Learn&Play
Home Edition

Well-being of school children: An Education Toolkit for Teachers and Educators.

Natalja Gudakovska, Thomas Albers, Aleksandrs Milovs, Sara Pereira Mota, Lorenzo Longu & Adela Trunkl.

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This publication has been developed as part of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership "Learn & Play: Home edition", which is funded under the Erasmus+ Programme, project number 2020-1-NL01-KA226-SCH-083101.

The project partners include: Anatta Foundation (Netherlands), Lidzdalibas platforma (Latvia), Institute IVIZ (Slovenia) and Euroaccion (Spain).

Details of the full report, its translations, a toolbox and other deliverables are available from website: **www.positivementalhealth.eu**

Project coordination: Anatta Foundation, the Netherlands.

This report has been developed by (in alphabetical order of surname): Thomas Albers, Natalja Gudakovska, Aleksandrs Milovs, Sara Pereira Mota, Lorenzo Longu and Adela Trunkl.

Lead author: Natalja Gudakovska

Proof-reading: Inès Aguas

Graphic design: Darjan Bunta

Images: freepik.com

Suggested full report citation: Gudakovska, N., Albers, T., Milovs, A., Pereira Mota, S., Longu, L., Trunkl, A. (2022). Well-being of school children: An Education Toolkit for Teachers and Educators. Aalten: Anatta Foundation.

Copyright © 2022 the authors. The content, or parts of it, can be used free of charge for non-commercial purposes only, appropriately accrediting the authors.

The European Commission's support in the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of its contents, which solely reflect the views of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Anatta FOUNDATION
EURO ACCION MUFRCIA
IVIZ INŠTITUT ZA RAZISKOVANJE IN USPOSABLJANJE V VZGOJI IN IZOBRAŽEVANJU
Participation for All

The Table of Contents

PART I: Introduction to the toolkit 4

The Rationale of This Toolkit 5

The Power of Games in Competence Development 6

Middle Childhood: Age Specifity & Learning 7

Learning in Digitalised Environment in Middle Childhood 11

Well-being of Children and Transversal Skills 15

How to be with children: The importance of the pedagogical relationship in working on well-being 19

Key Approaches of the Toolkit 22

Principles of Evaluation 28

Reference resources and publications 29

PART II: Educational Games Toolkit 32

The Grid of Games and Activities 34

1 A Story About Emotions 36

2 Chain of Strengths 39

3 Cultivating compassion 49

4 Dancing Through Emotions 52

5 I am / You are 55

6 Optimism and positive mindset 57

7 The Gratitude Trees and the Magical World of Gratitude 59

8 Values: What is important to me 64

9 What am I good at? 69

10 A Different Story 76

11 Discover the Importance of Communication 79

12 Emotional Museum 82

13 Find Your Treasure 84

14 Talents & Values into Action 87

15 You Cannot Eat an Entire Pie All at Once 90

16 Your Task Is My Task 93

17 LEGO Tower 95

18 The Orange Game 99

PART I

Introduction to the toolkit

The Rationale of This Toolkit

Motivating and engaging pupils in their learning journey has always been a hot topic for educational professionals in all countries. Due to COVID – 19, traditional methods of education were challenged and teachers had to adapt class activities for a digital environment. As the pandemic stretched educational approaches and questioned traditional teaching methods even further, accentuating the need for new, interactive and motivating methods that had started to emerge in recent years. Both formal and non-formal educational institutions are in a position of having to find new ways, or to adapt the old ones, to work with pupils and strive not only to teach them a topic, but also raise their intrinsic motivation, engagement and interest in learning.

The project "Learn&Play: Home Edition", and particularly this Toolkit, is a response to the challenges teachers face in working with children aged 6-11. In this project, we focus on emotional and social skills development, crucial for these children's well-being, through the use of games and a game-based learning approach.

We've created this Toolkit to support teachers and educational professionals, as well as our own organisations, in providing high quality and up-to-date learning experiences for children, helping them enjoy learning and supporting them in exploring their own potential.

This Toolkit provides innovative ideas and tools along with guidance drawn from our own experience and that of teachers from all 4 countries on how to use games and game-based learning in the development of emotional and social skills in children.

In Part I of the Toolkit, you will find the description of key-features of the game-based learning approach in children, suggestions on how to transform games into educational activities that allow pupils to experience learning and develop their social and emotional skills to increase their well-being, achieve learning goals and reflect on the learning process. In sum, this part of the manual sets the context and background for working with educational games in the classroom.

Part II of the Toolkit offers a set of 18 educational games and methods aimed at developing crucial transversal and soft skills for children aged 6-11, while positively influencing their well-being. Each game-based method or activity is described in detail, providing information on how to prepare for the activity, instructions for running the activity and tips and suggestions for teachers or educators to turn the game into an efficient learning experience for children, and some indications for reflection and evaluation process.

You can use this Toolkit when planning a lesson, a week-long, month-long or even longer programmes dedicated for children to work with well-being issues, and with one or several emotional and social skills. In this Toolkit, you will find activities aimed at developing skills within following dimensions:

- Cognitive Regulation
- Emotional Processes
- Interpersonal Processes
- Values
- Perspective / Mindset
- Identity / Self-Image

We encourage readers to apply the game-based methods from this manual as they are presented here, and adapt them according to pupils' age group and needs. We hope that our passion for games and game-based learning can motivate and empower you and your colleagues to support young people in their own path to doing and being well in life, now and in their future. In our experience, educational games and game-based methods can be an efficient and fantastic learning experience for each and every child in your school, centre, or organisation.

The Power of Games in Competence Development

The methods developed within the "Learn & Play: Home Edition" project and included in this Toolkit have a game-based approach. Games have been used by people for thousands of years for entertainment and learning. Board games were used in ancient Egypt as far as 4000 years ago. Also, in Chinese culture, discoveries suggest that Chinese people used to play games in ancient times.

We all know classic games such as Scrabble, Pictionary, Snakes or Goose among many others. There is a large number of strategy and quest games that children and adults like to play still today. Beyond the element of fun, games can be focused on the development of:

- vocabulary – children learn new words in a foreign language or their mother tongue,
- cooperation skills – by playing together in teams and finding common strategies to move on,
- critical thinking and problem-solving skills – dealing with problems and solving challenges,
- argumentation skills – presenting ideas to others and trying to explain opinions,
- ability to lose and win – by dealing with failures and success.

There are also games that help to explore the world and different facts about history, geography, to develop mathematical skills, as well as patience and tolerance, concentration and attention, strategic thinking, speed, feedback (give-receive), memory and decision making, responsibility, thinking and creativity, communication and listening skills, etc (Vujovic et al, 2020).

Games also provide an opportunity to explore the cause and effect relationship. Games go beyond entertainment. They are a part of the human development process, and play an important role in the development of the child. In human beings, games have always been associated with the development of more complex processes. They help us to connect decision making parts of the brain with the emotional brain. Through play, we engage on an emotional and cognitive level.

Fun and joy are the essence of play, and it is something that hooks the interest and attention of children. Children like to feel pleasant emotions. Joy, as a

pleasant emotion, stimulates creativity as the brain moves from a cognitive and rules-based state to a fluid and relaxed one, where the entire body engages in problem solving and keeps motivation high. Research shows that if a person often experiences positive emotions, they have excellent results in different areas of life (Diener, 2000).

Games also increase and keep children's interest. Doing and striving towards what interests us makes our life meaningful, preventing dissatisfaction from taking over.

That said, a game will simply remain a game if we, as teachers and educators, do not think about how to turn it into a learning process, what learning objectives we set for children, how to support child reflection processes, how to promote cooperation among players and self-exploration. How can we make this happen? The following chapters and each activity included in this Toolkit will provide further explanation.

Middle Childhood: Age Specifity & Learning

When developing games through this project, we focused on the period called middle childhood (children aged 6-11). This is the period when a child's environment expands dramatically. Namely, at age the of 6, children enter the school environment and their experiences become one of learning and testing new social and academic skills to determine their own abilities, also by comparing themselves to others. In middle childhood, children begin to learn about different aspects of social relationships beyond the primary family, through relating to friends and schoolmates. Friendships are very important for child development at this age, but children are also very susceptible to peer pressure.

During this period, growth slows down, and children summon their energy to refine their motor skills even further. Thinking and learning in middle childhood is focused on facing new social and academic challenges at school as children gain more independence from the familiarity of their family environment. They notice other's points of view and confront them with what they have internalised within their family. Their attention span increases drastically, to accommodate the need of attention that schoolwork requires from them.

Social aspects of middle childhood

During this period, children are very focused on sustaining self-esteem. They want to feel good about themselves and they look for ways to reinforce that feeling. School years can challenge their self-esteem. They can experience victories and failures; they can feel accepted or have a hard time fitting in.

Children, with the support of family and other respected adults as well as friends, find ways of coping and finding balance when facing these challenges. Even when a wide support circle is not present, experts claim that a child is more likely to learn how to bounce back after a challenge if there is at least one significant adult in their life who supports them and with whom the child has a warm and trusting relationship. The Learn & Play: Home Edition approach is designed to foster self-esteem through online activities that encourage presence and participation, giving children the opportunity to try new things and challenge themselves, while discovering what they like and what they are good at.

During this period, children are very concerned with being liked and accepted by peers. This desire to be accepted is reflected in their tendency to talk, act and dress like everyone else while, at the same, time being different. Thus, during this period, children learn to regulate their desire to be part of the group without completely losing their sense of individuality. The online environment represents an additional challenge in this regard, where children want to fit in and be liked by others: it creates a highly competitive space where children compare themselves with unrealistic presentations of others, which can have a negative effect on their individuality. The Learn & Play: Home Edition approach takes into consideration the pitfalls of the online environment and tries to turn scars into stars by promoting healthy, realistic individuality and achievable inner and outer presence of children during middle childhood.

During this period, children begin to look up acceptable role models. They can be part of the popular culture, a relative that they admire or even a fictional character. Children use role models to explore different sets of behaviours and expand their identity, and to start elaborating on their future goals. By participating in Learn & Play activities, children in this age group can develop the different emotional and social skills that they admire in their role models. Through game-based learning, they explore how developing certain skills makes them feel better about themselves, which stirs them towards making role model choices that promote their well-being rather than searching attention by imitating role models with questionable reputation. There are Learn & Play: Home Edition activities that explore the role model idea.

During this period, children also start to question their family's belief and value system. Going to school and expanding their social circle means stepping out of their familiar comfort zone and encountering other value systems and beliefs that differ from their own. This opens a new perspective on things and children start to question some of the previously accepted beliefs and to develop their own points of view. The Learn & Play: Home Edition model is about promoting a healthy value system that emphasises the child's positive self-image and independence. Children come from different belief and value backgrounds, which then collide with the beliefs and values of other children and members of society they encounter. The Learn & Play: Home Edition model is designed to give children in middle childhood the opportunity to develop discernment in what works best for them and promotes their well-being by developing competences that provide a solid foundation for starting to elaborate their own value system.

During this period, children start to ascertain themselves within their family. Gaining respect means a lot to them and they try to impress other members of the family. Intense sibling rivalry can result from this. Rivalry between siblings

should not be deliberately encouraged and all children in the family should be praised for their real achievement. Learn & Play: Home Edition activities are designed to promote cooperation and emphasise the "I'm good, You're good" principle, where every individual, with their characteristics, is regarded as a precious contribution to the community.

During this period, children also push the limits and try to gain more independence. As they grow older within this age range, they tend to put up more resistance to the limits that parents set for them. Conflicts that arise between children and parents during this period are contributing to building resilience on the path towards full independence. With Learn & Play: Home Edition activities, teachers can support children in their quests for age-appropriate independence and thus help parents during this challenging period of child development.

Children in middle childhood go through a period of intensive knowledge acquisition and mastering of new skills. When this process is smooth and children have no particular problems with learning, it results in a strengthening of their self-esteem. On the other hand, if this process is marked by learning difficulties, children might tend to give up easily rather than feel humiliated at this age, because they have not yet developed the coping skills to constructively face such challenges. This is why support and proper encouragement from relevant adults is so important at this age. The flagships of Learn & Play: Home Edition is the promotion of emotional resilience in children. Helping children to develop skills and competences to cope well with age-appropriate adversity is the number one goal of this project. The activities that this project offers are designed to support teachers in leading children towards the development of positive resilience, also in an online environment.

During this period, children become more concerned with their physical appearance, and are challenged to accept their body build and physical abilities. They tend to compare themselves with others to make sure they are not the only ones with certain "flaws". It is also expected, at this stage, to notice pronounced shyness or attempts to avoid social events where their physique may be seen (swimming pools, changing clothes before and after physical education classes, etc.). Promoting self-acceptance is also part of the Learn & Play approach, by helping children develop a healthy self-confidence.

