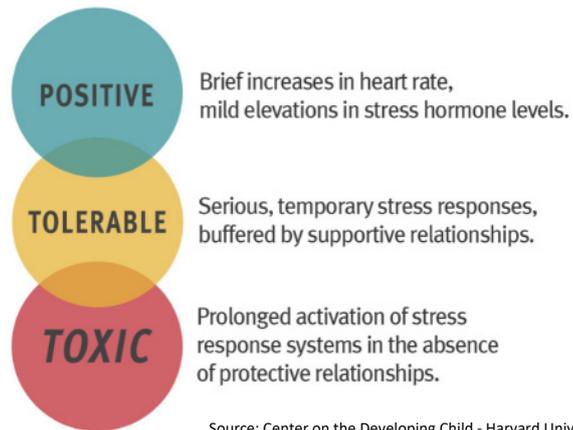
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Toxic Stress

[What is toxic stress?](#)



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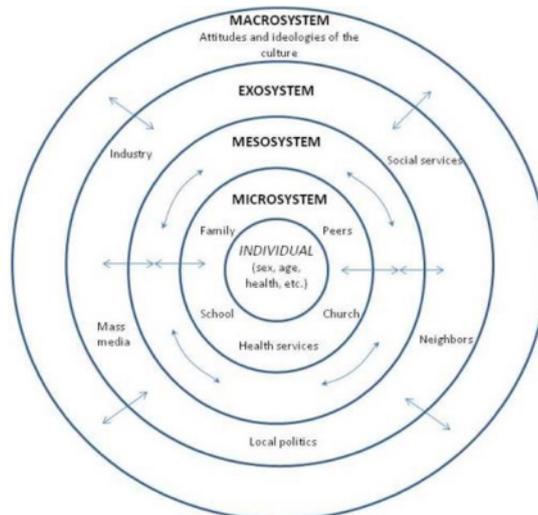
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Ecological Theory

“The developmental potential of a child-rearing setting is enhanced by the number of supportive links between that setting and other contexts in which the child and the adults responsible for the child's care are embedded”

(Bronfenbrenner, 1985: 51-52)



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Working Together (1)

The danger of the single story

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009)

- What are the "single stories" you grew up with?
- Has anyone ever used unique stories about you?
- How has this thing shifted your relationship to yourself, to people around you, and to the world you live in?
- Do you have ever used unique stories?

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Working Together (2)

Guided Fantasy: **“The mover”**

Adapted and translated from: Palacios, J.; León, E.; Sánchez-Sandoval, Y.; Amorós, P.; Fuentes, N.; Fuertes, J. (2006). Programa de formación para la adopción nacional. Junta de Andalucía. Consejería para la Igualdad y Bienestar Social.

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NOTES

Adverse childhood experiences

Work in small groups

- Discuss and list different forms of ACE
- It is quite possible that at first students will only mention individual or family unit aspects. To broaden the view, questions such as "Do you think that living in an area where there is war or having to leave the country for this reason could be added to the list?", "What about being bullied?" can be used.

Impact of ACEs in human's experience

The idea that traumatic experiences in childhood can have lasting consequences on people's health, social adjustment and well-being is widespread. Film and television fiction, for example, are full of examples of socially maladjusted people who experienced difficult situations in early life. Starting in 1994, a large study conducted in the United States with a sample of more than 17,000 individuals found a clear association between the accumulation of experiences of adversity before the age of 18 and negative outcomes in terms of physical and mental health in adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998).

Classic conceptualisation of ACE

The term ACEs was coined to identify those experiences that could have a negative impact on people's development and thus on their health and well-being throughout life. Initially, ACEs were classified into 10 categories grouped along three axes (Anda & Felitti, 2010):

- Abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
- Household Challenges
 - Mother treated violently
 - Household member was an alcoholic or drug user
 - Household member was imprisoned
 - Household member was chronically depressed, suicidal, mentally ill, in a psychiatric hospital
 - Not raised by both biological parents
- Neglect
 - Emotional neglect

- Physical neglect

Expanding the concept

Some authors consider that the term ACEs needs to be expanded to include other factors such as neighborhood violence, homelessness, foster care, bullying, and racism.

Research on the prevalence and impact of ACEs has highlighted:

- the high prevalence of ACEs in the general population: in the initial study, with a sample of over 17,000 individuals, 67% had experienced at least one ACE; 12.6%, one in eight, had four or more;
- that the accumulation of ACEs during childhood is a strong predictor of physical and mental health problems in adulthood: the higher the number of ACEs, the greater the likelihood of experiencing chronic depression, suicide attempts, risky behaviours, incarceration, premature death.

This is why in many countries the concept of ACEs has informed public policy. However, it is important to note that two children who experience the same type of adversity may respond in distinct ways: one may recover quickly without significant distress, whereas another may develop posttraumatic stress disorder or have their wellbeing seriously affected in the long term.

Critique to the concept of ACEs

While the very concept of ACEs has contributed greatly to identifying and making visible early experiences of adversity and their possible effects, there are also a growing number of critical voices. There are two main axes of criticism:

1. The assessment and identification of ACEs focuses on individual and household aspects. While it is true that the incorporation of other social factors in what we have called the expanded concept of ACEs opens the focus to structural, social and cultural aspects, in practice, household-centred questionnaires are still mostly used for assessment.
2. Identifying the relationship between early adversity and certain situations in adulthood often leads to a deterministic and fatalistic view of people, which ignores their capacities, potential and agency.

Approaches to ACEs

Quantitative studies measuring the prevalence of ACEs in the population and their correlation with difficulties in adulthood do not provide an explanation of how ACEs influence people's development and adult experience. In the following, we will look at the main approaches that try to answer what are the mechanisms by which ACEs influence development at different levels.

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Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was first formulated by John Bowlby (1969) and has been one of the most important, guiding, persuasive theories of the 20th century until today. Attachment theory has shaped child psychiatry, psychology, child care and the understanding of various problems of children and adolescents.

The central idea of the theory is that primary caregivers who are available and responsive to an infant's needs enable the child to develop a sense of security. According to Bowlby, it is based on the establishment of affective bonds, of early relationships between infants and their caregivers that allow for a good psychological and healthy well-being, which will affect the person's development in infancy, childhood and adult life.

The theory proposes that during the first year of a person's life, the attachment between the baby and his or her caregiver is established, which enables the child to feel secure. The attachment bond is defined as permanent and allows for the establishment of a relationship of closeness between the people involved. The following graphic shows how the attachment cycle works during the first months of life.

Attachment theory emphasizes the impact of primary caregivers and children relationships on psychological functioning. It states that it is through this relationship that children form an idea of themselves (as competent and worthy of love or as incompetent and defective) and of others (as potential supporters or threats), as they develop an 'internal working model' (or template) for subsequent relationships. Children then automatically implement these models when engaging in everyday circumstances.

Criticism of Attachment Theory

- **Monocausality:** Reduce the parent-child relationship to one dimension, that also is connected to a causal relation with specific psychiatric pathologies. The child's attachment to the caregiver (the caregiver as a "secure base" who provides safety and security) is only one specific component of the caregiver-child relationship. This can overshadow or dismiss other aspects of the parent-child relationship such as the child's temperament and biological constitution, the cognitive stimulation she/he has been provided, the caregiver's modelling of emotion regulation and impulse control, disciplinary techniques they use, etc. In addition, it fails to recognise the influences of other factors, such as **social class, gender, ethnicity, and culture on personality development.**
- **Determinism:** The theory reproduces an essentialism based on the idea that something that happened to us, often when we were very young, can have such a profound effect on our later personality and behaviour. Some studies have shifted the focus from the cause-effect relationship in the maternal bond to how the latter has been symbolically constructed by the subject in adulthood (Korstanje, 2008; Waters et al, 2002).

- **Multiplicity of attachments:** Attachment theory usually refers to the primary attachment figure, usually the mother. However, children have attachments and interact with other people other than their mothers, and these relationships have an important impact on the children's lives as they get older (Saunders et al., 2015).
- **Dynamism:** Attachment and the styles resulting from it are not fixed, but are constantly developing with time and experience (Mercer, 2006). It was assumed that an individual's attachment style remains stable across the lifespan, however, there is **no evidence of continuity from infant attachment classification to adult attachment classification** (Groh et al., 2014). Most of the studies have focused on children under 6 or 7 years.
- **Cultural differences and attachment behaviour:** It is necessary to bear in mind that attachment types vary substantially between societies. In recent years, although many researchers around the world have applied these scales in their societies, the results were quite contrary to those reached by both Ainsworth and Bowlby.

Neuroscience approach

Neuroscientists use another approach to explain how children exposed to ACEs early in life are at increased risk for developmental difficulties, affecting both cognitive and emotional adjustment. Neuroscientists consider there is clear evidence that ACEs are associated with enduring effects on the structure and function of neural stress-regulatory circuits such as the hippocampus or the amygdala and alter stress sensitivity and emotion regulation in later life.

When a child's stress response systems are activated within an environment of supportive relationships with adults, these physiological effects are softened and brought back down to baseline. The result is the development of healthy stress response systems. However, if the stress response is extreme and long-lasting, and softening relationships are unavailable to the child, the result can be damaged, weakened systems and brain, with long-term repercussions.

When a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support. This kind of prolonged stress can harm the body and brain, and cause lifelong health problems.

When toxic stress response occurs continuously, it can impact on the growth, development and physical and mental health. The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and later health problems. Research also indicates that **supportive, responsive relationships** with caring adults as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the harmful effects of toxic stress response.

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Toxic stress

Watch this video: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

We can distinguish three kinds of responses to stress: positive, tolerable, and toxic (see figure).

- **Positive stress** response is the body's response to temporary stress. For example, the first day with a new caregiver or receiving an injected immunization might lead to this kind of response.
- **Tolerable stress** response activates the body's alert systems to a longer and more serious stress, such as the loss of a figure of reference. When there is support to, the body can return to the normal state more easily.
- **Toxic stress** response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support. This kind of prolonged stress can harm the body and brain, and cause lifelong health problems.