During middle childhood, children are asked to step out of their family comfort zone, which brings up a lot of fears that previously were not triggered. Children at this stage are thus prompted to face their inner fears, such as the fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar, the fear of the future which results in worrying what is about to happen, the fear of failure or not being good enough, the fear of being humiliated or ridiculed. Going to school also brings a sense of losing control over what is going on at home. So, at this stage, fear of loss of family, friends, even possessions might be triggered. Fears are a natural component of change and growing up means exactly that: change. Dealing with fear, developing effective coping skills through games and game-based activities is a fun way of confronting inner fears and developing inner resilience, which is exactly what Learn & Play: Home Edition activities are designed for.

During this stage, children are also faced with the need to compromise and somehow master their wants and desires. They learn that they cannot have all their desires met all the time and they start to adjust their wants to fit in and

function well in the group. Learn & Play: Home Edition activities are designed to help children rely more on their own inner resources and competences; with that, the need of having every want met by others in order to feel good about themselves gradually subsides.

Children of this age group are also challenged to establish a clear and realistic sense of self, so that by the time they enter adolescence, they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and feel confident in approaching the challenges of the upcoming developmental period. With Learn & Play: Home Edition activities and methods, children and teachers receive clear feedback on how they perceive themselves and what competences could be strengthened to sustain an optimal level of well-being.

The premise of the Learn & Play: Home Edition project is the transferability of the classroom work onto online classrooms. The project aims to offer teachers a means of transferring and using all the approaches for developing emotional intelligence in children they possess, and were already used to seamlessly weave into the traditional classroom, into a game-based approach and provides ideas to adapt them to an online environment. The methodology thus gives teachers and children the opportunity to address, keep track and even develop competences that, in the last two years of on and off traditional schooling, were somehow put in the background, mainly for the lack of time and resources to address emotions from a distance. The project makes all this possible in a fun and easy way. Helping teachers reach out to children over the internet and address emotions, help children develop emotional intelligence and, in some cases, at least cope with difficult times.

Learning in Digitalised Environment in Middle Childhood

The Learn & Play: Home Edition project responds to the COVID-19 challenge, when all teachers and educators had to work in a digital or hybrid environment and find new methodological approaches. Teaching paradigm faced a need to adapt and upgrade into digital pedagogy to be accepted by and suitable for today's middle childhood children. Digital pedagogy is the study and use of contemporary digital technology in teaching and learning environments.

But let us first examine what that means. The health challenge that the world is facing has accelerated the urgency for pedagogy to redefine itself at a fast speed, but the need for such restructuring was already eminent. The term "Digital Natives" is not new: it was coined by the US author Marc Prensky and it is used to label people who were born after the digital revolution (in the 1980s) and grew up fully immersed in the information era. Depending on their upbringing, these individuals have been able to more or less fully blend with the intensity and speed of digital information and stimuli through devices and platforms such as mobile phones, tablets, computers and so on. Their cognitive faculties have adapted to accommodate the high-speed, multi-stimuli instant gratification and reward system, which is reflected in a notably shorter attention span.

The target group of the Learn & Play – Home edition are children in their middle childhood, aged 6-11. They are, as we would define them, Uber-Digital Natives, because they were born in an era when digital technology became super accessible. If a common Digital Native individual was not able to interact with digital devices at such an early age because of the relative high costs and limited market accessibility at the time, the Uber-Digital Natives have the "privilege" of having such devices at the tip of their fingers, practically while still observing the world from the comfort of their pram.

So, pedagogy and the teaching system is facing a huge paradox. Today, given the health situation in the world, as well as the changing of the teaching paradigm in general, teachers – who, at this point in time, mostly (with a great number of exceptions) range from those who fully accept the use of digital technology in the schooling process but struggle to do so because of lack of knowledge, to those who reject the use of such tools in the classroom – are constantly forced to learn and adapt their teaching methods to keep up with the demands and changing cognitive capacities of the "Digital and Uber-Digital Natives." There is this unspoken expectation that school content shall no longer be conveyed in the old school manner, but be embedded with digital technology and digital features.

However, if we examine this paradox closely, there is a silver lining at the root of it. And that is the fact that experts agree that the "Digital Natives" and even "Uber-Digital Natives" are markedly fluent in their social digital lives, but significantly less so within the educational context (Howell, 2012)

Observed from that perspective, digital tools give teachers a whole new and expanded set of resources to motivate learning and stimulate the curiosity of "Uber-Digital Natives" during the middle childhood schooling period. More specifically, the integration of digital pedagogy can benefit children during their developmental stages. It can help them become more active in the learning process. They can construct their own knowledge, and determine their reality according to their experiences; also known as constructivism (Elliott et al., 2000).

The upside of online education

Today, teachers are increasingly taking full advantage of new technology to make schooling more interactive and engaging. As a result, teachers are seeing the benefits of distance learning and finding ways to include those opportunities in their curriculum.

But when schools first closed in 2020 due to pandemic restrictions, it seemed that everyone was struggling to adapt to the new educational reality. Teachers were trying to adapt their traditionally delivered content to a digital context, and children were struggling to accept being online as a source of formal education as opposed to the mainly non-formal, leisure usage they were accustomed to.

However, not everyone was struggling. Some children were actually thriving at schoolwork when it was delivered online. And these children were usually challenged when it came to absorbing the traditionally conveyed school content.

These were usually shy pupils, some even hyperactive and/or highly creative children who were suddenly doing better with distance learning, than they were in the classroom with face-to-face interactions. As it seems and as some teachers are observing, these pupils have finally found their niche within the education.

So, why is that? And what can these children teach us about distance education and learning?

Observing these children, teachers and experts have come to discover some of the hidden reasons why a handful of pupils struggle with face-to-face class work, realising the many benefits of distance learning and the shift of educational paradigm that has occurred recently.

The benefits of Self Pacing

Online learning gives pupils and students the chance to learn at their own pace, which for many comes with many advantages. During the periods of total lockdown of schools, school schedules were very fluid, allowing children more choice over when and how they do their schoolwork. Even with online classes, which were reduced to as little screen time as possible, sometimes only allowing the teacher to give instructions, distance learning gives a sense of calmness because there are no restrictions set forth by classmates either. So, they don't have to worry about feeling like a know-it-all in front of others.

Distance learning thus can give the opportunity to self-pace. Pupils can review the material as often as needed and advance past already known subjects.

Some teachers observed that this gives pupils a taste of independence and responsibility, because they are no longer under the micromanagement of the school day. They can structure their day according to their learning needs, take more or less time for some subjects, take breaks or even be bored, all of which, research shows, is beneficial for the learning process. In this sense, distance learning gives pupils the chance to develop time management skills.

More realistic expectations

The change in learning-teaching modalities is inevitably calling for an adaptation of what is expected to be learnt. That is more of a side effect than a conscious effort by the educational system to lessen the demands on pupils and students. However, since the content of the schoolwork needs to be adjusted to be suitable for online learning, many teachers are forced to revisit the content they are teaching and make the workload more accessible and less overwhelming.

Many researches have shown that academic pressure is rated as the top pressure for schooling youth. Teachers, too, have been under increasing scrutiny, particularly over the last decade, to prepare their students to measure up on standardised testing, pressure that trickles down to students who are twice as likely to report unhealthy levels of stress during the school year compared to summer holiday periods (Fleming, N., 2020). Children seem to feel less pressure of failing when engaged in online learning. “Taking away the pressure of testing all the time, brings more room for actual learning,” is just one of the sentiments that children are expressing when asked what they like about online schooling.

And there is also a matter of more time to rest. As a rule of thumb, Paediatricians recommend a minimum of 12 hours of sleep for children ages 6-12. However, many studies show that children are not getting enough sleep, which greatly affects their academic performance. With distance learning and its flexible schedule, many children might get that extra hour of sleep that they need. For example, there are children who have a hard time getting to class at 8:00, but have no trouble getting organised for 10:30 in order to attend an online learning activity.

Less distractions, more focus on learning

Throughout the lockdowns, both pupils and teachers reported missing the in-person connections that traditional schooling offers. However, no matter how valuable the in-person teaching and learning together are in acquiring social skills, a lot of children benefited greatly from the seclusion that online learning brings. Mostly children who were often targeted by bullies, but not only: shy, socially anxious individuals were also much more at ease in the home environment and could focus more, which made learning and memorising much easier. However, in a digitalised setup, the socialising process and social

emotional skills appeared to become kind of left behind, or did not have a chance to be developed enough. The activities developed within "Learn & Play: Home Edition" project and included in this Toolkit are meant to ease the ways of dealing with the new teaching paradigm and to approach social emotional skills in regular classes, in digitalised environments and in hybrid setups.

Still, education is changing rapidly and that calls for a new attitude towards digital tools in the learning environment: an attitude of welcoming excitement for all the possibilities that this new chapter in education is offering teachers and their students.

Today's children, with some exceptions of course, had almost no problem adapting to a digital learning environment. Even though we are now back to physical classrooms, in many ways, distance learning has become our new reality with a handful of possibilities, challenges and positive effects on the learning process and its stakeholders. Distance learning, when appropriately structured, gives individual learners the ability to adapt the learning process to their needs and pace, which greatly benefits the learning outcome. The tools and methodology that the Learn & Play project is developing are aimed exactly for that, bringing easily applicable online tools closer to teachers for the benefit of their pupils, but also taking into consideration the dilemma of building emotional and social skills when the contact with other pupils is limited.

Well-being of Children and Transversal Skills

The purpose of the methodology and exercises available in this Toolkit is to promote the well-being of pupils. Even though each teacher will have an idea of what the well-being of children is, as a concept, it is not easy to define. The best definition may be that of UNICEF (2007), which has defined it as follows: "The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies in which they are born".

Well-being is, thus, more than the absence of ill-health or mental illness. It relates to a child's ability to be happy in life, develop and maintain positive relationships with others and cope with challenges in a age-appropriate manner. It also includes being able to deal with negative feelings and life events and bounce back in the face of adversity and in general incorporates the concept of psychological resilience (Friedli, 2009).

In order to promote the well-being of children in a school setting, one of the best researched approaches is through social and emotional learning (SEL). This SEL process (Elias et al., 1997) is the acquiring and development of a set of competencies to:

- "recognise and manage emotions,
- set and achieve positive goals,
- appreciate the perspectives of others,
- establish and maintain positive relationships,
- make responsible decisions and handle interpersonal situations constructively ."

The goal of social and emotional learning is to foster the development of qualities in children that will help them to maintain a suitable level of well-being.

Which competencies could be developed?

In the first phase of the project, we conducted a study among teachers and parents of pupils aged 6-11 to identify which competencies are considered important for a child's well-being. By competencies we mean skills, attitudes, knowledge, and values. Having the right knowledge about what well-being is and what you can do to maintain it (i.e., psychoeducation) is not enough for children to develop and maintain their well-being. Developing emotional and social skills (such as conflict resolution or making friends) and having the right mindset (for example, being optimistic rather than pessimistic) are fundamental for young people's lives.

The results of our study are presented in Table 1 below. There are six distinct domains in this competency overview (Jones et al., 2017): how I think (cognitive), how I feel (emotional), how I relate to others (social), having a positive outlook at life (mindset), a healthy sense of identity and understanding my values.

Domain / skill	Description
Cognitive	**'How I think'**
Critical thinking	Ability to analyse information appropriately/ adequately in order to form a judgement.
Problem solving	Being able to identify a problem and possible solutions, and having an understanding of potential pros and cons for each possible solution.
Goal setting and attainment	The ability to set appropriate personal goals and achieve those goals through action.
Decision making	Decision-making is the ability to make informed decisions at any given moment. This skill requires young people to assess possible courses of action, the potential consequences for each alternative, the probability of each possible outcome, and be able to select the most appropriate one and implement it.
Able to express thoughts and opinions	Feeling confident expressing thoughts and opinions.
Creativity	Innovative and new ways of thinking, connecting and acting.
Agency	Having a sense of agency and autonomy over one's own life and environment. Feeling able to take responsibility for one's own behaviour, emotions and thoughts.
Emotional	**'How I feel'**
Emotional literacy	Emotional knowledge and expression. The ability to recognize, understand and differentiate a wide variety of emotions, as well as express them in a constructive manner. This includes, for example, knowing that emotions fade away over time.
Emotion regulation	The ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with a range of emotions and in a manner that is supportive to one's own wellbeing, socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to allow spontaneous reactions, as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions when needed. It does include the ability to act even when experiencing fear.
Empathy and compassion	Empathy is about being able to take in someone else's perspective, understand and feel what others are feeling, both affectively and cognitively. Compassion for others is a feeling of kindness, a sense of kind-heartedness towards others that is accompanied by the desire to help.

Social	**'How I relate to others'**
Communication skills	The ability to communicate and listen clearly. Being able to receive, perceive and share information with and from other people efficiently. It is a two-way exchange of information and understanding.
Social problem-solving skills	The set of conflict resolution skills that help to address problems and conflicts between individuals in a positive manner, as they arise, and to negotiate conflict constructively.
Relationship building and maintaining	The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with different individuals and groups (peers and adults), being affectionate and confident, able to express oneself in a warm, tender and loving way towards others (when appropriate), such as giving hugs.
Cooperative behaviour	The act or process of working together to get something done or to achieve a common purpose that is mutually beneficial.
Being respectful of the needs of others	Understanding the (non-)verbal signals & cues in others and within social contexts that are important for participating in social dynamics. Recognising and being respectful of the needs and boundaries of others (peers and adults).
Being forgiving	Being able to forgive people for making mistakes or for doing things that are in conflict with one's own needs and expectations.
Values	**'What I find important in my life'**
Interest in community	Being interested in the community one is part of. In this age group, it doesn't necessarily imply actively contributing to the community.
Family values	Giving importance and priority to values that include the entire family, regardless of its structure.
Respecting social values and rules	Being able to understand and respect the values that are dominant in any given social context, such as school.
Perspectives / mindset	**'How I look at the world around me and other people'**
Being open-minded and curious	The desire to engage and understand the world, an interest in a wide variety of things and a preference for a fuller understanding of complex topics or problems. Being eager to learn and having a motivation for learning based on joy and internal resources, rather than the avoidance of painful experiences such as shame or guilt for not doing something (correctly).

Being optimistic	Having an optimistic expectation of the future and viewing challenging experiencing from an optimistic perspective.
Identity / Self-Image	**'How I look at myself and act based on that'**
Self-awareness	Having a sense of one's personality and character. Knowing our own strengths and weaknesses. Being aware of and recognising our own needs.
Growth mindset	Having a fundamental sense that one can change, and that this change can be achieved intentionally.
Self-worth	Feeling good about oneself and happy with the type of person one chooses to be. Having a fundamental sense of being loveable and feeling loved and accepted, feeling safe (non-judged), in relation to one's body, oneself and others.
Self-compassion	Being kind with ourselves.
Physical	**'How I use my body'**
Being active	Being active, moving and exercising.
Playfulness	Having a playful attitude and play in a physically active way.

Table 1. Well-being competency model

Developing these well-being competencies in children in a school setting happens mainly in two ways: taught and caught (Blyth et al., 2019).

In the taught manner, children under the guidance of a teacher follow an educational activity that intentionally addresses the desire or need to acquire or develop certain well-being competencies. When teachers work in the classroom with the tools from this manual, they intentionally aim at developing children's social and emotional skills and are thus developing them in a taught manner.

The educational environment and culture of the classroom and the type of activity are important. Having a positive and emotionally safe environment and a trust-based and healthy pedagogical relationship with the teacher are caught strategies that most likely result in high quality education (Jacobs & Wright, 2017). Through a trust-based relationship, a child will learn directly from a teacher through, for example, imitating how they deal with stress or adverse experiences. More information about how to foster the pedagogical relationship can be found in the chapter about the mindset of the teacher.

How to be with children: The importance of the pedagogical relationship in working on well-being

Most teachers will understand that one of the significant factors in education is how a teacher educates, not just what is taught. The 'how' is a key factor particularly with regards to the topic of the well-being of children in the classroom. We know that teachers have plenty of experience in this, so in this chapter, we aim to give some more information about how this can be done.

In the 'positive education pedagogy' approach (Waters, 2021) well-being is built into all subjects and classes across the entire school, and not just in those moments that explicitly address well-being. This also relates to the caught way of learning (Blyth et al., 2019) in which pupils learn through the teacher's own way of being (for example, being optimistic rather than pessimistic), through the teacher deals with stressful situations or addresses conflict in the classroom. Some research even states that the quality of teachers has a bigger impact on students' learning than the quality of the curriculum itself, the teaching methods, the school building, or the role of parents (Snoek et al., 2010).

Several characteristics of the teacher-child relationship in education (also known as the pedagogical relationship) have a major impact on a child's adaptation to the school environment and the way in which children can feel safe enough to be able to develop in their best possible way. Feeling emotionally safe is of key importance for children, as this activates different parts of the brain compared to when children do not feel safe. Children, just as adults, always check if they are 'safe' first (which also means emotionally safe) before they open up and dare to connect with others. A positive pedagogical relationship, in which there is trust and connection between teacher and child, not only leads to better school performance but also to increased well-being of the child (Rucinski et al, 2018).

The self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) can help us with a good framework on how this pedagogical relationship can be fostered. According to this theory, children's three basic needs of autonomy, relationships and competency can be considered fundamental to the quality of the pedagogical relationship, and thus to their well-being.

Autonomy

The autonomy need relates to children having a certain level of agency over their tasks and learning pathway. Curiosity and inquiry-based learning are two examples of approaches in which pupils have a relatively high level of autonomy, as their curiosity is leading in the education. A high amount of autonomy will not always be possible or desired in education, but it is important that pupils always get a certain amount of freedom and independence to perform learning

tasks in the way that fits them best. For example, when working with the tools in this manual, proposing at least one alternative exercise is recommended so pupils can make a choice which helps them in their autonomy needs. Giving a child the option to choose to work alone, in pairs or in a larger group will also give them a sense of autonomy over their learning pathway.

Competency

The competency need refers to pupils feeling confident and experiencing joy when learning. The authors behind the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) believe that (young) people have the psychological need to develop themselves through being challenged and that they need to feel confident to be able to learn and develop. In education, this means that children should be given tasks that challenge them in an appropriate and proportionate way. If a child is given a task that is beyond their capacity, this will not develop their well-being, but may, instead, make them feel incompetent, which has detrimental effects. Of course, a child should also be challenged to learn, so we can recommend suggesting two or three games with different levels of difficulty, and letting the child decide which one they would like to do. Some children will enjoy challenging themselves more than others, and forcing any child to do so is not recommended. A child that chooses the 'easier' alternative probably does not feel as competent as a child that immediately goes for a more difficult game. Often, learning to trust one's own qualities and capacity to learn simply needs time and patience. A teacher's capacity to understand what a child needs in order to feel confident, or to be challenged positively through encouragement, is essential for the quality of the pedagogical relationship.

Relatedness

The relatedness or connectedness need of the self-determination theory says that children are at their best when they feel emotionally safe and connected with their teacher(s), peers and learning topics. It also implies that pupils get appreciated for who they are, for their character strengths and their values.

In practice, as mentioned above, this could for example result in a classroom where pupils get a choice between two or three exercises (different in topic and/or level of difficulty), decide if they want to do this alone or with peers, feel confident that they can do the exercise and get appreciated for the positive qualities they express in doing so.

For a teacher to understand, see and take care of these three psychological needs is a major support to the child and their well-being education. Providing emotional support, in particular, shown through high levels of warmth, respect, positive affect, a child-centred focus and teacher sensitivity and responsiveness, is fundamental to the education of well-being (Buyse et al., 2008). Lastly, the attentive presence of the teacher is also important when teaching well-being. This kind of presence can be defined as "a state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to the mental, emotional, and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments, and the

ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step" (Teacher and teaching, 2006). It basically means being a stable and emotionally grounded resource for the child in the school environment, where they will learn some of the most important skills in life.

Key Approaches of the Toolkit

This chapter will help teachers and educators explore the main approaches that form the basis of all methods included in this publication: games-based learning, non-formal education and experiential learning. You will possibly find similarities with some other approaches already used in schools, such as interactive methods of learning, inquiry-based and project-based learning. However, we find it important to explain their core values and principles to make them explicitly clear for the user of this Toolkit. It will also help teachers and educators see the possibilities for adapting game-based methods according to the needs of children they work with.

Game-based learning and gamification

Game-based learning refers to the development and improvement of skills by playing concrete games (Hellerstedt & Mozelius, 2019). It makes acquiring skills and knowledge a more fun and engaging process. Game-based learning complements traditional teaching strategies and brings energy, creativity and diversity to methods used with pupils. Games make learning concepts and the development process more pleasant for pupils. Games stimulate creative behaviour, divergent thought and brilliantly serve as ice breakers. By following the path of the game, pupils explore concepts and develop skills (Edmetum, 2021).

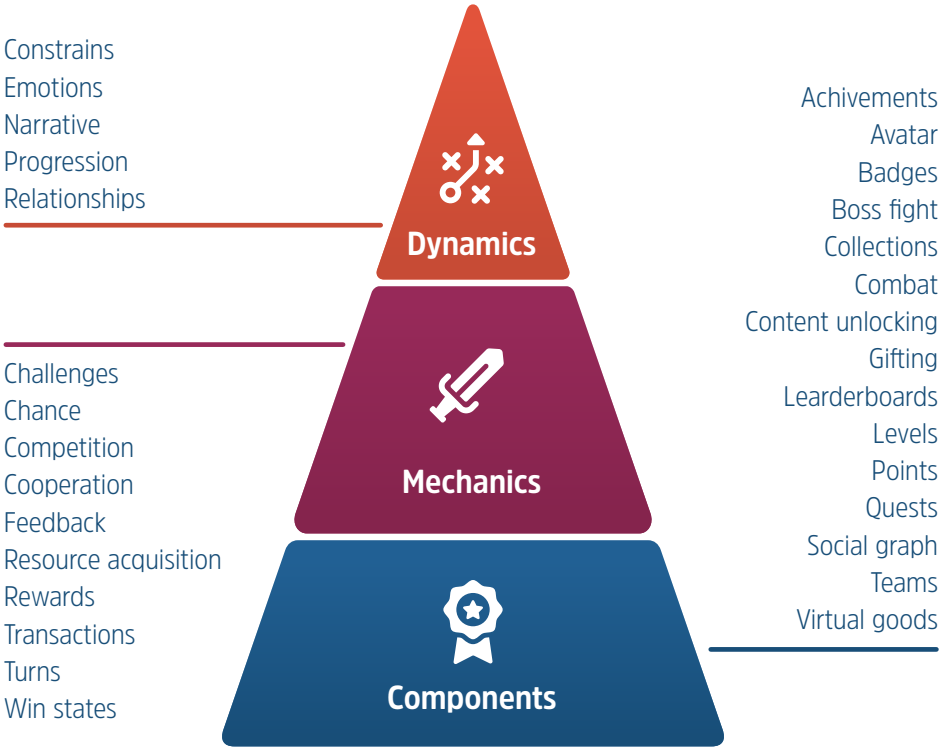
As a pedagogical tool, games are very useful and effective and make teaching topics juicier. Games provide opportunities for pupils to learn through solving problems both by themselves and in cooperation with others. Research shows that "games have a special role in building self-confidence" and "they can reduce the gap between quicker and slower learners" (Ziwaga et al, 2017).

Each game has a set of elements that are important to consider when you plan to use games in the learning process, i.e.:

- The aim of the game
- The competences you would like to improve or develop
- The group's needs and particularities (age, education level, emotional state etc)
- The flow and type of game
- The evolution of the process and the steps pupils will take within the game – how the algorithm looks like and what the dynamics are
- What you need to prepare and how to set up the environment
- How you will keep the motivation up.

Gamification refers to the use of game elements to promote the development of game thinking and the use of game-based tools in a strategic way. For example, the process of washing the dishes can be boring for children, but if you add some game elements to the process –, e.g. an hourglass, to wash the dishes while the sand is falling; a soap bubble survivor to see who makes the least soap bubbles from the cleaning liquid, or the opposite; a bubble battle, to make the most amount of bubbles with the washing-up liquid – this might make it more

interesting and engaging. Similarly, gamification or game elements can be used in the educational process. The pyramid in Picture 1 below reflects different elements that will guide you in making gamified processes, from simple to complex ones (Costa et al., 2017; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Feel free to use some of them individually or to develop an extensive gamification process over several months or possibly even a whole school year.



Picture 1. Pyramid of Gamification Elements

Non-formal education

Non-formal education refers to planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for children and young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside formal educational curriculum. In many cases, non-formal education happens in different organisations – youth clubs and organisations, drama and theatre groups, etc (Brander et al, 2020). Just as in formal education, non-formal education is focused on participants' learning (developing knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes), even though it may be harder to recognise immediate learning outcomes in non-formal education settings, especially when we are talking about values and attitudes.

Non-formal education allows children and young people to reflect on their values and attitudes. The programmes and activities based on non-formal education approaches are powerful tools for the participants' own personal development. Some of the topics raised in non-formal education include, but are not limited to, socio-emotional learning, European citizenship, democracy, migration, conflict resolution, human rights, racism, discrimination, participation, disability, environment, gender (Brander et al, 2020).