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Ecological Theory

The social ecology models provide a wider frame both to assess the impact of early adversity and the ways to address it. The classical ecological theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) allows consideration of factors that impact on development and the life course, positively or negatively, beyond the family unit. Bronfenbrenner's model depicts four systems:

- **the microsystem:** comprises the interactions and relationships within the household, day-care centres or playgrounds.
- **the mesosystem:** is the interlinked system of microsystems in which a person participates—for example, linkages between family and school.
- **the exosystem:** refers to other environments that affect the child indirectly (where the child is not an active participant), like the parents' work environments, sibling's school, or local government.
- **the macrosystem:** encompasses broader social characteristics, including norms, customs, beliefs and political structures.

Ecological theory allows us to understand how children's development and wellbeing depends on **multiple factors, some of them outside the spaces they inhabit.** It also helps to conceptualise early

adversity **not as something definitive and irreparable, but as part of a universe that can be repaired or integrated by the rest of the elements of the system.** Thus, for example, suffering experiences of early adversity in the family unit (microsystem) is different when there are or when there are no public or educational policies (exosystem) that facilitate the repair and overcoming of its possible effects.

Working together (1)

Watch the TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and in small groups answer the questions below:

- What are the "single stories" you grew up with?
- Has anyone ever used unique stories about you?
- How has this thing shifted your relationship to yourself, to people around you, and to the world you live in?
- Do you have ever used unique stories?

The group reflects on the use and effects of unique stories and appreciate human diversity in all its richness and complexity.

Tools: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

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Annex 4

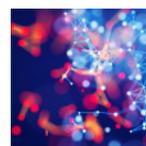
UNIT 4

Connection between wellbeing and learning



Objectives

- To identify the elements at the school that can stress children (materials, spaces, topics and other triggers)
- To identify the alert signals of stress in teachers and in pupils, specifically coming from protection system
- To develop strategies, dynamics and tools for teachers in order to:
 - Build a safe environment
 - Keep individual and group wellbeing





What's classroom well-being?

Identify items that may be stressful for

- Pupils, specifically coming from protection system
- Teachers

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Stress triggers

Unexpected dynamic changes

Unexpected teacher changes

Surprise exams

Know that holidays are near

Tiredness

Boring lessons

Uninteresting content

Repetitive activities

Excursions and trips

Talk about the family history or birth country

Father's or mother's day

Talk about genetic load or family tree

Talk about birthdays

Racist and xenophobic behavior or comments

Pupils' disruptive behaviors

Unresolved personal issues

Prejudgments

Lack of resources to deal with pupils with special needs

Ignorance of certain types of learning difficulties and intervention mechanisms

Very inquisitive families

New activities

Supervisor's visit

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Neurobiology of stress

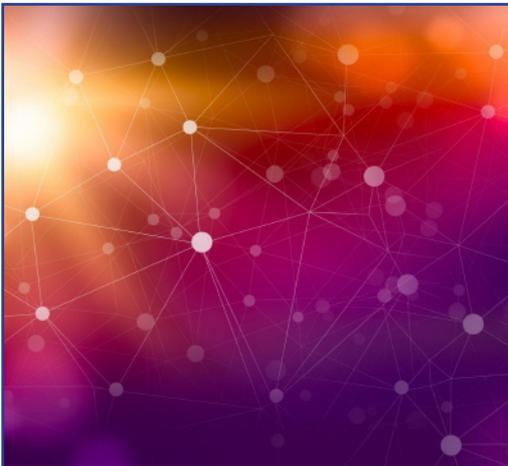
- Trigger element
- Interpretation (experience)
- Stress response
- Cortisol activation
- Fight or flight response



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ATTACHMENT and LEARNING

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Attachment Theory & Learning

- SECURE ATTACHMENT
- SECURE ENVIRONMENT
- PROTECTIVE REFERENCE FIGURE

Security
Exploratory capacity
Delivery to learning
Good self-concept
Good image of the environment
Confidence in a positive future

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Stress & learning process

- Activation of the fight response
- Generalized fear
- Difficulty sustaining attention
- Shock / Dissociation
- No retention
- Episodic amnesia

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ACADEMIC RESILIENCE APPROACH

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School as a resilient factor

The positive experiences lived in the school will be a factor of protection against adverse situations experienced or that may occur.

The school based on resilience focuses on the abilities and potential of students and develops educational practices that teach students to face difficulties in a positive way.

[The Academic Resilience Approach](#)

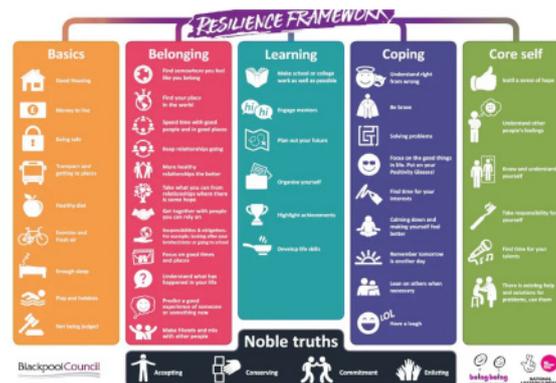


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Academic Resilience Approach - ARA



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Incorporating ARA in the school

- To propose short and simple actions such as creating a space within the school where students enjoy a calm atmosphere.
- Incorporate the ARA in the framework documents of the school.
- Review daily actions to redefine or incorporate new ones.
- Include ARA in the school's Coexistence and Educational Success Plan.
- The whole educational community should know what resilience is.
- The principles of the Resilience Framework play an important role in the role of the tutor.
- To give children and adolescents the opportunity to express their opinions and proposals, based on a relationship of trust.
- To propose specific activities that include content such as knowledge of one's own identity, responsibilities, maintaining healthy relationships or empathy.

Hart et al., 2018

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Relevance of Primary Intervention

- Need to promote group cohesion
 - How to do it?
 - How to keep it?
 - How to detect that it is failing?
 - How to assess that it is working correctly?

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Emotional Intelligence_1

What is it?

• Benefits:

- Better personal connection with others
- Greater ability to manage the skills of pupils
- Considerable reduction of anxiogenic and stress-generating situations
- Faster and more effective resolution of anxiogenic and stress-generating situations
- Less tension in the classroom / better learning environment
- Less sense of loss of control by the teacher

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Emotional Intelligence_2

Benefits (2):

- Greater security in pupils as an exploratory base before knowledge
- A better predisposition of teachers to the activity
- A better predisposition of pupils to the activity
- Reduced frustration
- Allows teachers to make a good assessment of the situation
- Facilitates self-criticism and improvement

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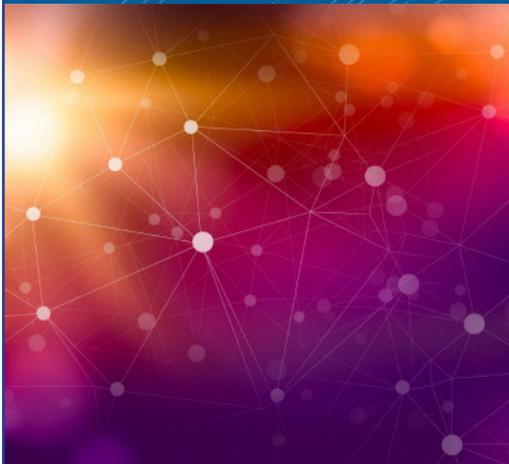
Tools to apply good emotional intelligence in the classroom

- To know the personal realities of each child.
- Set up personal interviews where you can find out pleasures, hobbies,... show a real interest.
- Dedicate a daily/weekly space to assessing emotions and working on values and principles, respect for others
- Select the activities according to the pupils needs.
- Make a prior assessment of the activities to be carried out with respect to the mandatory content and make the corresponding inclusive adaptations.
- Carry out a small retrospective evaluation of how each activity has evolved.

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CASE STUDIES

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Case Study 1

Juan is 8 years old and bites his nails and the skin of his fingers until he bleeds. Some say that he is a curious and restless child. He has been diagnosed with ADHD but it still seems that medication doesn't always work for him. He is a boy who tries very hard to make friends with all his classmates, becoming "bothersome" and being rejected more forcefully by others who make fun of him or do not take him into account in their plans, games, ...

And it is that Juan makes inappropriate jokes and/or at times that do not correspond, such as when everyone is concentrating on following the teacher's explanations. At those moments, Juan makes noises, he drops his pencils, he gets up to look for things in his shelter or to throw papers in the wastebasket, he comments on things he sees through the window, he hums, he rocks in his chair, he asks to go to the bathroom, he mess with a classmate, ... continuously interrupting the rhythm of the classroom. He has come to masturbate in class.

Juan is repeatedly punished without success. Also, he seems like he is not able to control it. Taking him out of the classroom doesn't work either because in the hallway he also messes up and annoys the other classes. If he misses recess he is more restless and the last part of the morning behaves worse. If they send him more homework he never finishes it because according to his parents, despite spending the whole afternoon he doesn't give it time, he does it poorly, with reluctance and they don't help him learn more.

The teacher doesn't know what to do and has even told other teachers that he can't stand Juan or commented in front of the whole class that "that boy is impossible".

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Case Study 2

Maria is a shy 6-year-old girl. She never speaks in class, she never makes contributions, she doesn't bother,... she goes completely unnoticed; It's like she wasn't there. She does what she is told, although not always immediately. She waits for her table mates to start and then she, by social imitation, gets to work. If they ask her if she has understood the explanation, she always says that she has, even though she is unable to start a task on her own and if she insists a bit, she begins to cry.

At recess she is usually with the same group but always letting herself go, never in an active way.

Maria cries if her teacher leaves class, if they change her table, if they ask her to respond to something in public no matter how simple it is, and every time the teacher orders them to go home. She sometimes lives these moments with such anguish that she pees herself.

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Case Study 3

Jorge is 14 years old and he is the best in the class. He is a very competitive kid, his average is around 9.8. Any threat to this score becomes catastrophic, forcing you to interrupt and rearrange your day-to-day.

He is part of a swimming team where he always competes for the first places. He studies at the conservatory. He is especially attentive, polite and courteous. He is very loved by teachers and friends. He is always aware of his parents and involved in thousands of charitable causes.

He has a girlfriend, the most beautiful in the class, with whom he is the perfect boyfriend: detailed, romantic, affectionate, generous,...

Jorge is manic and obsessive. He has important rituals every day that, if not followed, lead to recurrent anxiety and panic attacks that leave him breathless for minutes. He sometimes throws up because that calms him down. He never wears short sleeves because despite having an athletic body, he is afraid someone will ask him about the scars on his arms.

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What are the main difficulties that teachers find when applying these tools?

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NOTES

Objectives

The objectives of this unit are three: to identify the elements at the school that can stress children (materials, spaces, topics and other triggers). The second one is to identify the alert signals of stress in teachers and in pupils, specifically coming from protection system. And the last one is to develop strategies, dynamics and tools for teachers in order to build a safe environment and to keep individual and group well-being.

What's classroom well-being?

The definition of wellness is a state of the person whose physical and mental conditions guarantee a feeling of satisfaction and tranquility. Therefore, what we want is for the classroom to become a space where students and teachers have that feeling of tranquility and peace. And for this we will start by identifying some items that may be stressful for the different agents that participate in the school.

Stress triggers

When students have lived through traumatic experiences like the ones evaluated earlier, they have learned hypervigilance patterns that make them constantly alert to any possible adverse change (Cáceres et. al., 2017; Mesa-Gesa & Moya-Albiol, 2011). In this sense, many of these children develop seductive or disruptive behaviors as a mechanism of evasion and dissociation in the face of the fear generated by uncertainty. However, these unexpected, inappropriate or inconsistent behaviours are considered by adults as a provocation instead of as an alarm symptom (Espinoza, 2006).

For example, a child used to the loss of affective referents feels threatened by an unexpected change of teacher or a classroom change. In these cases, all the warning mechanisms are activated in the student involuntarily (Mesa-Gresa & Moya-Albiol, 2011). Some examples are unexpected dynamics changes, and unexpected teacher changes and the surprise exams. Another one is to know the holidays are nearby. The tiredness of pupils. Boring lessons. Uninteresting content. And the last one is doing repetitive activities. Specifically with pupils coming from protection system we can add talk about the family history or the birth country. The father's or mother's day or talk about genetic load or family

tree.

Also, there are items that may be stressful for teachers as pupils' disruptive behaviours, unresolved personal issues, prejudgments, lack of resources to deal with pupils with special needs, very inquisitive families, new activities or the supervisor visits.

Neurobiology of stress

From a neurobiological point of view, Benito (2020) explains that when students are deregulated, begin to secrete different substances such as cortisol and adrenaline which predispose them to fight, to defense and to survive. All these turn into attention difficulties to follow simple instructions, and into hyperactivity that prevent them from staying seated following the class. These mean continuous movements in the chair, repetitive strokes with the pencil on the table, continuous interruptions with topics incongruous with the content being worked on, noises, masturbation, ... because they cannot pay attention but they need to let all the emotional tension loose that is overwhelming them (Spangenberg, 2015).

Summing up the neurobiology of stress shows five elements that can produce stress: trigger elements, experience interpretation, stress response, cortisol activation and fight or flight response.

The most complicated part of this situation is that the interpretation of each of these triggers is subjective and unknown to others. This means that sometimes we perceive that a child has inappropriate responses to a comment, gesture, situation, ... simply because we do not know its importance to him. For example, playing in the park a child wants to play a prank on one of his classmates and throws a water balloon at him unexpectedly. This colleague begins to cry inconsolably for a long time and there is nothing that can calm him down. They are 10-year-old and this response is considered inappropriate due to its magnitude. Everyone tells him it's no big deal... However, no one in the park knows that this boy fell into a pool when he was a year and a half old and nearly drowned.

Therefore, this sensation of the water balloon suddenly falling above evoked in that child the same anguish of his drowning experience and the manifest response is not because of the balloon but because of the fear of drowning.

However, in that moment of anguish, the activation and dysregulation is so great that the child is blocked from listening and reasoning, much less learning.

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ATTACHMENT and LEARNING

Attachment Theory & Learning

From attachment theory we can also observe how this unexpected change alerts children or adolescents about a possible loss, even if it is only from the routine that facilitates predictability and therefore security (it can be a party, a trip...) (Guerrero, 2020). Faced with this situation, students feel fear and take a warning behaviour in an attempt to anticipate the pain that this uncertain situation may cause. They prefer to boycott themselves so that the loss is based on their disruptive attitudes and behaviors and not about qualities of themselves that they cannot change or in unforeseen events that are beyond their control (Espinoza, 2006). The typical behaviour related with that is: *you don't leave me, I leave you*. Let us remember that they are children or adolescents who have experienced continuous loss as well as neglect or abuse. For that reason, in a mistaken attribution, they blame themselves and they may prefer to continually feel that they are in control of what may happen.

Stress & learning process

These types of attitudes are also common when students face new social relationships in which they want to fit in and feel accepted. But it also happens in the face of the acquisition of content that is especially complex for them and for which they are afraid to fail. Students, given their emotional insecurity, anticipate their own failure and they associate that with a social rejection and from the affective environment. So, they prefer to disconnect from that area: they do not write down the tasks, they lie about what they have to do, they do not answer the exams not to be mistaken... (Rodríguez, 2014). These behaviors are often confused with a lack of interest or carelessness. Although it may be possible in some cases, it is usually the result of the learning difficulties that students present as a result of their ACEs and their own emotional insecurity. Guerrero (2021) explains that generating a safe environment in the classroom and establishing a good emotional bond between students and the teacher where children and adolescents feel protected, will predispose students to positively face new challenges and learning.

School as a resilient factor

Resilience is used to describe the positive mechanisms of an individual, group, material, or system that, in the face of an adverse situation that affects their integrity and stability, allow them to endure, cope, recover, and emerge stronger (Vaquero, Urrea & Mundet, 2014). This includes various processes such as the good recovery from an adverse situation, and / or that adversity does not limit a person's development. Therefore, a resilient child is one who recovers after experiencing an adverse situation and / or develops properly despite continued exposure to risk (Gilligan, 2000). From an ecological point of view, the factors that make a person resilient are both the person's personal characteristics and social and contextual factors. That is, the person's resilience is also influenced by the child's experiences and how he or she integrates them into his or her development. In this sense, the school plays an important role in promoting the resilience of students as the positive experiences lived in this context will be a factor of protection against adverse situations experienced or that may occur.

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The school based on resilience focuses on the abilities and potential of students and develops educational practices that teach students to face difficulties in a positive way, to have a life project, to develop their potential, something which will allow them to better deal with adverse situations. In order to incorporate resilience into schools, we propose to adopt the Academic Resilience Approach - ARA. This is a whole-school-based community development model that aims to provide schools with tools to help students overcome adversity and improve their educational outcomes (Boingboing, 2017). It implements the Resilience Framework as a cross-cutting element that must be considered in the daily activities of the school.

Academic Resilience Approach – ARA

The Resilience Framework consists of five basic pillars related to the areas of life of children and adolescents and is transformed into:

Actions that involve addressing the basic needs of children and young people. It would be impossible for some students to start undertaking anything without first solving them.

- Actions related to learning that allow students' educational routine to work as well as possible, bearing in mind that learning is not only given in the classroom but also in contexts such as the playground or outside the school. We need to make sure they are developing their interests, talents or skills for life.
- Actions that help to develop coping skills that help children and adolescents to solve problems, to defend their own points of view and beliefs and to change challenges of daily life.
- Actions aimed at developing intrapersonal aspects, in order to encourage children and adolescents to understand who they are, to know their thoughts and beliefs about themselves and to develop their personality.

To develop these actions, the Resilience Framework proposes the need to take into account four principles:

- Acceptance. It involves accepting the situation or the problem, focusing on what you want to happen from now on, and taking action to achieve it.
- Conservation. It means preserving the good things that are happening in the lives of students, identifying them, if necessary, and reinforcing them.
- Commitment. It is important to stay focused and be consistent in promoting resilience as it is not a quick fix.
- Enlisting. It means involving other people in the educational community or outside the school who can support children and adolescents.
- Relevance of Primary Intervention: do a practice exercise to reflect together about group cohesion.

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Relevance of Primary Intervention

You can use this slide to do a practice exercise and reflect together about the group cohesion.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional Intelligence_1

The ability that human beings have to relate in an appropriate way with others is one of the specific intelligences that Gardner (1983) detailed within his theory of Multiple Intelligences: Intrapersonal Intelligence. This intelligence is closely related to another that the author called Interpersonal Intelligence and which refers to the personal skills that each individual owns to effectively identify and control their own emotional states.

Daniel Goleman, in 1995, publishes "Emotional Intelligence" combining both to and thus allude to the ability of a subject to identify and efficiently manage both their own emotions and those of others, in such a way that social relations would suppose a great success compared to those other people unable to recognize and manage them properly.

In this sense, and referring to the situations in the classroom described in the previous section, it can be affirmed that the capacity of the school staff when it comes to preventing, detecting and

redirecting any possible destabilizing emotion in students as well as its trigger to grant the teacher the power to manage in an efficient and emotionally safe way a good group management as well as a good development of the academic contents (Birknerova, 2011).

However, to Jeloudar, Yunus, Roslan, and Nor (2011), it is not always given adequate relevance. In this context it is essential teachers will always be able to detect what their emotions are like. It is also important for teachers to be aware of when they become emotionally deregulated and why. That is, what events trigger them (especially if they are related to the behaviors and/or attitudes of a specific student) as well as of which elements will help them regain calm and control of themselves.

Emotional Intelligence_2

In the same line, López & López (2018) explain that if the teacher is sensitive to understanding that the same thing happens to the students and that these emotional destabilizers are associated with their personal history and/or experiences, the teacher will be able to depersonalize any provocation and/or disruptive behavior of the students avoiding significant emotional distress on your part. In addition, in this way the teacher is given the ability to seek and implement effective solutions in each possible case that return to the classroom an environment conducive to learning (Vesely-Maillefer & Saklofske, 2018).