The principles of non-formal education to consider when organising activities with children (Brander et al, 2020) are:

- Participants' needs-based - the educational programme and working methods are chosen according to participants' needs.
- Voluntary participation - participants are taking part on a voluntary basis.
- Learner centred.
- Participatory - based on participants' active involvement in all stages of the learning process.
- Learning is about practical life skills – a pupil is learning and practising skills they can use after the educational experience is over.
- Experiential learning is an important feature in non-formal education.
- Non-formal learning is both process and result oriented.
- Involvement of participants at emotional and cognitive level.
- Importance of a safe (physical and psychological) environment for participants to share their thoughts and ideas, including a creative, respectful, democratic, and non-judgmental atmosphere.
- The diversity of interactive forms and methods used – it raises children's motivation for participation in activities.
- Opportunity to work in different ways and different tempos.
- Equal roles of teacher/educator and learner.
- Reliance on personal experience of participants, learning through reflection and analysis of experience.
- Establishing a link between participants' experience and theory, concepts – helps to extract learning from playing experience.

Social Learning

In today's school system, the teacher figure is still of utmost importance, assuming a central role in the classroom and in the student's learning. Collaborative learning helps to shift this principle in the classroom and bring new aspects to the learning process, namely with regards to academic achievements, the well-being of students and classroom settings. Collaborative learning helps to achieve a common goal with a common effort. Furthermore, "(...) learning to cooperate is in itself an important educational goal. Collaborative skills and teamwork have an important place in all sets of 21st century skills[1], as they are expected to become even more important in the future because of social and economic developments (...)". (Veldman, Doolaard, Bosker, Snidjers, p.1). Educational games-based methods presented in this manual take into consideration and are often based on this principle.

When a teacher or an educator wishes to develop an activity that uses collaborative learning, they need to take into consideration the following principles:

- during the activity, pupils must need each other to complete the task,

1 21st century skills refer to the knowledge, life skills, career skills, habits and traits that are critically important to student success in today's world, particularly as students move on to college, the workforce, and adult life, for example, critical thinking, communication skills, creativity, problem solving, perseverance, collaboration, information literacy, technology skills and digital literacy, media literacy, global awareness, self-direction, social skills, literacy skills, civic literacy, social responsibility, innovation skills, thinking skills. https://ell-being.panoramaed.com/blog/comprehensive-guide-21st-century-skills

- pupils' attitudes and behaviours towards the activity should affect the whole group, i.e., reaching the end goal of the activity or not,
- pupils' emotions and feelings will be part of the debriefing moment and learning transfer.

Learning in and with the group during the class means that pupils will be able to develop and/or improve competences that will raise the quality of learning and teaching process in the classroom. These competences include creativity, flexibility, leadership, teamwork, decision making, active listening, communication skills, conflict resolution and problem solving, as well as friendlier attitudes – respect for others and their ideas, tolerance, and patience – and a deeper understanding of others' culture and background. At an emotional level, pupils improve their emotional management skills and emotional literacy, activate the will for self-improvement, grow in confidence, experience less anxiety and apprehension about learning, develop motivation, resilience and, finally, higher participation in general in and out of the classroom. Collaborative learning also provides the possibility to celebrate with classmates and share pleasant feelings, which helps to embrace diversity and different abilities, as well as instigate the feeling of belonging to the class.

Holding a shared classroom and activities with everyone involved implies the following competences and principles:

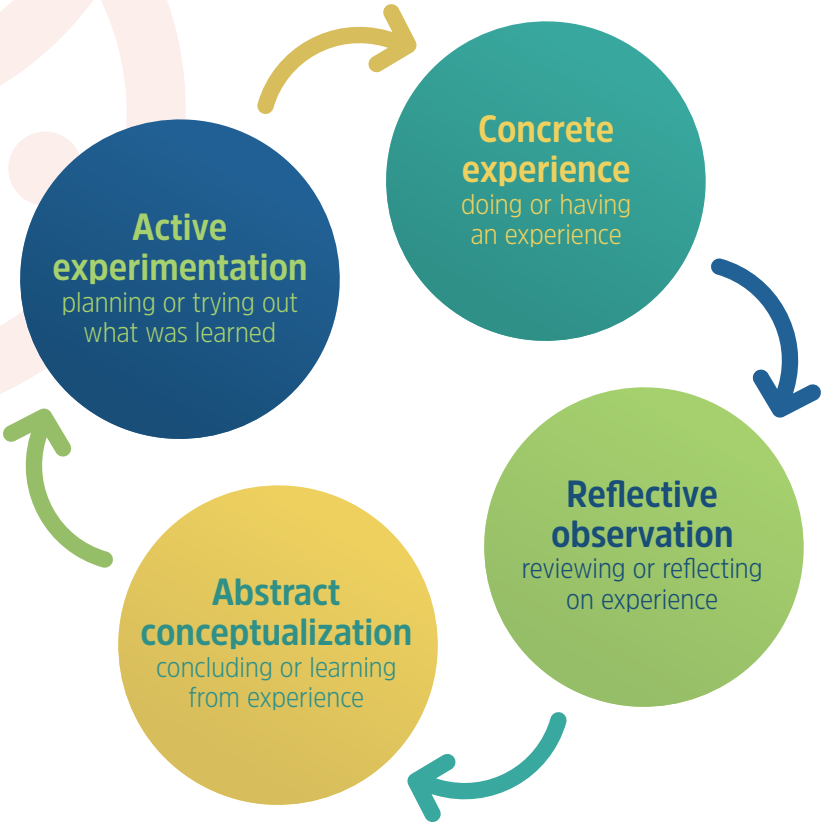
- The teacher needs to keep in mind the group of pupils that will be gathered and put together. An imbalanced group may disrupt the activity, although it is also a learning opportunity, depending on the debriefing the teacher chooses to give to it. For example, for an art activity, the teacher can choose to create groups randomly, which may create groups where everyone likes or dislikes this kind of activity, or balanced groups of children with different interests.
- Activities should have reminders to bring pupils back to task in case they get distracted. Pupils in the current school system have little to no experience in collaborative activities, so it is vital to motivate students who feel behind in relation to peers.
- Working collaboratively should be accompanied by the promotion of deconstruction of prejudices in relation to classmates, otherwise it may enhance them. This deconstruction will also reduce social isolation and discriminatory behaviours and increase learning satisfaction and well-being within the school context.
- At the end of the activity, there should be space for debriefing about the activity and the pupils own involvement in what was a collaborative experience.

All these aspects improve the cognitive level of the student, but also the development of strong healthy and meaningful social and family relationships, and the ability to get involved as a citizen in the community. This is the greatest reward: Lave & Wegner in Fernandes, 1997 state that "it is fundamental «to shift the analytical focus from the individual learner to a learner participating in the social world (…).» The social dimension is not a peripheral condition of learning, but it is intrinsic to learning itself" (p. 565).

Experiential learning

Non-formal education is based on experiential learning practices. David Kolb proposed that experience is critical in the development of knowledge – learning comes through active discovery and participation. Kolb defined learning as: "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984). Learning follows a four-stage cycle. Kolb believed that learners progress through the stages to complete a cycle, and, as a result, transform their experiences into knowledge.

Essentially, Kolb stated that individuals could demonstrate their knowledge or the learning that occurred when they were able to apply abstract concepts to new situations. Completion of all stages of the cycle allows the transformation of experience to knowledge. With each new experience, the learner can integrate new observations with their current understanding. Ideally, learners should have the opportunity to go through each stage (see Picture 2).



Picture 2. Experiential learning cycle

1. Concrete Experience:

Kolb's learning cycle begins with a "concrete experience" stage. This can either be a completely new experience a child is taking part in, or a reimagined experience that already happened. In a concrete experience, each child engages in an activity or task. Kolb believed that the key to learning is involvement. It is not enough for children to just read about something or watch it in action - to acquire new knowledge, children must actively engage in the task.

2. Reflective Observation:

The child steps back to reflect on the task. This stage in the learning cycle allows the child to make observations about what happened in the activity, ask questions and discuss the experience with others. Guided communication from teacher or educator at this stage is vital, as it allows the child to identify any discrepancies between their understanding and the experience itself.

3. Abstract Conceptualisation:

During this stage, the child draws conclusions of the experience by reflecting on their prior knowledge, using ideas they are familiar with or discussing new "discoveries" and" insights" with other participants. The child moves from reflective observation to possible conceptualisation with the support of the teacher and according to their age capacities. They also begin to form conclusions on the events that occurred. This involves interpreting the experience and making comparisons to their current understanding of the concept (for example, friendship, responsibility, family, refugees, etc.). Concepts do not need to be "new"; children can analyse new information and modify their conclusions on already existing ideas.

4. Active Experimentation:

This stage in the cycle is about applying their own conclusions to new experiences. Children can make predictions, analyse tasks, and make plans for the acquired knowledge in the future. By allowing children to put their knowledge into practice and showing how it is relevant to their lives, teachers or educators are ensuring the development of children's competences and transfer of learning into future life situations.

Reflection is an important learning tool in a Kolb cycle. To turn the experience of children into practice it is necessary to plan and organise reflection, also called debriefing process, well. Reflection as a group discussion has its own logic and usually starts with the reflection on the emotional side of experience, followed by the reflection on the process, observation, and conceptualisation. Teachers help children to reflect when they ask thought through questions that lead through all four stages of the cycle. Here is an example of the questions flow: How did you feel when you received the role? Can you describe your emotions in one word? What happened? Why? What have you learned about yourself, others? What did you learn about the question that was covered in the exercise? How can you use/apply the experience gained in the future? What will you do differently, further? Reflection is structured according to children's age, needs, background and educational level, as well as learning goals.

Experiential learning and reflection serve as a basis for participants' critical thinking development which is an important aim of well-being education.

Principles of Evaluation

The school system is still embedded in a grading system framed by a continuous evaluation of students. It is a way of determining the value of the child as an individual and their progress as a student, often done through setting a standard that should be reached. This type of quantitative and qualitative measurement is, though, criticised in several fields since it limits future endeavours and decreases confidence and engagement in students.

Evaluation goals, as for teaching and learning, are truly questionable, as they do not consider the different styles of learning and intelligence. Furthermore, students become more interested in getting good grades than in understanding the subject and skills development or in their learning process and the joy they get from it. Consequently, being a good student according to a grade interval is also a source of anxiety, diminishing well-being.

At the same time, not only are students' knowledge and skills being evaluated based on teaching objectives, but so too are their attitudes/behaviours. This refers to a point of judgement that can affect the grade of the student overall. As stated by Almeida and Alves (2021), "Teachers practice forms of assessment that can be classified as formal or informal (Freitas, 2003). The first is instrumentalised by academic training and guidelines instituted by school management, with a pedagogical focus. The second is more intuitive, based on the experiences and beliefs that teachers accumulate, transforming common sense into evaluative criteria. There is, therefore, a relationship between training, the quality of teaching work and the technical ways in which students are assessed." (p. 22)

Evaluation can also be done through self-assessment and recognition of competences by the individual. It is a continuous process of reflective learning, where the child can understand where they stand throughout their learning process and not at specific times of the school year. Thus, not only will the students have a clear picture of their situation throughout the year, but also teaching can be improved at a pedagogical level, for example, to help the students reach their goals.

To stimulate self-assessment and reflective practices of evaluation, teachers can, for example:

- use a giant thermometer on the floor where students can position themselves according to what they think they can improve or have already understood.
- use the Blob tree [2] to understand how they feel about their learning at that moment.

This type of evaluation is often used in non-formal and game-based contexts and kept aside in the school context, but it should be used as a tool to measure emotional well-being in school and as a main approach in well-being education. Teacher training in reflective evaluation techniques can result in an improvement in education.

2 https://www.blobtree.com/

Reference resources and publications

- Almeida, Frederico Alves, Alves, Maria Teresa Gonzaga (2021). The culture of grade retention in schools organized in cycles. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*. Vol. 26, p. 1-28.
- Blyth, D. A., Borowski, T., Farrington, C. A., Kullonen, P., & Weissberg, R. P. (2019). Ten criteria for describing and selecting SEL frameworks. Measuring SEL Framework Briefs. Introductory series 3/3. Retrieved 26th Feb 2020 from https://measuringsel.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/AWG-Framework-Revised-A.3.pdf
- Brander, P., De Witte, L., Ghanea, N., Gomes, R., Keen, E., Nikitina, A., & Pinkeviciute, J. (2020). COMPASS - Manual for human rights education with young people, 2nd edition, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- Buyse, E., Verschueren, K., Doumen, S., Van Damme, J., & Maes, F. (2008). Classroom problem behavior and teacher-child relationships in kindergarten: The moderating role of classroom climate. *Journal of school psychology,* 46(4), 367-391.
- Cañabate, Dolors, Serra, Teresa, Bubnys, Remigijus, Colomer, Jordi (2019). Pre-Service Teachers' Reflections on Cooperative Learning: Instructional Approaches and Identity Construction. *Sustainability*. Vol. 11, p. 1-18.
- Costa, C. J., Aparicio, M., Aparicio, S., & Aparicio, J. T. (2017). *Gamification Usage Ecology*. In Proceedings of the 35th ACM International Conference on the Design of Communication (p. 2:1–2:9). New York, NY, USA: ACM.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. American Psychologist, 55, 34–43
- Edmentum (2021). Play-Based Learning: What It Is and Why It Should Be a Part of Every Classroom. Retrieved from https://blog.edmentum.com/play-based-learning-what-it-and-why-it-should-be-part-every-classroom.
- Elias, M., Zins, J., Weissberg, R., Frey, K., Greenberg, M., Haynes, N., Kessler, R., Schwab-Stone, M., & Shriv- er, T. (1997). Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators. Alexandria, Virginia: Asso- ciation for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Elliott, S.N., Kratochwill, T.R., Littlefield Cook, J. and Travers, J. (2000). *Educational psychology: Effective teaching, effective learning (3rd ed.)*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill College.
- Fernandes, Elsa (1997). O trabalho cooperativo num contexto de sala de aula. Análise psicológica, Vol. 4 (XV), p. 563-572.
- Fleming, Nora (2020). Why Are Some Kids Thriving During Remote Learning? Retrieved from https://ell-being.edutopia.org/article/why-are-some-kids-thriving-during-remote-learning.
- Friedli, L. (2009). *Mental health resilience and inequalities*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe.