For example, to Geddes (2021) it is likely that a student who comes from the protection system will be restless and disruptive in the classroom when an activity related to origins such as the family tree or certain geography topics is being worked on when there is some type of movement in their history migratory or racial difference, or when talking about reproductive issues when they have suffered some type of abuse or their genetic load is unknown. That is why, faced with the possibility of this situation happening, the teacher should be sensitive and anticipate that this dynamic may affect the student in order to prevent and/or alleviate any possible damage by adapting content and/or giving it different approaches so that it results more inclusive.

This author said that it is true that, on occasions, teachers do not know part of the student's history and face situations in which the student is deregulated without understanding the reason. Given this fact, teachers must apply those tools that they know in advance that work with the student, such as leaving the classroom with the excuse of running an errand or lending a hand in another class, changing activities, including a break that involves physical activity in the playground... For this it is essential that teachers can meet with families to delve into what emotional strategies are successfully applied at home to be able to use them in the classroom as well.

In this sense, it is key that teachers are able to depersonalize each and every one of the student's disruptive behaviors, thus ensuring that they do not experience it as a personal attack but nevertheless feel that they are a source of solution to any possible difficulty that the student may have. The student can go through and for this it is essential that they have a high knowledge and self-control of themselves and their emotional responses (Vesely-Maillefer & Saklofske, 2018).

Tools to apply good emotional intelligence in the classroom

Before presenting the slide, ask the students how they will ask the children questions related to their lives. What are the sensitive issues and how can we ask about them?

What are the main difficulties that teachers find when applying these tools?

To sum up, we can discuss how to address the difficulties that teachers find when applying these tools.

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Annex 5.1

UNIT 5.1

Working in partnership
with parents and care givers

What does a true partnership involve?

What are the potential barriers to the partnership?

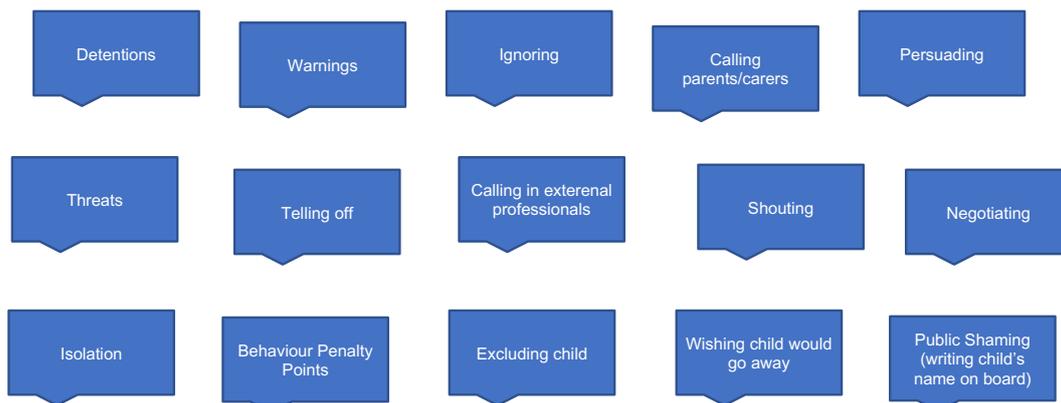
School Expectations vs. Behaviour that challenges



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Common Responses in schools to Challenging behaviour



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Behaviour that Challenges



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Adverse Childhood Experiences

Impact of ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

- Poor sense of self
- Sensory needs
- Emotional Regulation Difficulties
- Executive Functioning Difficulties
- Trouble building relationships with Adults
- Trouble Building Relationships with Peers
- Coping with change
- Transition losses
- Learning needs

How ACES look as behaviours

- Continually talking/and or asking questions
- Making noises
- Unable to sit still
- Leaving their seat, classroom, building
- Throwing or breaking objects
- Hurting themselves or other children
- Taking things that don't belong to them
- Trying to take control of situations
- Outbursts of frustration and/or anger

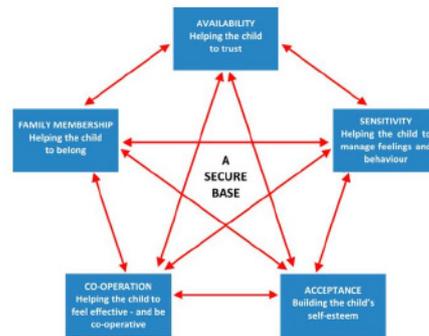
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Behaviour as Communication

- I don't feel safe
- I don't trust you
- The only person I can rely on is myself
- I don't know how I feel
- I feel rubbish
- I feel stupid
- I feel sad
- I feel threatened
- I need to escape
- I need to protect myself
- I need to be in control to feel safe

The secure base model



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School Behaviour Policies

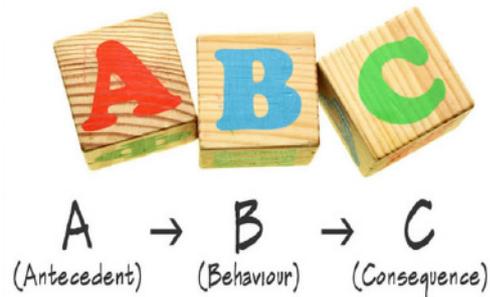


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ABC Chart

An observational tool
to record behaviour
that helps us better understand
what is being communicated



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Establishing and maintaining a positive relationship

- **Availability**
(so the child can learn to trust)
- **Sensitivity**
(so the child can understand and manage their feelings and behaviour)
- **Acceptance**
(so the child can develop their self esteem)
- **Cooperation**
(so the child can feel effective)
- **Membership**
(so the child can feel they belong)

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NOTES

What does a true partnership involve? What are the potential barriers to the partnership?

When traumatized children are experiencing difficulties, it can place a lot of pressure on the people who are supporting them. Everyone within this network of support can feel high levels of anxiety and we can then sometimes slip into a culture of blame. Parents and carers often tell us that they can sometimes feel to blame for their child's difficulties and struggles in school, perhaps because there can be a misconception that the child's difficulties have arisen from poor parenting. Schools, teachers and the "team around the child" can help such situations by acknowledging that a child's difficulties may be due to their early life history, not their adopted or foster family or even their adoption or care experience.

Partnerships between parents and school can be even harder when children don't appear to have any difficulties at school. The school may interpret this as the child being fine whereas the parent/carer knows all too well that the child is managing to hold it together in school and then coming home and letting the stresses spill out. Imagine a bottle of coca cola that has been shaken all day long and at the end of the day and after all of the shaking the lid comes off and the coke spills out everywhere. Many adopters and carers can relate to this analogy

Over compliance can be a particular issue for adopted children. There early life experiences have taught them that the best way to keep themselves safe is to be very very good, but what cannot be seen is the high levels of fear and stress that sit beneath the surface of this over compliance

School Expectations vs. Behaviour that challenges

Schools are complex organisations, made up of various staff members, children, young people parents, carers and external professionals. It is important to recognise that all of these people may have very different starting positions when thinking about the needs of adopted and care experienced young people. Many may also be dealing with other competing priorities and differing agendas. The process of change can be very difficult hard and changing organisations such as schools requires consistency over a long period of time. The most effective changes that take place are led from the top, so in the example of a school this would be a Head Teacher/School Principal.

In order to develop inclusive environments, schools teams need a significant shift in mindset. This is about taking the first step as a school to think about everything they have tried so far to managed traumatised children's behaviour.

If you are training teachers or students with working in school experience, you can discuss these 3 key questions:

(1) What have schools (or your school) tried so far? (2) How has it worked in the long term? (3) What has it cost them?

When you are listing what has been tried, put down everything: from things individuals have done to a whole school approach. (see next slide)

If your students have no teaching experience, then explain how some behaviours from traumatised children challenge school expectations.

Common Responses in schools to Challenging behaviour

Here is an example of some of the approaches that school may have taken as an individual or as a whole school approach to get a child to change their behaviour.

If a particular strategy was helpful, we would expect to see a decrease in it's use with a particular child. If we think about detentions for example if they were effective we shouldn't see that child keep getting detentions because we would expect their behaviour to have changed in response to the first few detentions. When you are thinking about the cost it is also important to consider the impact on people's emotional well being and resilience. Thinking about the self esteem and self efficacy of both staff and children.

Once you have identified the approaches that are not working it is important for us to ask "why do we keep doing the same thing hoping for a different outcome?"

Behaviour that Challenges

Traumatised children need relationships that with attachment (A) regulation (R) and competency (C). This is true whether we are providing individualised therapy, therapeutic parenting at home or a healing environment in schools.

Thinking about behaviour as communication is key for teachers, educators and school staff to understand that those children who are so often viewed as naughty are in fact dealing with many complex issues which can only be addressed through whole school understanding and different approaches.

These children do what they do from experience and from what has been learned, not because they feel like being naughty or mean which can so often be the interpretation.

We must accept difficult behaviours as coming from a place of fear and adverse childhood experience not from intentional or wilful behaviour. When there is a lack of understanding as to where this behaviour comes from teachers and the school so often misinterpret the child as being oppositional, defiant and rude

School are complex organisations and so often teachers who are managing classes of up to 30 pupils understandably can get caught up in logging and reacting to these behaviours rather than exploring what the child might be telling us through their behaviour what their needs are.

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Adverse Childhood Experiences

Many of the children displaying these behaviours probably won't be aware that these behaviours are the things they are feeling and thinking. If we are curious and open to exploring what might be underneath these behaviours we can help start to develop an awareness for themselves.

When we are thinking about these behaviours we need to ask ourselves (1) What the behaviour tells us about the child's unmet needs such as their emotional and social needs (2) How can we change/adapt the school environment to reduce any of the triggers which may cause the challenging behaviour? (3) How we adjust how we respond to the behaviour which is more helpful to the child? Next slide – what these behaviours as a means of communication might be telling us – we also need to say a behaviour policy within schools that meets children where they are at.