- Ghufron, M. A., & Ermawati, S. (2018). The Strengths and Weaknesses of Cooperative Learning and Problem-based Learning in EFL Writing Class: Teachers and Students' Perspectives. *International Journal of Instruction,* Vol. 11(4), p. 657-672.
- Hellerstedt, A., Mozelius, P. (2020). Game-based learning - a long history. Conference: Irish Conference on Game-based Learning 2019 at Cork, Ireland, project: game-based learning. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336460471_Game-based_learning_-_a_long_history/citations.
- Howell, J. 2012. Teaching with ICT: Digital Pedagogies for Collaboration and Creativity. Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press.
- Jacobs, J., & Wright, P. (2017). Transfer of life skills in sport-based youth development programs: a conceptual framework bridging learning to application. Quest, 70(1), 81-99.
- Jones, S., Brush, K., Bailey, R., Brion-Meisels, G., McINtyre, J., Kahn, J., ... Stickle, L. (2017). Navigating SEL from the inside out. Looking inside and across 25 leading SEL programs: a practical resource for schools and OST providers. Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Maldonado Recio, M. T., Barajas Esteban, C. (2018). Teoría de la mente y empatía. Repercusiones en la aceptación por los iguales en niños y niñas de Educación Infantil, Primaria y Secundaria. Escritos de Psicología, 11(1), 10-24.
- OECD (2009). Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes.
- OECD (2013). Synergies for Better Learning. An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment.
- Puspitasari, Febi (2018, April 21-22). *Cooperative Learning: Engaging Young Learners in a Large Class.* International Conference On Child-Friendly Education, Central Java, Indonesia.
- Rucinski, C. L., Brown, J. L., & Downer, J. T. (2018). Teacher–child relationships, classroom climate, and children's social-emotional and academic development. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 110(7), 992.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). Self-determination theory. *Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness.*
- Ryzin, Mark J. Van, Roseth, Cary J. (2018). Cooperative Learning in Middle School: A Means to Improve Peer Relations and Reduce Victimization, Bullying, and Related Outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology.* DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/edu0000265
- Siew, Nyet Moi, Chin, Mui Ken, Sombuling, Agnis. (2017). The Effects Of Problem Based Learning With Cooperative Learning On Preschoolers' Scientific Creativity. *Journal of Baltic Science Education,* Vol. 16(1), p. 100-112.
- Snoek, M., Swennen, A., & Van der Klink, M. (2010). The teacher educator: a neglected factor in the contemporary debate on teacher education. *Advancing quality cultures for teacher education in Europe: tensions and opportunities,* 33-48.

- Tavares, Cláudia, Sanches, Isabel (2013). Gerir a diversidade: contributos da aprendizagem cooperativa para a construção de salas de aula inclusivas. *Revista Portuguesa de Educação*. Vol. 26(1), p. 307-347.
- Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, Vol. 12, No. 3, June 2006, pp. 265–287
- Thompson, Darrall G. (2016). Marks should not be the focus of assessment—But how can change be achieved? *Journal of Learning Analytics,* 3(2), 193–212.
- Veldman, M.A., Doolaard, S., Bosker, R.J., Snidjers, T.A.B. (2021). Young children working together. Cooperative learning effects on group work of children in Grade 1 of primary education. *Elsevier*. Vol. 67, p. 1-13.
- Veneu, F., Rosse, C., Costa, M. (2017). Ação sociopolítica e aprendizagem cooperativa: a elaboração de um banner com alunos do ensino fundamental no município de Miguel Pereira, Rio de Janeiro, *Da Investigação às Práticas,* 7(2), 22 - 33.
- Vujovic, S., Pavicevic, V., Durovic, A., Radojevic, M., & Radulovic, I. My Values and Virtues – Development of Social and Emotional Skills Handbook for Secondary School Teachers Podgorica, Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/15451/file/My%20Values%20and%20Virtues%20–%20Development%20of%20Social%20and%20Emotional%20Skills.pdf
- Waters, L. (2021). Positive education pedagogy: shifting teacher mindsets, practice, and language to make well-being visible in classrooms. In *The Palgrave handbook of positive education* (pp. 137-164). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Werbach, K., & Hunter, D. (2012). *For the Win: How Game Thinking Can Revolutionize Your Business*. Wharton Digital Press.
- Zirawaga, V.S., Olusanya, A.I., & Maduku, T. (2017). Gaming in Education: Using Games as a Support Tool to Teach History. *Journal of Education and Practice,* 8, 55-64.

Internet resources:

- https://ell-being.rileychildrens.org/health-info/growth-development-6-11-years
- https://ell-being.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/middle2.html
- https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-lifespandevelopment/chapter/periods-of-human-development/
- https://ell-being.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2020/12/11/digital-pedagogy-for-young-learners/
- https://ell-being.oup.com.au/media/documents/higher-education/he-samples-pages/he-teacher-ed-landing-page-sample-chapters/HOWELL_9780195578430_SC.pdf
- https://ell-being.researchgate.net/publication/349589277_Digital_Experience_and_Cognitive_Development_in_Primary_School_Students
- https://ell-being.edutopia.org/article/why-are-some-kids-thriving-during-remote-learning
- https://vibe.us/blog/10-positive-aspects-to-distance-learning/

PART II
Educational Games Toolkit

Dear Teacher,

In Part II of the Toolkit you will find 18 educational games and activities that were developed by the team of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project "Learn & Play: Home edition" and piloted by teachers in Latvia, The Netherlands, Slovakia and Spain.

These activities were developed with the aim of improving the wellbeing of children by developing soft skills, socioemotional competences and resilience.

Each educational game is structured according to one of three levels – Easy (E), Medium (M) and Hard (H). This gradation applies to both the complexity in terms of running activity and level of contribution required from the children.

All activities are presented in the form of a Grid (next page) to allow you to see which competences each activity addresses and the level of difficulty it represents (E for Easy, M for Medium and H for Hard). We suggest that you begin with a pupils' needs analysis to identify the competences they need to develop, and then choose the most appropriate activity or set of activities for your class or workshop.

When selecting an educational game/activity from this manual, these tips might help:

- What is the educational aim and how will the activity help to achieve it?
- What is the target group that will take part in the activity?
- What are the needs of this target group?
- What is the emotional and physical state of the pupils?
- How much time you need for a particular game – can you ensure that time?
- Will the learning programme become more balanced and richer as a result of using this game?
- Where can this activity take place (place and space)?
- Have you considered your pupils' special needs?
- Can you answer the question – why have you chosen this activity?
- What is the educational outcome of this activity?

You can also build a programme for a few hours, days or weeks, by creating learning pathways that contain several activities in a sequence. Each activity includes reflection moment with pupils – you will find some ideas for questions in the description of each activity, but you can definitely adapt these to the needs of the class and educational purpose. Feel free to use all your creativity, professionalism and knowledge of your group, and finally, enjoy the process of learning with pupils yourself.

Your Project Team

The Grid of Games and Activities

No.	Exercise name & link to competence/skill domain	Cognitive regulation						
		Critical thinking	Problem solving	Goal setting and attainment	Decision making	Able to express thoughts and opinions	Creativity	Agency
1	A Story About Emotions						■	
2	Chain of Strengths							
3	Cultivating compassion							
4	Dancing Through Emotions							
5	I am / You are							
6	Optimism and positive mindset							
7	The Gratitude Trees and the Magical World of Gratitude							
8	Values: What is important to me				■			
9	What am I good at?							
10	A Different Story	■						
11	Discover the Importance of Communication							
12	Emotional Museum							
13	Find Your Treasure							
14	Talents & Values into Action							
15	You Cannot Eat an Entire Pie All at Once		■					
16	Your Task Is My Task							
17	LEGO Tower							■
18	The Orange Game		■		■	■		■

E - Easy

M - Medium

H - Hard

Emotional Processes			Interpersonal Processes						Values			Perspective / Mindset		Identity / Self-Image				Physical		
Emotional literacy	Emotion regulation	Empathy and compassion	Communication skills	Social problem-solving skills	Relationship building and maintaining	Cooperative behaviour	Being respectful of the needs of others	Being forgiving	Interest in community	Family values	Respecting social values and rules	Being open-minded and curious	Being optimistic	Self-awareness	Growth mindset	Self-worth	Self-compassion	Being active	Playfulness	LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY
																				E
																				E
																				E
																				E
																				E
																				E
																				E
																				E
																				E
																				M
																				M
																				M
																				M
																				M
																				M
																				M
																				M
																				H
																				H

1. A Story about Emotions

Level of difficulty:
Easy

Topic (s):
Emotional literacy, creativity

Objectives:
- To improve emotional literacy of pupils
- To develop children's creativity

Time:
1 hour

Age:
6 – 7

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation

Prepare one or more dice with:

- 6 main emotions: sadness, joy, disgust, surprise, anger and fear.
- Images that represent those emotions such as, for example, from the Disney movie Inside Out[3]
- Animals, such as sheep, cats, dogs, snakes, and turtles. It is up to the teacher to choose what animals they would like to have. You can also ask the children to decide. See photos below for examples.

Materials

- Colourful cardboard
- Dices with animals
- Dices with emotions
- Check the Annex 1 to find the template to create the box.

Implementation

1. Ask the children to sit in a circle. Ask them who would like to start.

2. One by one they throw the dice of the emotions and the dice of the animals. If the children cannot read, the teacher helps them. The teacher can use the images to ask them what they think it represents.

3. When they have the combination of emotion and animal, children should make up a story about it. This can be a story about something that happens in their life and/or one that they invent and/or that they have seen in a cartoon tv show.

3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=seMwpP0yeu4

4. It can be the animal that feels the emotion or that the emotion appears in the story as a character. For example: "There was a yellow dragon that felt lonely because all the other dragons were green" or "Sadness wanted to be friends with the joyful sheep of the group. Only that way, sadness could believe that everything would be ok".

5. When one finishes, another participant can throw the dice.

Reflection / Debriefing

- How did you feel during the activity?
- How were the stories connected to what happens in your life?
- How was it to connect feelings with moments of your life?
- Did you like to paint the emotions you chose? Why?

Variation

If there is time, the teacher can create the different dice with their students and involve them in the whole process, while developing other competences in the children.

The teacher can allow the participants to intervene in other children's stories, the children or the teacher may add aspects to the stories, as well as ask questions to help the original author to create a more complex story. If the character of a story goes through a conflict, the teacher can suggest conflict-resolution strategies that can be integrated into the story, if that is also a goal for the class.