Behaviour as Communication

If we understand all we can about the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and how they manifest themselves in behaviour within the school environment we need to ensure that our policies and the environment in which we are expecting these children to learn and thrive meets their needs. Move to next slide where we will look at behaviour policies.

School Behaviour Policies

Behaviourism is the idea that all behaviour can be reduced reaction linked to a response. These links are learned from our environment. In the world of behaviourism, rewards and punishment are not emotive terms, they are simply the things that teach us to do more or less of a particular behaviour. It is understandable then that schools have relied on rewards and punishment to shape children's behaviour. The difficulty is that behaviourism and social learning theory do not sufficiently take into account attachment or children's experiences of trauma.

Such systems assume that:

- The problem is that child won't do something, not that they can't. Therefore if we have a system that uses rewards and consequences this will solve the problem
- Children are in control of their behaviour and they are not acting impulsively
- Children understand cause and effect so will be able to learn from such a system
- Children can cope with the punishment from an adult without interpreting this as (I am rubbish)
- Children can feel guilt (I did something bad) without feeling Shame (I am bad)

We cannot make this assumption about adopted and care experienced young people as many of their tricky behaviours come from a position of feeling threatened and unsafe

Let us now look at a typical school behaviour policy (bring a couple of examples of school policies to share).

- What have we learned about the policies we have read?
- Are they behaviourist or are they relationship?
- Do you think these policies will work?
- What issues can you see within these policies?
- Are there aspects of the policies you think might work?
- Do they consider the needs of adopted and care experienced young people?

We are now going to work on our own mini policy and think together in our breakout (or whole group depending on size) what needs to be considered within this policy.

ABC chart

We are going to look at something called a Functional Behaviour Analysis Chart or an ABC chart. This is an observational tool that allows you to record a particular behaviour. It enables you to consider the behaviour alongside the schools behaviour policy/ethos and how this might be impacting. It helps us think about what changes we might need to make in school in terms of taking a whole school approach. The aim of using an ABC chart is to help us better understand what the behaviour is communicating. They also include environmental factors that may also be impacting the child or young person negatively.

You can use a case study (such of [Ben's case](#)) to deep in the use of the ABC Chart. who has been refusing to complete tasks, is continually running out of lessons and is generally being disruptive to the class.

One you have read the ABC chart in your smaller groups (or large group if not enough numbers to break into sub groups) we are going to answer the following questions which relate to the school environment and strategies that might support this young person in school. One you have done this and thought about the triggers for the behaviour and the consequences which could be maintaining it, you can then use all of this information to help you develop a plan to better support this student.

- Q1. What changes could you make to the environment around the child to decrease exposure to any triggers?
- Q2. What strategies could you teach the student to cope with the triggers better?
- Q3. What skill could you teach the student that would reduce their need to engage in a particular behaviour?
- Q4. What support can you provide to meet the students needs and thus reduce the need for the behaviour?

Establishing and maintaining a positive relationship

Key Adults in school play a vital role for the child in creating a safe base. Key adults can support and help meet the child's need for availability, sensitivity, acceptance, cooperation and membership. The role of the key adult includes:

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Availability (so the child can learn to trust)

- Provide the child with regular predictable "attachment time" which is built into the child daily or weekly timetable
- Ensuring this time is fully focused on the child looking and listening to them closely, without being interrupted or distracted
- Being reliable and communicating clearly to the child if plans have to change, explaining why and what the new plan is
- Making sure the child knows how and is allowed to find the key adult if they are distressed or need help
- Seeking out the child if they not ask for or accept help when they are in distress or trouble
- Acknowledging and celebrating key milestones for the child including birthday, adoption days or anniversaries and achievements
- Keeping in touch over half terms, long holidays and once the child or adult leaves the school

Sensitivity (so the child can understand and manage their feelings and behaviour)

- Being aware of the child's previous experiences, including key triggers and areas of difficulty
- Tuning in with genuine curiosity to the child's feelings, thoughts, needs and wishes
- Using validation and empathy to show the child that you are interested in understanding how they feel and in linking this to what is happening around them
- Responding to the child's feeling and needs by acknowledging them and meeting them as appropriate
- Helping the child to find ways to express and cope with their feelings and needs
- Sharing (appropriately) some of your thoughts, feelings, wishes and need so that the child learns that others also have thoughts and feelings and learns to read these accurately and connect them with what is happening

Acceptance (so the child can develop their self esteem)

- Using accepting language that shows the child they are not alone. For example: "We had a tricky day didn't we? We can sort it out together"
- Welcoming the child's strengths and interests and giving them opportunities to pursue these, with the message "everybody is good at something"
- Naming and accepting the different "parts of the child, including the parts that seem contradictory, like "your silly part", "your working hard part", "your sad part" and "your kind part"
- Finding ways to show they child the are of value just the way they are
- Modelling imperfection and acceptance of yourself (e.g. making a mistake and then speaking

compassionately to yourself: "Never mind we all make mistakes"

- Encouraging the child to take risks in play and learning, and helping them to accept the fear or making a mistake or getting it wrong

Cooperation (so the child can feel effective)

- Finding ways to help the child feel that they are effective and competent and can be autonomous in a developmentally appropriate way
- Offering the child choices
- Negotiating with clear boundaries
- Encouraging child to have a go at activities and tasks for themselves while providing support so they can experience success
- Helping the child to feel like part of a team where they have something to contribute, helping you with jobs such as preparation, to working on a project with you
- Setting clear limits so that the child can feel to exercise the control they have without the scary sense that they are all powerful or that they are responsible for decisions or events

Membership (so the child can feel they belong)

- Creating a sense of being a team together with the child
- Helping the child to feel included in other groups and teams, such as their class, clubs, intervention groups, and in the school as a whole, by being acknowledged at assembly or representing the class at a school event
- Pointing out what the child has in common with you and with other children and adults in the school, such as their uniform, neat handwriting, their hair or eye colour and their likes and dislikes
- Working with the child's family to affirm, as appropriate, that children can belong to multiple families (adoptive, foster families, other permanency type families) and that embracing new belonging does not sever previous ties
- Reinforcing the child's sense of belonging with their adoptive family, using photographs, transitional objects from home, books and stories and by talking about the future. "When you all go on holiday next summer....., when you celebrate Christmas at home....."
- Helping the child to leave school with clear evidence of their belonging at the school, e.g. a yearbook or "goodbye book" with photographs, messages and contact details for key people



Annex 5.2

UNIT 5.2

Working in partnership
with parents and care givers

What does a true partnership involve?

What are the potential barriers to the partnership?

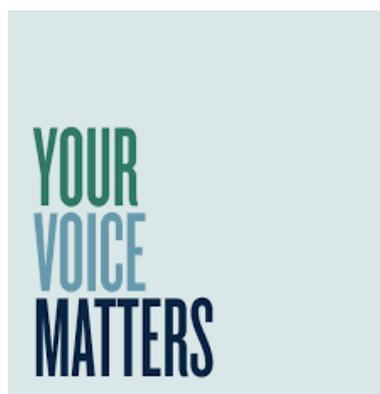
Ladder of Participation



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Making space for everyone's voice



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Getting it right from the start

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

the first seeds of
the relationship

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Communication: What, when and how?

**Good communication
means knowing:**

What to communicate
When to communicate
How to communicate

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Communication in the partnership



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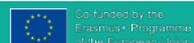


Support Plans Measuring Impact and Outcome



- Reflecting Adoptive and Looked After Children sensitively within the curriculum
- Dealing with curriculum hotspots
- Avoiding and modifying triggering content
- Removing children from triggering classes
- Asking families and carers for their input
- Appropriate adoption and permanency language
- Dealing with curious peers
- Evaluation

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Over compliance can be a particular issue for adopted children. There early life experiences have taught them that the best way to keep themselves safe is to be very very good, but what cannot be seen is the high levels of fear and stress that sit beneath the surface of this over compliance

The over compliant and pseudo independent child

Behaviours like over compliance and pseudo independence give the impression that the child is coping. These behaviours cause concern because they often stem from a fear of adults and a lack of trust in others. Such children will need help to learn to trust that others can support them and that they do not have to manage everything themselves. All too often parents tell us that school report that their child's behaviour is excellent at school and that they try hard with their work and they have lots of friend. It takes a very knowledgeable, open, supporting and accepting school to recognise that a child is struggling behind their appearance. This can mean for those children who are compliant and who undertake the tasks given and are achieving are often "under the school radar" and so if there is no robust partnership between school and parents where there is a shared understanding all too often the social and emotional wellbeing of a child can be missed or misinterpreted.

Setting up the partnership

A true partnership between parents and school means that parents are informed, consulted, involved and engaged. Sometimes your interactions with parents/ care givers will be focussed on their child. At other times you'll engage more broadly with parents about the life of the school.

True partnership between parents (or care givers) and school is so so vital for the support and wellbeing of a child

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The ladder of participation

It can be used to assess the participation of children and youth in decisions that affect them, and also the participation of parents/caregivers. Participation starts at rung 4 "Informed".

	Regarding Child	Regarding whole school
INFORMED	- Parents/caregivers are update about progress. - They are updated about incidents. - Parents are told if the school identifies a particular need.	- They are told about the provisions made for adopted children. - They are reminded to self declare for Pupil Premium Plus (UK ONLY).
CONSULTED	- They are asked for their views about their child's progress. - They are asked for their views about the schools plan for intervention and support.	- They are asked for feedback about the provisions made for adopted children/ children in care. - They are asked for feedback about use of Pupil Premium Plus (UK ONLY) or other funds the school may have to support adopted or care experienced young people.
INVOLVED	- They participate in meetings to identify child's progress and needs. - They participate in making plans for intervention and support. - They are asked about broader family support needs.	- They are involved in the journey to becoming an adoption friendly school - They are part of a group or network of adoptive parents within the school or community. - They participate in the decision making process about Pupil Premium Plus (UK ONLY) or other funding used to support needs of adopted or care experienced young people.
ENGAGED	- Picture of child's needs is reached jointly with their input. - Support and intervention plan is made jointly with parents. - Parents/caregivers monitoring of child's needs and progress is welcome.	- They are represented on governing body. - They are part of a group of adoptive or care givers within the school or community feeding back into the whole school community. - They are part of plans and review of impact of Pupil Premium Plus (UK ONLY) or other funding used to support needs of adopted or care experienced children and young people.

Making space for everyone's voice

Schools can sometimes find it difficult if they feel they are being told what to do by parents. Parents conversely can feel "shut out" if their expertise is not welcomed. Sometimes schools and parents relinquish their control to outside experts to try and help them through their difficulties.

Successful partnerships however acknowledge that everyone's expertise is welcomed and is a necessary component around the table.

Getting it right from the start

First impressions matter. This includes the school's website and information they provide to parents and carers when they are in the process of deciding which school is right for their child. For parents and carers it is helpful to be able to assess this from the outset. Its helpful to include on the school website:

- Information on how the school acknowledges and meets the needs of adopted and care experience young people
- Directions on the website as to where this can be found within school policies
- Information about the designated teacher (UK only) – this is a teacher who has specific responsibility for the oversight of all adopted and care experienced young people – this should detail what the role involves, who they are and how parents/carers can reach them
- Information about how the Pupil Premium Plus (UK ONLY) is spent or other funding linked to the support of adopted and care experienced young people
- In the UK adopted children have priority admissions at normal transition points and priority on the waiting list if they are joining a school part way through the year.
- It is important for schools to think about ensuring their reception and/or office staff are aware of this so that they do not discourage adoptive parents or care givers from making contact, asking questions or coming to visit
- As partnerships takes time to form, it is best not to wait until something goes wrong before you get to know the parent/s/care givers
- It is a very good idea to have an initial meeting with parent/s/care givers when the child starts school to ensure you have the information you need and there is agreement about how and with who that information can be shared
- Building in routine appointments to review (say half termly) will ensure you establish a relationship with parents from the outset so as and when difficulties come up the school and parents are ready to work together to support the child

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Communication: What, when and how?

Parents and care givers tell us what they would like to hear about is

- What is going to happen so they can prepare their child for any changes (this could be a change of activity/change of teacher)
- What their child has been doing each day? (Adopted and care experienced children can find it particularly difficult to remember and communicate what they have done in other contexts (Remember the coca cola bottle analogy where sometimes they are just doing their best to keep it all in)
- Parents can use the detail of what you share with them to encourage conversations at home
- Parents want to know if there have been any difficulties (try not to just share the consequence of the incident, but the detail and the schools understanding of what happened).
- The use of neutral and descriptive language is particularly valuable (e.g. the child hit Jo instead of "chose" to hit Jo).

This is not an exhaustive list and you may think of others that you feel would form part of a useful relationship in understanding what to communicate to parents. How information is communicated to parents is also critical.

For many parents, having the teacher call them from across the playground is a very embarrassing experience for the parents and the child, and completely unnecessary. Think about what could have been done to communicate this to parents before the end of lessons and think about the impact on the child who is led to the playground by the teacher's hand.

Establishing some explicit points of agreement within the partnership agreement can also be helpful.

For example, if you agree to call parents every Friday afternoon to give them an update. Such updates can ensure that conversations, even difficult ones, are held and that the 'team around the child' works well together to continue to support the child.

Maintaining relationships throughout the child's school life is very important and beneficial to the child. The partnership must recognise from the outset that there may be times when we report that everything is going well, but we must also be aware that sometimes we also have to share the difficult issues

Communication in the partnership

As the partnership starts to take shape, don't wait for things to go wrong before you get to know the parents/carers. A good idea is to have an initial meeting when the child starts school to make sure you have all of the information you need. This is also a good point to agree with parents what can/cannot be shared with other staff members. It is important to understand that it is NOT necessary for teachers/schools to have a full history for a child (unless there is risk and this is appropriate to do so). This is the child's story. The importance within the relationship is that teachers and parents work together drawing on each others expertise and sometimes with the

support/help of outside professionals such as an Educational Psychologist or psychotherapist. A first meeting will also give you the opportunity as the teacher/school to understand the child's needs and how best they can be met in school. Scheduling in reviews/regular meetings with parents is a hugely helpful way of evaluating the ongoing needs of a child and whether the resources and support strategies in place are working.

Support Plans Measuring Impact and Outcome

Reflecting Adoptive and Looked After Children sensitively within the curriculum

It is important to recognize that with increasing diversity in the way people become a family, we can no longer assume that all children in our classrooms share the same family structures.

Some schools may have made great strides within reflecting this changing landscape, but all too many adopted and care experienced children and young people still tell us they feel invisible at school. Adoption and being care experienced is so rarely discussed and this lack of visibility for adopted and care experienced young people can impact hugely their validation. Schools and their staff play a key role in setting the tone of acceptance within school and this can be supported through specific projects around adoption and care experience and by using opportunities that arise in day-to-day teaching to discuss adoption and care experience in a positive manner.

Ways to do this could include:

- Lessons that includes themes of families and love are the perfect place to explore all the ways families can come together and how relationships can be built
- Add books and other media sources that feature adoption and other forms of permanency as a theme or characters that were adopted or care experienced and treat the subject accurately and appropriately to your classroom libraries and use them as teaching materials
- Use visual representations of families whose members do not share the same physical characteristics
- Inspire your class with projects on famous adopted or care experienced people who have experienced childhood adversity, showing them that people with difficult starts in life can be successful (there is a BLOG for example in UK which can be accessed worldwide by Ashley John Baptiste who is a TV presenter in UK and is a care experienced person)
- Invite adults from the local community who are adopted or care experienced to come in and share their story
- Provide materials that celebrates the diversity and interconnectedness of cultures.

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Dealing with curriculum hotspots

The school curriculum often assumes that all children have experienced a consistent and positive family life. We know of course this is not true for a number of children and in these cases the child's history can make for a particularly difficult topic of discussion

Adoptive parents and care givers often tell us that common topics and assignments covered in schools can unintentionally create a minefield

As a school it is helpful to be aware of potential issues with contact as many of these can be preempted by thorough planning. When choosing content for a whole school assembly, themed weeks and school productions keep in mind how particular topics/subjects may affect children in the school community who have lived through adversity

When planning an activity for example ask yourself:

Could this activity/topic bring up tricky feelings for any of the children taking part?

- What are the aims of the session?
- Is there an opportunity for the children to reflect on what they feel about the task?
- Is there alternative content or a method of approach I could use with some of the children to still reach these aims?
- Would it be most beneficial to remove a child? Is this the only answer?

Asking families for their input

When you meet with a family of a new pupil and in your follow up meetings/catch up, its helpful to ask which activities and themes their child may struggle with.

Case example: a parent contacted us to say her child's class topic was diversity in families. The teacher chose the film Lion with Nicole Kidman. The film tells the story of an Indian man who was separated from his mother at the age of 5 and adopted by an Australian couple. He returns home as an adult determined to find his birth family. It is a hugely emotional story and the parents watched this prior to the activity taking place in school. The child's mum found the film hugely emotional and wondered about the impact not just upon her son, but the class as a whole. She was worried about making a fuss and being seen as "helicopter parenting", but she knew her son and his story and so her expertise were hugely valid. We supported mum to think about her concerns and how they may be addressed, she considered watching the film beforehand with her son so that he was not overwhelmed in the classroom. In the end we supported mum to ask the question about what the aim of the session was and to see if this could be achieved in another way. The class teacher acknowledged that she had not considered the impact the film might have upon this particular child,

but also she was able to reflect upon the impact this may have upon other children. The lesson plan was changed and the film cited as a possible resource for parents who may wish to share this with their child.

The language used is also crucial and in each of our respective schools across the UK, The Netherlands, Italy and Spain we need to think about what is right for the children and families you work with. Working with families from the outset will allow you to understand how they refer to themselves and what language is important to them. Avoiding the subject of language around adoption or care experience only serves to reinforce this as a taboo subject. By using the right language we model respect and dignity for adoptive and care experienced families

Dealing with curious peers

Children are understandably curious about other children whose lives differ from their own. Sometimes this curiosity can be expressed inappropriately and is experienced as intrusive by an adopted or care experienced child. Adopted and care experienced children and young people's feelings about their families are at the very core of their being and teaching and school based staff must be ready and willing to help protect this core wherever possible. Although a student may appear strong and resilient they may still benefit from some support. Again all of this information can be factored into your initial meetings with families and follows up to help work together and be guided about what is right for a particular child. (See Unit 6 for further information).

The importance of evaluating support plans should never be underestimated.

Making support plans for children in school need to be done in a joined up and collaborative way. They should include key people in school, parents and wherever possible the child or young person. Structure and routine are an important source of safety, as they make the world predictable. Staff should let children know what will happen in the day and week, using visual timetables and now-and-next boards. It is helpful to let parents and care givers know too, so that they can talk children through the day beforehand. When there are changes to the usual routine, it is important to let the child and parent know in advance, so they can prepare for the changes.

It is useful to create a safe space for the child in school, which they can use when they feel anxious or unsafe; this may be a designated room, or a pop-up tent in the corner of the classroom. The space should be used with the child's key worker, and should not be experienced as 'sending them away' or 'time out.'

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Children may not be able to manage their strong feelings on their own. These children need adults to help soothe and regulate them. It is helpful to speak to parents about what their child finds soothing and calming; options include using the five child's senses (e.g. lavender on a tissue; stroking a soft fabric; listening to a calming CD), doing calming repetitive activities (sorting coins or coloured pencils), or more physical activities such as 'stretching like a cat.' If children are intensely distressed, it may help to encourage them to do intensive exercise (e.g. running on the spot for a minute) or use temperature (e.g. squeezing an ice pack) to alter their body chemistry. The key worker and child can then develop a 'calm box' together with activities and ideas.

Mindfulness is a very helpful way of grounding children in the present moment, as well as being effective at settling the whole class after moments of transition. These can be very simple activities, like asking a child to tune into all the sounds they can hear, or note all the green objects in the room. Children may also find it helpful to be physically grounded in the present, such as by carrying some heavy books to the school office, or having a weighted lap beanbag which gently weighs them down into their chair.