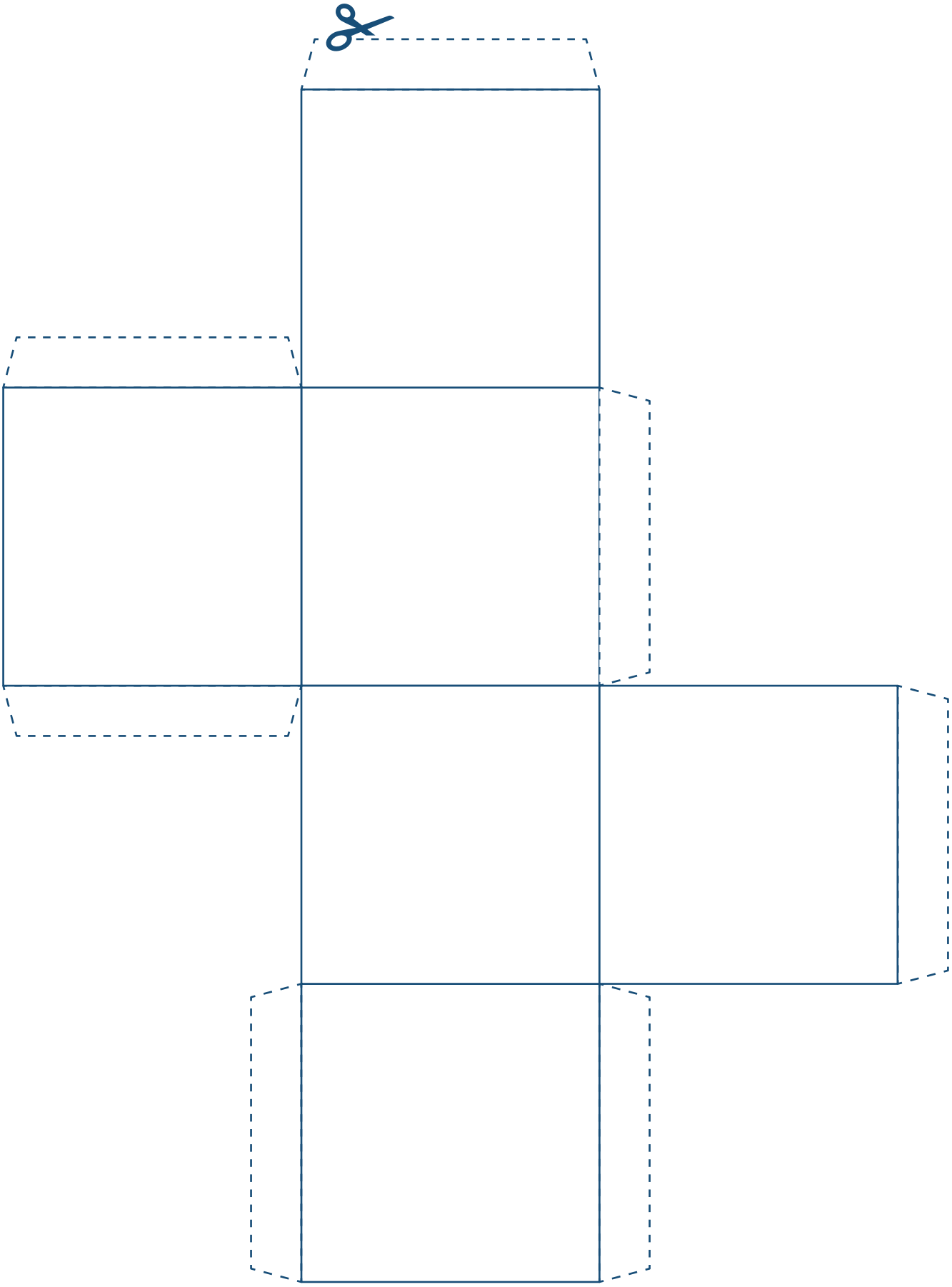
Tips

Young children often connect the emotion with the animal and tell stories about themselves represented in the animal. It can be a good indicator of the wellbeing of the student.

Additional resources

The prototype scheme of the dice is in the Annex 1. Please copy and cut it out as big as you wish. You can find below some examples of the dice.

Annex 1



2. Chain of Strengths

Level of difficulty:
Easy

Topic (s):
Self-awareness and self-worth, cooperative behaviour

Objectives:
- To help children identify their character strengths
- To support pupils' reflect on how collaborating with others makes a group stronger

Age:
8 – 11

Time:
1 hour

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Print the content of the Annex 2. Make sure you print a complete set of worksheets for each pupil in case they have many of the same strengths (to avoid turning it into a competition). Alternatively, cut out stripes of paper with strengths of your choice (all the different strengths must be available for each child) or leave stripes of paper blank for children to write their own strengths. You can use coloured paper if you would like to shorten the time of this exercise.

If possible, place chairs and tables to the side of the classroom to leave the floor free for the activity.

Materials
Printouts of Strengths sheets in Annex 2 or pre-prepared and pre-cut strips of Strengths, markers or crayons, scissors, and tape.

Implementation
1. Ask the children to sit on the floor in a circle. At the centre of the circle, place the strips of paper with strengths, markers or crayons, scissors and tape.

2. If using the printout of Annex 2, instruct children to start by picking seven colours — one for each group of strengths. The colours will help them see the biggest areas of strength. Tell them to colour the individual strengths as they talk or think about each group. If you had already cut the Strengths sheets into strips, give children time to go through the available strengths and pick those that they feel they possess. Let them pick the material simultaneously, while telling them how it is important to respect each other and give time and space for everyone to select what they want.

3. If using the printout of Annex 2, let them cut out all the strengths that apply to them.

4. Instruct them to use the tape to make a paper chain out of the individual strengths. Ask them to leave the first and last stripe open.

5. Once each child has made their own chain of strengths, ask them to string the chains together, forming a big circle of united strengths. Talk about how we're stronger when we use everyone's strengths.

6. Congratulate children on their work! Celebrate their effort, determination, persistence!

Reflection / Debriefing

First, ask children how they liked the activity.

- What did you like the most?
- Was it hard to recognize your own strengths? Why is it so?
- How do you feel when you think that you all used your strengths to make this chain?
- What kind of strengths others have you also have, but did not include them in your chain?
- When you think of your strengths and the strengths of others, do you appreciate yourself and them more?
- How can you further use and make the class community stronger?

Variations

Children themselves can write their own strengths and make the strength chain, instead of giving them a set of pre-printed strengths to pick up from.

Tips

To help children thrive, recognizing their strengths is just as important as working on their challenges. Focusing on strengths in a group setting helps children see that we are all equal and that by joining our effort and strengths together, the group can achieve more.

Building character is all about seeing ourselves in a positive light, where mistakes, if we learn from them, are advantage points that lead us towards the best version of ourselves. However, sometimes children can find it hard to make a mistake, especially if they see it as a failure. Focusing on failures can seriously affect a child's self-confidence, so the goal of this activity is to bring attention to the child's Strengths.

By connecting the chains that the children created individually to make one long chain to hang in the classroom, the activity strengthens cooperation with others. In seeing how by putting our strengths together, the chain is longer and stronger, children figuratively understand that United We Stand, Divided We Fall.

The activity can spark a conversation in your class about how everyone has strengths and challenges. Plus, the completed strengths chain is a visible reminder to your students that they all contribute to making the classroom community stronger.

Additional resources:

https://www.understood.org/articles/en/5-steps-for-recognizing-strengths-in-kids?_sp=7f9d0fcc-fd9f-44d9-8687-d350219a4725.1647543670185

Adapted from the:

https://assets.ctfassets.net/p0qf7j048i0q/uvqC72wUOXlmeeSapX3Y6/7c0fcc7b9271d4374c7a9afdcabd8b08/Strengths_Chain_Understood.pdf

Annex 2

MAKE A STRENGTHS CHAIN

Adapted from Understood for All, Inc. © 2017

Ready to start identifying strengths?

All you need to get started are some markers or crayons, scissors, and tape.

Step 1
Start by picking seven colours — one for each group of strengths. The colours will help you see the biggest areas of strength. Colour the individual strengths as you talk or think about each group. Use the blank spaces on the last page to write in any more strengths you think of.

Step 2
Cut out all the strengths that apply. If more than one person is doing this craft, print a set of strengths per person in case they have many of the same strengths (to avoid turning it into a competition).

Step 3
Use tape to make a paper chain out of the individual strengths. You can hang the chain on the wall and keep adding to it as new strengths develop. If more than one person is doing this craft, you can string all the chains together and talk about how we're stronger when we use everyone's strengths.

Curl ends up and tape together

Thread the next strip through the ring to form a chain

CARACTER STRENGTHS

Colour the strips on this page:

I am honest and

I am caring and kind.

I am helpful at home and do my chores.

I am sensitive to the needs of others.

I am loyal.

I am resilient and keep working on difficult tasks.

I can work or play on my own.

I can work or play with others.

I am eager.

I am curious.

SOCIAL STRENGTHS

Colour the strips on this page:

I can share, take turns, and compromise

I am a good listener and try not to interrupt too much.

I put effort into making friends and keeping them.

I accept differences in others.

I can ask for help when needed and have ways of coping when frustrated (like not hitting).

know when it's OK to follow the crowd and when to resist peer pressure.

I accept personal responsibility for my actions (good and bad).

I don't argue when adults tell me to do something (most of the time!)

I tell the truth and can apologize when I need to.

I have a good sense of humour.

COMMUNICATION STRENGTHS

Colour the strips on this page:

Ill use words to express what I need and want.

I like talking to people, especially friends.

I take part in discussions at home, at school and with friends.

I have strong negotiating skills.

I can tell others when I'm upset.

I ask for help when needed.

When I talk to others, I respect their personal space.

I can listen to others without interrupting them.

I enjoy telling jokes.

I understand jokes, puns, and sarcasm.

COOPERATION STRENGTHS

Colour the strips on this page:

I like to participate in joint activities.

I am a fair loser and winner.

I can follow instructions and rules of the games.

I like to be a leader, but I can follow others as well.

I can accept when others do not agree with me.

I handle other people's feedback well.

I can easily pick up on how other people feel.

I am able to work out quarrels with others.

I like to volunteer my time for common goals and projects.

I have no problems sharing with others.

PLANNING STRENGTHS

Colour the strips on this page:

I I am able to set realistic goals for myself.

I can adapt to changes if needed.

I can care for my pet.

I am responsible.

I am persistent in carrying out assignments or activities.

I can make decisions easily.

I am good at explaining ideas and giving instructions to others

I am able to plan for the future, describe future goals.

I like playing games that involve strategy, like chess.

I can get started and stay focused on tasks.

LEARING/THINKING STRENGTHS

Colour the strips on this page:

I like to learn new things

I'm curious about the world around me.

I'm a flexible thinker – I can think about something in more than one way.

I can organize my thoughts as well as physical items, like my backpack.

I can follow rules and routines.

I can keep track of time and the things I need to do.

I can recognize and try to control "big feelings."

I can pause to think through decisions or choices.

I can learn from mistakes.

I have a "growth mindset" and believe my skills can improve with effort.

OTHER STRENGTHS AND TALENTS

Colour the strips on this page:

I am creative

I like drawing and doodling.

I can dance, act, sing, or play a musical instrument.

I can swim or play sports.

I like problem solving in video games.

I like doing community service projects.

I like to practice yoga, mindfulness, or meditation.

I am gentle with animals and younger children.

3. Cultivating Compassion

Level of difficulty:
Easy

Topic (s):
Self-compassion

Objectives:
- To cultivate feelings of compassion in children for oneself and others

Time:
45+ minutes

Age:
6-11

Step by step description of the activity

Implementation
Compassion is best learned by example (it is very contagious), but it can also be cultivated. Below some suggestions on how compassionate feelings and acts can be promoted inside and outside the classroom.

1. Practice loving-kindness meditation. This kind of meditation focuses on improving the wellbeing of oneself and wishing that also for others. There are many different ways of practicing this with a focus on forgiveness, wishing well for others and being compassionate to suffering. On the web and platforms such as YouTube you can find many examples of pre-recorded guided loving kindness meditations. If you do not feel comfortable guiding a meditation in the classroom, it is a good option to use a pre-recorded version. Practicing even a few minutes a day can create huge changes in children.

2. Practice acts of compassion for neutral ones. Many activities are possible. For example, you can ask the children to write a letter to a child in an orphanage, or to children that are in a war situation. Similarly, the children can prepare a gift box or do acts of service for people that the children think could need some extra compassion. Such activities could be perfectly combined with holiday festivities, such as religious celebrations, during which the children can prepare gifts for people that may not be able to celebrate these days with others.

3. Practice acts of compassion for familiar ones (e.g., people, animals, plants). In the classroom you can do this in many ways. For example, you can make an 'acts-of-kindness jar' in which children can offer whatever they can do unconditionally for their peers.

4. Practice acts of compassion for oneself. One successful and easy to introduce exercise is to write a letter to yourself from the future. Ask the child to imagine themselves being older, or imagine a wise old person they admire, and write a letter as if they were the ones writing, with some kind words of advice or wisdom to help the child deal with challenging situations. What would this future you or wise old person tell you?

How to present this activity as a game-based activity

1. We recommend that you as an educator prepare three big posters. You can decorate the posters without mentioning (including the writing) what they are for. When you start with activity 2, you write down on the poster 'Practices of Compassion for Neutral Ones'.

2. You introduce activity 2 and after the activity you can ask the children to make a drawing on the poster of their act of compassion (or draw it on a small piece of paper and then stick it on the poster).

3. When all of this is done, you can introduce activity 3 and write on the second poster (Practices of Compassion for Familiar Ones'. You follow the same flow as mentioned for the previous step.

4. You do the same for activity 4, 'Practices of compassion for oneself'.

5. When the children have completed all these steps, you can organise a small party to celebrate reaching and accomplishing the most difficult step – that of self-compassion.

Reflection / Debriefing

The reflection should be focused on helping understand what compassion is and if there is an expectation to receive anything in return. The most beautiful acts are those that are unconditional. People may not always receive or recognize the acts of compassion as they were intended, and this could also lead to disappointment for children. When this happens, a great learning moment arises!