Children who have experienced developmental gaps need us to meet them where they are developmentally; a common expression in the adoption world is "Think toddler!" It can be helpful to use developmental tools to map out a child's development in each area. School nurture groups offer a developmental approach to children's learning. They provide children with enriched family-like environments, with plenty of opportunities to explore the world and develop early skills. Activities such as eating together, reading together and exploratory play are understood to be important for developing children's language, social skills, emotion regulation skills and play skills. All of these are important building blocks for learning.

Each support plan for each child will be different and needs to take into account their needs. Change doesn't happen over night: consistency, predictability and repetitiveness is key to any plan you put in place. Give it time to work and build in reviews perhaps 3 monthly or sooner if necessary to evaluate how things are going, make any necessary changes and continue. Working together, collaborating and involving children where possible in some of the decision making about how best they can be supported.

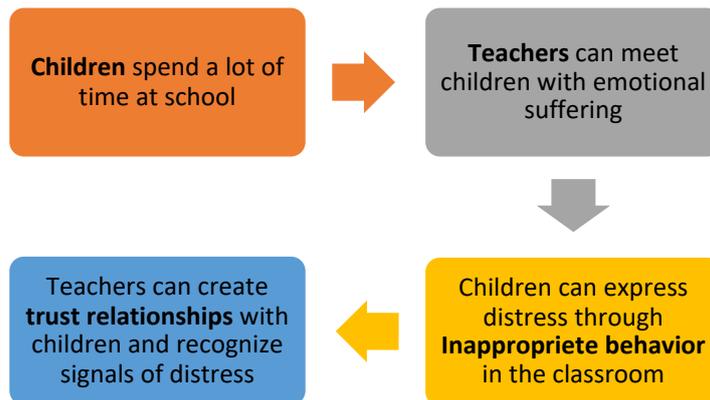


Annex 5.3

UNIT 5.3

Facing sexualised behaviour

The centrality of the school



Sexualised behaviours in the classroom

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is the most difficult to detect because it is difficult for an adult to imagine

Behavior as language

Children often do not talk about sexual violence but express themselves through their behaviour.

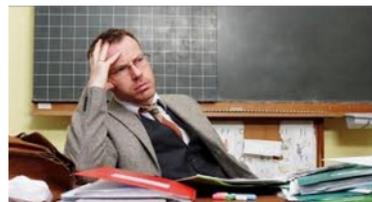
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What can teachers do?

A wide spectrum of teacher emotions

- anguish
- powerless
- anger
-



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Key questions

How can they successfully manage their **feelings** and avoid becoming harmful?



What **skills** do teachers need to better cope with these sensitive situations?

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What is important_1

to recognize

- what child sexual abuse is
- short and long-term consequences for children

to understand that

- no child is born “bad”
- inadequate behaviour could be a result of traumatic experiences
- this child can be helped

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What is important_2

to recognize

- their own emotions
- To know how to manage them

to learn that

- they should not act alone
- they should **share their observations** with the school management
- They can activate a **support network**



What is child abuse_1

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activities, even if not characterized by explicit violence.

It can be made by an adult who is **almost always an authority figure** for the child, both within the family and in non-family relationships (places of aggregation, sports activities, school).



What is child abuse_2

A sexual abuse can also be perpetrated on the child through **falsely playful and ambiguous method**, almost always by an adult who has a significant relationship with the child

The **affective relationship is exploited** by using sexual communication totally inappropriate, harmful to children.



What is child abuse_3

A false belief: child abuse can only occur in multi-problematic households and in deprived socio-cultural contexts.

Sexual abuse of children exists and is a **widespread phenomenon**.

It is a phenomenon that **cuts across** all social classes, regardless of ethnicity, level of education and economic conditions.



What is child abuse_4

It is always a confusing and destabilizing **attack on the child's personality** and developmental pathway

Any gesture of violation of intimacy certainly produces discomfort in the immediate aftermath but will also have long-term **consequences well through adulthood**

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Behaviours as indicators of sexual abuse

The child often uses **behaviours** instead of words to ask for help
S/he identifies people close to him/her to communicate the abuse in which s/he lives



The teacher is frequently the adult chosen by the abused child
S/he should have the **ability to pick up these signals**



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Behavioural indicators of sexual abuse_1

1. Early and improper sexualization

- age-abnormal knowledge of aspects of adult sexuality in children;
- tendency to eroticize relationships as a means of receiving and giving affection;
- compulsive search for sexualized games;
- drawings with sexual content;
- compulsive masturbation;
- sexual requests to adults or peers;
- ...



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Behavioural indicators of sexual abuse_2

2. Emotional distress

- sudden crying, irritability and outbursts of anger, sudden mood swings, despair, anxiety, hyperactivity, insecurity, aggression;
- sleep disorders (e.g. nightmares);
- eating disorders;
- excessive and inappropriate fears;
- refusal to undress during sports activities;
- speech and learning disorders;
- sudden drop in performance, school phobia;
- self-harming behavior;
- ...



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Consequences of early trauma

Adverse events experienced in childhood can lead to **serious social and cognitive fragility** in children

They increase likelihood of developing **psychopathologies in adulthood.**

The **earlier the trauma is addressed** with protective interventions, the more it will be possible to guarantee a **healthy adulthood**

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Sexualisation?_1

In the field of sexualization there are **so-called 'normal' behaviors**

- playing doctor
- imitation and role-playing games (kissing or flirting)
- comparing various intimate parts
- occasional masturbation as an exploratory and/or consolatory act



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Sexualisation?_2

Inappropriate experiences

- Sexual abuse
- viewing pornographic sites
- watching sex games

Possible behaviors

- strong early sexual knowledge
- sexually oriented drawings
- sexualized behavior that creates embarrassment



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Teacher's emotions

- Sexual abuse is **unthinkable**: a child can't be sexually abused by an adult close to him/her
- The emotions involved are generally painful and unpleasant: distress, feelings of inadequacy, frustration, helplessness, failure, anger, resentment, and disgust.



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Teacher's emotions in cases of suspected sexual abuse_1

Emotional defense strategies

- **DENIAL:** refusal to recognize the problem even when the signs are obvious, (it's not true", "I didn't notice", "it's not my responsibility").
- **EMOTIONAL DISTANCE:** indifference to what is acknowledged, e.g. "it's not us who have to deal with it, it happens, I have so many other problems to think about".
- **COLLUSION:** is allying oneself with the adult instead of the child, typical of partners of abusers.



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Teacher's emotions in cases of suspected sexual abuse_2

Emotional defense strategies

IDENTIFICATION with the VICTIM: the teacher is emotionally too close to the child, and feels powerlessness, despair, fear, and anger of such strength that he cannot perceive and act effectively.

IDENTIFYING WITH THE AVENGER: The desire to do justice and protect the child leads the teacher to step out of their role, creating confusing situations both inside and outside the school.



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Networking as a source of support_1

- It is crucial **NOT TO ACT ALONE**.
- Emotional reactions that can arise and **possible protective intervention** are complex
- teacher can **SHARE** the child's situation and their own **management** difficulties with their school manager/superior in order to understand how to deal with the situation.
- If the child is already followed and known to **other professionals or services** in the region (psychologists, social service, etc.) teachers should share their observations with these professionals and activate a network.



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Networking as a source of support_2

Networking for:

teacher's own **emotions management**, for example with respect to anxiety or frustration.

Design of intervention strategies with **professionals** to help the child feel better (neuropsychiatrists, psychologists, social services, educational day care centers).

If the indicators are very worrisome the teacher can ask for advice in order to make a report to **proper authorities**.



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Collaboration is necessary to build an **integrated intervention solution** to better assist and support children with traumatic experiences



Annex 6

UNIT 6

The child's story at school:
sharing personal information



My personal life/privacy_1

*When do I feel that my privacy
is violated in a relationship?*



My personal life/privacy_2

- National law(s)
- Constraints regarding the professional role (i.e. teachers, educators)
- Institutional policy
- Professional practices

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Overall sensitivity, private stories



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The whole community approach (Chafouleas et al., 2021)

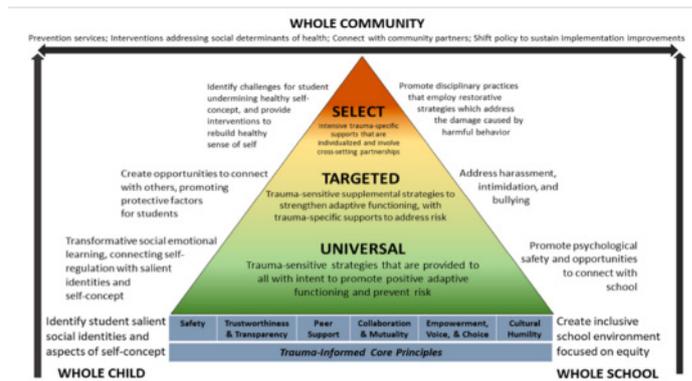


Fig.1 Illustration of a system approach to trauma-informed care in schools. Note. An ecological framework applied to a trauma-informed approach in schools interweaves whole school and whole community supports to enable a tiered system approach to supporting the whole child

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Deficit-oriented vs affirmative/assets-oriented approach

- Translation of ACE research to education: risk of individualistic and deficit-based focus reflecting a decontextualized approach to trauma-informed care in schools
- Emphasis on recognizing the impact of trauma: reciprocal de-emphasis of natural sources of strength and resilience or the potential for post-traumatic growth.

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Making room
for
communication

Introducing
each other

Structured
dedicated
time-space

Confidentiality

Child's
involvement

Developmental
mindset

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Stigma and self-fulfilling prophecy

*People are influenced by the
expectations built upon them*

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Choosing the right words_1

Instead of...	better use...	because...
“true/natural mother/father/parents/siblings”	mother/father/parents/siblings or 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”.

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Choosing the right words_2

Instead of...	better use...	because...
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.
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)	Words that recognise the specificity and uniqueness of the person instead of making an event in their biography an identity marker	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.