Possible reflection questions are:

- How did you feel when thinking about or planning your act of compassion?
- What did you learn from your classmates when you saw them performing the act of compassion? What did you notice or learn from them?
- Have you ever received such a compassionate act? How did it make you feel?
- How was your receiver's response and how did you feel about that?
- Would you like to do more of these kinds of things in your daily life and if yes, how can you do that?

Tips

This exercise is about cultivating compassion. It is not the same as empathy, which is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Compassion relates more to a sympathetic concern for the suffering of others. Empathy is a necessary ingredient for this, but compassion is a follow-up action component that aims to support the other person in their suffering.

When teaching compassion, it is important to also teach the understanding that people experience compassion uniquely. Some people prefer a hug, others might respond better to kind words. Similarly, different situations and different people require different kinds of compassion at different times.

It is important to keep a certain emotional and cognitive distance between the person who does the act of kindness and the person that receives it. This means that the child understands that the life of the other is not their life. And that they can still enjoy their own life even if others are suffering. The acts of compassion are about cultivating a human interconnectedness and an understanding that we are all humans striving to be happy and healthy.

Ask the children what they think they could do for others or themselves. Compassion is very contagious and don't be surprised if the children come up with many more ideas of what could be done. Of course, always encourage compassionate thinking as the future needs a generation that thinks and cares for others.

4. Dancing Through Emotions

Level of difficulty:
Easy

Topic (s):
Emotional regulation, emotional literacy

Objectives:
- To warm-up the body and to connect with it
- To express emotions through movement and non-verbal communication
- To increase emotional literacy by identifying emotions and associated vocabulary

Time:
50 minutes

Age:
6-11

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Papers with emotions. They should be different depending on the age of the students, their profile and needs. Check the Wheel of Emotions for inspiration (Annex 3).

Playlist of songs of different genres.

Make space in the classroom where the students will be moving.

Materials
- Sentences for part 1: "Dance as if you were: angry, sad, joyful, happy, surprised, fearful, disgusted, etc."
- Paper with emotions
- Speakers and Music.
- Examples of playlists:
  - https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0c7gdWxP8WvGEL6hHU5prB?si=e890fdf601c549ec
  - https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1FUVOMwaXZcJyjgvBdmbgO?si=516f149991484c28
  - https://open.spotify.com/playlist/02CsBkG5o4GjOY5e8FAiS7?si=7b8db69c67074037

Implementation

PART 1:

Part 1 helps to build an environment where children feel safe to express themselves through their bodies in the group and prepares the body for the second part.

1. Explain the activity: "We will put on different music that you can dance to. When I say, for example, dance as if you were angry, you could start moving like this. When I say stop, you start dancing normally again. I will keep repeating sentences until we finish."

2. Tell pupils to stand up and to start walking without music. After 1 minute, put on the song and start the activity.

PART 2:

1. Sit participants as in an auditorium and explain that what follows is a mimic game.

2. Ask for one volunteer to start the activity.

3. Give the volunteer the selected emotions to pick randomly from and mime it.

4. The participant that guesses the mimed emotion is next.

Reflection / Debriefing

- How did you feel throughout the activity?
- Did you find it easy to move and connect with emotions?
- Did you prefer to guess the emotions or mime them?
- Which emotion was easier to show/to guess? Why was it easier?

Variations

The teacher can also choose to do this mimic game in small groups. In that case, you would need more people as facilitators, so as to be pay attention to several groups.

Tips

Be mindful of the songs you choose. Check the playlists mentioned above for inspiration.

Dancing can be embarrassing for children. There are two options:

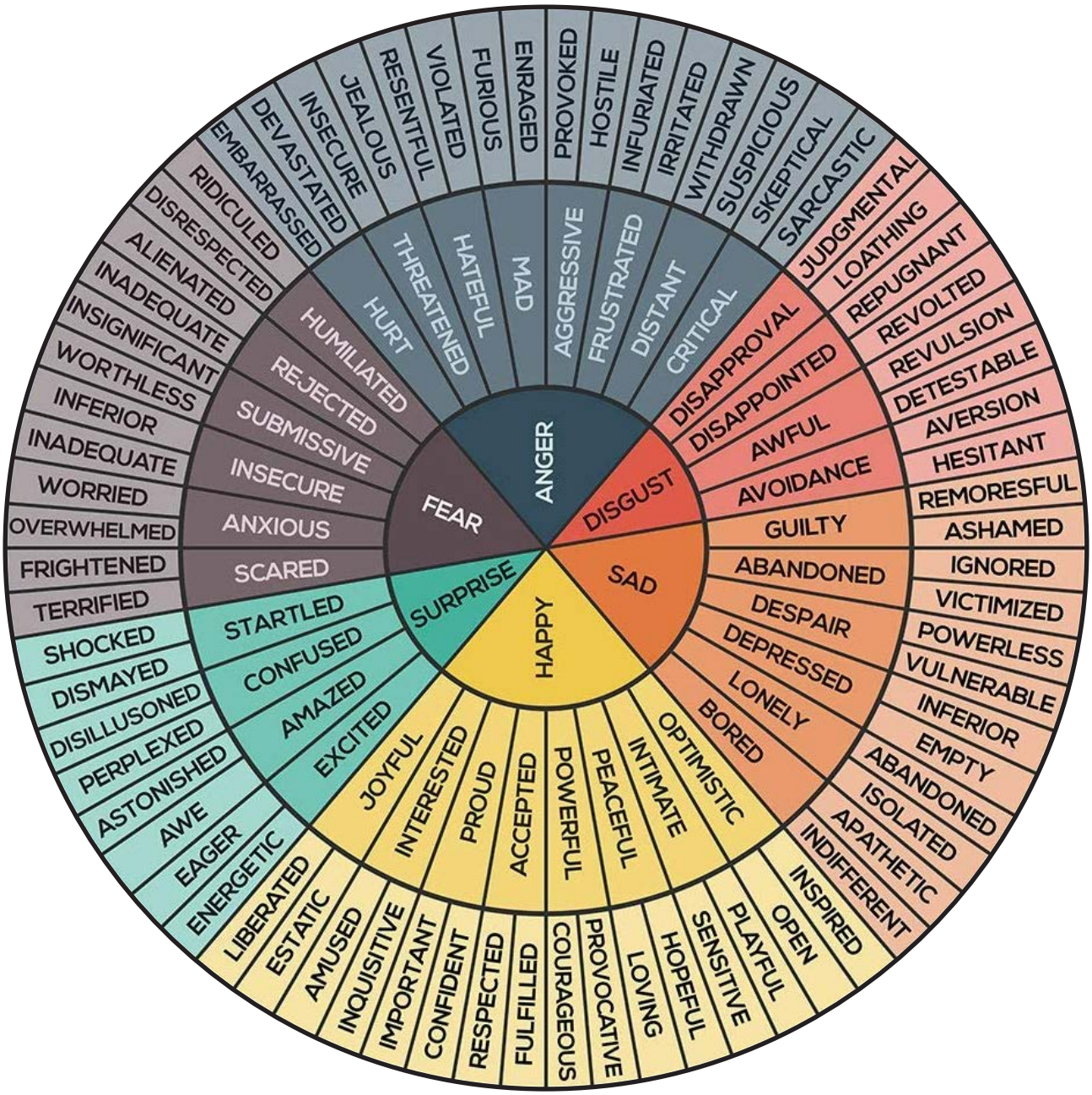
- You can also ask them to walk and to feel the music. Some will dance, others will not and that is ok for the process.
- As a teacher, you can wait for the group to establish a sense of trust and safety before asking them to move their bodies, while walking.

If the same person repeatedly guesses emotions being represented by others, the teacher should ask again for volunteers among those who haven't yet had the opportunity to mimic any emotion, so everyone can participate.

Additional resources:

You can use the Wheel of Emotions for this exercise (please see Annex 3).

Annex 3: The Wheel of Emotions



5. I am / You are

Level of difficulty:
Easy

Topic (s):
Empathy and compassion, Relationship building and maintaining

Objectives:
- To get to know others better
- To develop healthy relationships with peers and adults
- To understand how self-perception and the perception of others can be different.

Time:
Depends on the size of the class and the development the teacher whishes to give to each choice by each student. For a group of 10 students, it may take around 45 minutes, if the group is engaged and everyone shares their choice.

Age:
6 - 11

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Cards with different types of written characteristics, and also with images for students that do not yet read. If the teacher does not have the cards from the game EMO, these can be created by scratch, following the same model. Check examples in the photos below.

Materials
- Cards
- Paper
- Pens

Implementation
1. Students sit in a circle. The cards should be turned right side up for all students to be able to see them.

2. One student volunteers to start the activity. The student chooses two cards they identify with and write on a piece of paper the characteristics stated in the chosen cards and that they recognize in themselves (for example, stubborn and kind). The cards chosen are not taken from the floor or table. If the student does not know how to write, the teacher will write for them.

3. When the child chooses the cards with the characteristics they perceive themselves with, each student will choose one card they believe represents this person in some way and explain why (if there is time, it can be more or less developed).

4. At the end of the round, the student tells others what cards they had chosen in the first place.

Reflection / Debriefing

- How did you feel throughout the activity?
- How was it to choose only two characteristics that you think you have? How was the decision process?
- How did you feel when you were choosing a card to describe another person?
- How did you feel when someone else was telling you how they perceive yourself?

Tips

It is important to remember that the goal is for students to get to know their colleagues better by being aware of how each sees themselves, and to understand how self-perception and the perception of others can be different. This doesn't mean one is correct and the other is not!

The teacher should be aware that some characteristics may not be considered pleasant to a student. So, students should be free to choose the card they want, but the justification should be done in a positive way.

The teacher can and should also participate in this activity. This activity should be done with a group that already knows each other quite well.

6. Optimism and positive mindset

Level of difficulty:
Easy

Topic (s):
being optimistic, being open-minded and curious

Objectives:
- To foster thoughts of optimism
- To foster feelings of gratitude
- To foster a healthy positive mindset

Time:
45 minutes

Age:
6-11

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
No specific preparation needed

Materials
Writing paper and something to write/decorate with

Implementation
This tool consists of two exercises that can be done on a regular basis, such as daily, or weekly, based on how the school/classes are structured.

1. Naming three highlights of the day: in this exercise you ask all children to name up to three highlights of the day. These can be very simple things, such as receiving a smile from a classmate or something 'bigger' such as receiving a great mark for a test. The aim of this exercise is practice focusing on the things that went well, rather than those that didn't. Or to focus on those things that made our day a good day, rather than a not-so-good day. This is called 'learned optimism', as being optimistic is something that can be trained, also through this simple exercise. When introducing this activity, it can be challenging for children to name those things, but over time it will get easier. With smaller children (e.g. 6 years old), you may want to start with just one highlight of the day. You can do this exercise in a group and share the highlights verbally, or on paper (e.g., in words or drawings).

2. Naming three things you are grateful for: this exercise is similar to the previous one, but focused on gratitude. In a similar fashion, ask the children to name up to three things they were grateful for during this class/day/week. The highlights and what one is grateful for might of course be the same, but there are of course some fundamental differences. A highlight is a memorable moment of the day, whereas something you are grateful for can be anything, such as that the child could be together with friends.

Optimism and gratitude as a game:

In order to introduce these two activities as games, we can recommend including them a longer-term activity. For example, the children could be asked to make a poster in the class where they can keep track of their answers for several week(s) or months. They can decorate the poster and make it their 'collection of highlights', or in the case of gratitude, make it their 'wall of gratitude'. They can then see their answers over a longer period and record an overall idea of gratitude and optimism.

Alternatively, you can ask the pupils to decorate a cardboard box as a 'gratitude box'. You can do this with markers, shells or any other (natural) materials that can be found in the vicinity of the school. Place the gratitude box in a clearly visible place in the classroom where it can be easily accessed by students. Daily, the children can drop their little pieces of paper with answers in the gratitude box and the teacher/facilitator can occasionally, or daily take, out some papers and read them out loud. If you do this anonymously, you can occasionally take out papers from the box and place them on a wall. You can also play a game where you make pairs between the things children are grateful for, for example when two the same things are mentioned, and then play 'memory' with the papers.

Reflection / Debriefing

When introducing these exercises:

- Ask the children how it is for them to name these highlights and things they are grateful for. Is it challenging?
- And how do they feel in their body when they mention them out loud? Does it make them feel light for example?
- After some days/weeks of practicing:
- How is it to name these things now, after some time of practice?
- How has it changed since we started?
- What do you think the impact is on your wellbeing? How do you feel in your body when we talk about these things?

Variations

You can ask the children to write their answers to exercise 1 and 2 in a sort of diary. You can make this a starting activity, asking the children to make/decorate their own gratitude/highlights diary.