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NOTES

My personal life/privacy_1

Participants are asked to recall concrete situations when they felt exposed and disclosed in their private matters, starting with trivial everyday events with their colleagues and/or pupils.

First in small groups participant debate about:

What happened? How did I feel? What was my colleague's intention? How did s/he feel? How did I react? What could have been done differently by the other and my side?

Then a plenary discussion where the main contents are reported and gathered according to the main topics. The group is asked to order the different topics/situations according to a hierarchy.

Debriefing:

- We all have a 'sense of privacy', the content can be as important as the context (not what I say, but how/where), this sense of privacy is not objective and absolute, but is subjective and variable.
- When we occupy a professional role (teacher, social worker, educator, etc.), the sense of privacy and its boundaries depend not only on personal sensibilities but also on regulatory and professional constraints.

My personal life/privacy_2

Within the EU countries, the right to privacy of personal data, private and family life is protected by a number of laws, which may vary from country to country. Similarly, there is a right to professional secrecy regarding information about health history and judicial decisions that affect people's lives.

It is important then for professionals to be aware of the general legal framework ruling privacy issues of the country in which they work. Laws often constrain the professional role and are the basis on which the single institution defines specific policies on the matter.

It is also important to remember that the concept of privacy is culturally informed. For this reason, it is essential, especially with families or pupils with a migrant background, never to take for granted a shared understanding of its meaning, of the forms and boundaries that privacy should take, as well as of the practices to respect it. To this end, figures such as cultural mediators can be essential resources.

Provide specific information about the normative situation of the country.

The right to privacy, however, is not only a legal and ethical obligation but also a pivotal relational tool for building interpersonal relationships based on trust. For this reason, confidentiality and sensitivity in respecting private areas of personal stories are crucial skills to build an effective relationship with families and kids.

Overall sensitivity, private stories

Awareness of how early adverse experiences can affect human functioning is essential for teachers to frame children's behaviours and for developing sensitivity to the variety of needs. However, developing awareness and sensitivity to the role that early adverse experiences can play in a child's life does not mean that it is necessary for every teacher or professional at school to know kids' personal history.

The actors involved in the educational relationship may have different perceptions about the salience of information, the proper boundary of respect for confidentiality, the child's ability to decide for themselves.

Family members or caregivers may, for example, feel that it is better to select or even not reveal specific information about the child's life at all. As a result, it may be that the school does not know that a pupil has a history of adoption or fostering, or that information about the pupil's **relational** difficulties is not shared. There may be several reasons for this: distrust of professionals due to previous negative experiences, fear of stigmatisation, expectation that in a new context the child can "start again", etc.

Unlike children themselves may show strong unease at the idea of strangers learning information that they themselves do not yet know how to deal with. Children may feel shame, anxiety, guilt, and aggression because of this, or the need to protect their families from external judgement. This need for privacy and control of one's own life can become critical in adolescence. In this phase of development, in fact, young people are engaged in the construction of an adult identity, breaking with their childhood identity, and the demand for independence from the adult world is central. In such circumstances, the way of presenting oneself to the world becomes a particularly sensitive element.

Unlike children and caregivers, school staff may feel that knowing the details of personal stories is essential to protect the child and build a safe environment, feeling the need to share information with the educational team.

It is therefore important to create a climate of collaboration and integration between the school, caregiver and child, aimed at having precise and constant monitoring of the child's functioning and well-being in the school context. The focus of the information exchange is therefore not the personal story, but a description of the child's current functioning, with their fragilities and strengths, where biographical elements provide a general interpretative framework of behavioural signals.

Navigating the different perspectives can be challenging, taking in mind that collaboration with caregivers is crucial when the school encounters pupils who have experienced early adversity, and careful relational work is required by the school staff to build the trust necessary for open dialogue. Open and effective communication is essential to identify support strategies highly individualised, shape realistic expectations and set shared goals within the child's reach.

It is however important to keep in mind that, in itself, knowledge of a specific traumatic biography does not automatically lead to the development of an awareness of the problem and a capacity for case management, and can instead create a counterproductive effect, supporting prejudices and stereotypes.

The choice to share parts of a traumatic biography, far from being a pure transfer of information, is an important and delicate moment in an educational relationship, in which the construction of a space of trust and recognition is at stake.

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The whole community approach

Life experiences outside the classroom shape the context of students' school experience, filtering their perceptions of self, others, and the importance of fully engaging in school (Huebner et al., 2001). The potential potent impact of ACEs on student outcomes has been documented, ranging from academic achievement (Slade & Wisnow, 2007) to behavioural and emotional well-being (Hunt et al., 2017). The author suggests that framing this work as "healing-centred" offers a critical shift that orients toward system-level, culturally grounded, and asset-driven work.

We propose an integrated whole child, culturally responsive, and healing-centered approach grounded in an ecological framework. Specifically, this integrated approach accounts for the adverse impact of ACEs, protective factors, and cultural factors influencing individuals and the environments in which they are situated to provide an opportunity for a more systemic approach to trauma-informed education. An ecological framework applied to a trauma-informed approach in schools interweaves whole school and whole community supports to enable a tiered system framework to supporting the whole child.

Trauma-informed school systems attend to service delivery at both child and school levels, and are situated within community contexts that enhance service delivery to support whole child and school functioning. At the school level, all staff understand their role in enabling a positive and inclusive environment, and have the knowledge and skills to enact policies and practices that promote safety and connection, address issues of inequity, and avoid re-traumatization. At the child level, students are actively engaged in developing their social identities and self-concept through social emotional learning, are provided opportunities to connect and strengthen protective factors, and have access to intensive interventions that heal and rebuild a sense of self. Together, related bodies of the literature (e.g., exclusionary discipline, racism, social determinants) are integrated with ACE research in informing a complete system approach to trauma-informed care in schools. Such integration demonstrates how trauma-informed care is critical to articulated goals in education around inclusion, equity, and social justice (Ridgard et al., 2015). To accomplish this vision for integration, the continuum of strategies informing a trauma-informed approach must reflect an understanding of the cultural context shaping student life experiences. An emerging body of the literature suggests whole child support includes school practices that reflect holistic engagement of students' social identities and account for cultural factors shaping their academic experience (Blitz et al., 2020; Jagers et al., 2019; Lewallen et al., 2015).

Deficit-oriented vs affirmative/assets oriented approach

Current actions have been more heavily focused on the effort to build awareness and empathy around traumatic experiences than on understanding the contributions of school environments and

enacting system change across policy and practice.

Organizational change requires alignment among the expected work of the organization, the people within the organization, the culture of the organization, and the structure of the organization (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Challenges arise when there is a lack of congruence across components, thus potentially limiting the capacity to bring about desired change.

Schools are embedded within community networks of support, services, and interfacing systems (e.g., health care, juvenile justice), all of which exert influence on policy and practice within schools. As such, schools encounter the need for both horizontal and vertical congruence to be fully responsive as a trauma-informed system.

We need an integrated whole child, culturally responsive, and healing-centered approach grounded in an ecological framework. Specifically, this integrated approach accounts for the adverse impact of ACEs, protective factors, and cultural factors influencing individuals and the environments in which they are situated to provide an opportunity for a more systemic approach to a trauma-informed education.

Making room for communication

Communication with those with a history of early adverse experiences and their caregivers cannot take place spontaneously or randomly, but needs to be thought out and planned. It requires the construction of dedicated and structured time-spaces. It is thanks to this constant exchange of information that teachers can orient their work, receive feedback and jointly evaluate its effectiveness.

The information that children and caregivers can provide is, for example, very important for assessing the individual's levels of functionality and autonomy, regardless of abstract age-based references, thus helping to create a reliable and safe environment at school. At the same time, feedback on behaviour at school, the timing and manner of learning contents as well as social skills, can support the activities the child undertakes at home or in the community and the adults who care for him or her.

The alliance and collaborative climate created between the school and the family helps to create to "hold" the child, who thus perceives that the efforts of caregivers and teachers are moving towards common goals.

In order to foster the development of a good alliance between the subjects involved in the relationship, it can be useful to have some points in mind:

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- Entering a new school can be highly challenging for children who experienced early adversity. In order to make them feel the school is a safe place from the very beginning it is recommended to arrange encounters with a reference person, before starting regular lessons. Having the possibility to get acquainted with the space, the people and the routines are a good way to lay the foundation for a good connection.
- An essential element in building a relationship of trust with the child and their caregiver is the guarantee of confidentiality of details concerning their story. The child must be master and responsible for sharing their life path, at a time and in a way that suits them.
- Maintain an evolutionary mentality. The difficulties and fragilities that children may show in learning tasks and social relationships do not complete their identity. Working on the development and consolidation of strengths and talents contributes to releasing the identity of these young people from trauma and pushing them towards a future of new developmental goals.

Stigma and self-fulfilling prophecy

In order to provide a respectful and safe environment at school, vocabulary is crucial.

For example, we talk about 'early adversity' or 'trauma' to describe difficult and painful experiences that pupils have undergone. These words are a kind of framework that allows teachers to recognise and make sense of otherwise incomprehensible and confusing behaviours, cognitions and emotions. The words trauma and adversity do not indicate a specific and unique experience but name a wide range of possible ones.

However, as the words circulate, they are loaded with other social meanings and so trauma often becomes an identity marker, encouraging 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 explain a specific way of functioning, but it does not define who a person is or who they will become. Focusing only on the past may obscure the enormous resources and skills that learners bring with them, and classify them as 'needy' individuals who are unable to make a positive contribution.

In more general terms, often the lives of young people facing foster care, out-of-home care, and forced migration are described in negative terms, as lacking something, so that expectations of them are minimal and perhaps it is no coincidence that their educational success is significantly lower than that of the young population not leaving home.

Choosing the right words_1&2

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 realize that there had to be other parents before a child was placed for 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 their parents can take care of them again.

Support the concerned child's way of understanding and naming their family. Some children living in foster families call the people who take care of them "mom" 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.

When raising their children, all families do similar things regardless of the way their family was built or its composition.

Emphasizing 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.