7. The Gratitude Trees and the Magical World of Gratitude

Level of difficulty:
Easy

Topic (s):
Being open minded and curious, being optimistic, being active, playfulness

Objectives:
- To help children learn how to easily focus on positive things in their life
- To support children in wiring their brain for gratitude

Age:
8 – 11, or 6 – 7 with help from teacher/parents

Time:
90 minutes to make the tree, 10 min/day for the gratitude posting

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Make one or more leaf cut-outs for children to use as a template for the leaves. When doing the activity with smaller children, trace the leaves on coloured papers and cut them out for them.

Ask children to bring a vase or a flowerpot from home. Have all the material ready at the teacher's desk, so children can choose the branches and leaf template that they like the most.

Materials
Several double-sided coloured sheets of paper, preferably of different colours, string or ribbon, scissors - one for each participant, twigs or tree branches - depending on the size of the tree you make, there can be only one branch per child or more, some stones or marbles to weigh down and hold the twigs or tree branch in the vase/pot, one vase or flower pot per child, and a sense of gratitude. If doing the exercise in the class, you can make one sole tree for the entire class.

Implementation
This is a home activity, but it can be implemented in the classroom as well. The activity is divided in three stages and is envisioned to be carried out for 21 days – 21 days is the period that an activity needs to be repeated to become a habit.

1. Classroom: children can work at their desks, which can be rearranged.
2. Tell children a story about Gratitude. You'll find an example below, but you can make one on your own.

The Gratitude Trees and the Magical World of Gratitude

Once upon a time, Earth was a magical place. There were trees everywhere, the air was pure and the water clear. Life was simple and people were happy with what they had.

One day, an angry wizard, Greedlush, took over the world.

In reality, he was sad, because as a boy he had been all alone, living in an orphanage, and no one would want him. He had no toys, he had no friends, he had no one to care for him. And as he was growing and seeing all the nice things others had, but were not available to him, he felt that burning sensation in his belly, that yearning that turned sadness into anger and hate… He said to himself, "I never want to hurt this way again, so I will become the greatest wizard of all, and make all my wishes come true; I will have everything I'll ever want!"

So, he grew up and became the most powerful wizard that ever walked the Earth. And although with power comes great responsibility, he did not care about that. All he wanted was to get as many things as he possibly could. He didn't care about making friends, he didn't care about anything, all he cared about was what he could put his hands on…

As the years went by, he accumulated quite a lot of wealth, and became the owner of most things on planet Earth.

But there was one thing he could not get, and that one thing was happiness. No matter how many things he owned, he was never happy. The more he got, the less happy he was. That was driving him crazy. He observed other people who all seem happy with very little things, and that made him even more angry. So, one day he cast a spell over the entire population of planet earth, so that they, too, felt miserable with what they had, always wanting more while feeling less and less happy. He thought that if all the people in the world shared the emptiness he felt inside, he would feel less sad.

And one after the next, people forgot how it feels to be grateful for what you have. They forgot how to be happy and how to share that happiness with others. They focused on what they wanted to have and the more they had, the more they wanted. They were never grateful, and they were always sad. They started to cut down trees just to make new things. When it was just one man, the Earth could handle it, but when it was all the people, Earth could no longer grow trees fast enough to replace the ones the people cut off, so soon all the trees vanished from the face of the Earth. What once was a magnificent place to live became a barren land of greed, misery and ungratefulness.

This went on for quite a while, until a new kind of magicians were born here on planet Earth. They were born with a mission to save the planet and their special power was GRATITUDE. With every grateful thought they thought, a new tree sprang from Earth's soil. They knew the planet depended on them, so now they are recruiting as many people as they can to be grateful for what they have, to end the monarchy of Greedlush once and for all, bringing old happiness to planet Earth. The world depends on their efforts to think gratefully… And that, my dear children, are you… You are the promised magicians that can help Earth and all the people on it to live happily and gratefully…

So, your mission is to make a beautiful tree with as many leaves as possible, where each leaf is a thought of gratitude and after a while, you'll see, the whole world will be happy again…

3. Ask children to trace leaves on your coloured paper, cut out the leaves and punch a hole at the top of each leaf, looping the string or ribbon through each hole.

4. Have children put the stones or marbles in a vase and stick the tree branch or twig in the middle.

5. Have children draw or write things that they are grateful for on the leaves. They can also use photographs or pictures from magazines if they like.

   Encourage children to do the exercise for 21 days, to make it a habit.

   Each day they adorn three (3) tree leaves with 'things' they are grateful for.

   - On the first leaf, something they are grateful for about themselves
   - On the second leaf, something they are grateful for in others
   - On the third leaf, something they are grateful for in their life in general

6. Children have a presentation of the tree every seven days when they are encouraged to list a few things they were particularly grateful for in the past 7 days.

7. After each 7 days of gratitude "gardening" they receive a diploma for passing the level (see an example of the Diplomas for each achieved level below)

Diploma for the achieved level

Each seven days of gratitude gardening, children receive a diploma for the level of gratitude mastery they have accomplished. They all start as GRATITUDE APPRENTICEs.

- After the first seven days, they become the GRATITUDE MASTERs
- After the second seven days, they become the GRATITUDE MAGICIANs
- After the third seven days' period, they become the GRATITUDE ALCHEMISTs.

Examples of text for each diploma:

GRATITUDE MASTER

As Gratitude Master, you have mastered what it means to live in a magical world of gratitude where small things that make your heart sing have big, wonderful, happy meaning that, once acknowledged, begins to grow and grow like your tree of gratitude and this happy meaning then touches and heals even those things that might make you sad or angry...

GRATITUDE MAGICIAN

CONGRATULATIONS! You have made it to the next level of mastering life in the magical world of gratitude. This is a big deal. A lot of people have tried to make it to this level of mastery and failed, as they failed to recognize the importance of seeing and cherishing the good in small things, recognizing their own greatness and the greatness of others. But you made it, and you have officially earned the title of GRATITUDE MAGICIAN, which means that by now you are Magician at being grateful for things that others don't even notice. You have found at least seven attributes of yourself that you are grateful for, and you are happy and grateful for all the good attributes that others possess, because in number there is strength and there the more grateful we are the more magic we create in the world for us and for others.

GRATITUDE ALCHEMIST

KUDOS TO YOU! You have achieved the highest recognition for your incredible gratitude resilience. Few have ever made it this far. Few have kept their heart open and brave to reach the grail of alchemy that, once discovered, changes you forever. The GRATITUDE ALCHEMIST's heart is touched by the great magic of gratitude and can find and see beauty in the darkest of times. And your persistence and kind nature have brought you here, here where you turn simple events into pure happiness, angry enemies into potential friends, rules into safety nets... Because you see through the eyes of your brave heart and what you see is a beautiful world, full of things to be grateful for.

Reflection / Debriefing

Periodically, after each 7-day period, ask children:

- How do you like this game?
- What do you like/or don't like about it?
- How easy or difficult was it to complete the tasks? What was difficult?
- How hard is it to think of "things" in your life that you are grateful for?
- How do you feel when you think about things in your life that make you happy? - Ask children to find as many positive adjectives for their feelings as possible.
- For older children: what do you think – how are people happy for the things they have or achieve? How do they feel about those things and achievements?

Tips and Hints

Tree of Gratitude and its upgrade the Magical World of Gratitude are easy and fun activities for children, which inspire a sense of wonder and accomplishment.

Showing gratitude to others is regarded as established decorum, with positive effects for the receiver, but training our brain for gratitude has many positive effects on the emotional and mental wellbeing of the giver as well.

As stated in PositivePsychology.com, research shows that gratitude can:

- Help you make friends. One study found that thanking a new acquaintance makes them more likely to seek a more lasting relationship with you.
- Improve your physical health. People who exhibit gratitude report fewer aches and pains, have a greater general feeling of health, do more regular exercise and more frequent check-ups with their doctor, than those who don't.
- Improve your psychological health. Grateful people enjoy higher wellbeing and happiness and reduced symptoms of depression.
- Enhance empathy and reduce aggression. Those who show their gratitude are less likely to seek revenge against others and more likely to behave in a prosocial manner, with sensitivity and empathy.
- Improve your sleep. Practicing gratitude regularly can help you sleep longer and better.
- Enhance your self-esteem. People who are grateful have increased self-esteem, partly due to their ability to appreciate other peoples' accomplishments.
- Increase in mental strength. Grateful people have an advantage in overcoming trauma and enhanced resilience, helping them to bounce back from highly stressful situations. (Morin, 2014 in https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises/).

Additional resources

You can read more on gratitude and positive mindset here:

- https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-tree-kids/
- Short video with example on how to make a gratitude tree: https://youtu.be/WcNoq8GL6tY.

8. Values: What is Important to Me

(preparation activity for the exercise "Values and Talents into Action")

Level of difficulty:
Easy

Topic (s):
decision making, interest in community

Objectives:
- To raise children's awareness of what values are
- To gain insight into which values are important to a child
- To understand how values are a compass in decision-making in life
- For parents and teachers, to understand what values a child has

Time:
45-90 minutes

Age:
8-11

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Printout of the Value sheets (Annex 4) for each child

Materials
Value sheets (Annex 4), something to write with

Implementation

1.

Introduce children to the concept of what values are - the purpose of this step is to raise some awareness of the existence of values, what they are and that we all have them.

Explain that every person has things that are very important to them and that act as a compass in their navigation through life. We also have sort of 'anti-values' that are totally unimportant to us, and by avoiding them or doing the exact opposite, they still direct our actions in life. Values are directions, not destinations (like objectives). Values also change throughout our life, depending on one's phase of life.

Understanding values will help you make decisions in life and help your parents and teachers better understand how to be of support to you.

You can introduce the topic to children using superheroes in your narrative. For example, Spiderman finds justice and fairness very important, just as he

wants people to be safe. These values make him act when he sees that people are threatened by the 'bad guys'. Spiderman doesn't care about fame (anti-value), he always keeps himself (as Peter Parker) anonymous. Similarly, you can use other narratives that help young people 'feel the guiding forces of values.

2. [optional]

In this step, help the children becoming more familiar with recognising values in narratives. Trying to find them in themselves can be quite a big step for a child.

Depending on the time available, you can do a group exercise in which you tell a story, such as a fairy tale, where the protagonist is clearly guided in their thinking, feeling and acting by their values. Together, you can try to understand, and 'extract' what values are important to the protagonist. You can also discuss what the children think of these values and maybe already some of their own values can be identified through asking reflection questions, such as 'is this also important to you?' or 'what would be important to you, if you were in this situation?'.

3.

In this step, help the children identify their own personal values. Hand out the Value Sheets (Annex 4) and ask the children to fill in Page 1 of Annex 4, marking for each of the 21 values, how important they are to them. There is also the possibility of adding some new values if they can come up with them. The list of values is not exhaustive; it is a selection of the most commonly used ones for children.

4.

Ask the children to fill in Page 2 of Annex 4 and write down their answers to the questions. There are of course no right/wrong answers as the purpose of this step is to better understand oneself and each other.

5. [optional]

This step has the purpose of helping the children apply the values in their day-to-day life. It requires the children to think a bit further on how they could use these values in their day-to-day life, such as in their decision making or in conflict resolution. In most conflicts, someone's values are threatened or ignored and that is what the person usually responds to.

- You can ask the children to think of a moment when they were very upset with someone and try to find out the underlying value that was violated.
- You can also ask them to think of a difficult decision they will have to make and guide them in using values as a compass in making the decision that seems to best fit what is important to them.

This could for example be which 'future job' they would like to have or 'which school to go to next'. You can decide, based on your time, to write the answers down on their value sheets, or to just keep it as a sharing of thoughts.

6.

Invite the children to share the results of the session with parents/caregivers and other people that they feel safe with. Of course, don't force them to share anything they don't want to as one of the things that happens during this session is that the trust between teacher and child is strengthened, which is a wonderful and important thing in the classroom.

Reflection / Debriefing

Continuous reflection is an important element of this exercise, as for each step you could deepen the level of understanding by reflecting. In the steps above some guiding reflection questions are provided. At the end of the session, you can have a general reflection moment, asking for example:

- What did you learn about yourself today?
- What did you learn about others?
- How would you like to share these things we talked about today with your parents/caregivers and how do you think they can help you?
- How can we help understanding each other better in our classroom?

Variations

Some options for variations are provided in the description of the activity. The group setting for this activity is not specified, and you can experiment doing this with the entire group, smaller groups or pairs. Or of course a mix, where you go from entire classroom activity to smaller groups to entire classroom again. Please use your own experience and intuition when you work with your own classroom.

Tips

The key learning element of this session is in its reflection. As a facilitator, you can also share your own values. Pay attention to establishing emotional safety rules so all children will feel at ease to share such personal things.

Use the activity to build and strengthen the emotional bond between you and the children and between them. It's a wonderful thing to be able to know what goes on inside such a young human being and understand what drives them in their life (mostly unconsciously!).

If a child is not skilled enough in writing, please ask another trusted child to help out, or as a teacher to help writing things down.

This activity is a preparation for the activity 'Values and Talents into Action' which you can explore with children as a next step.

My name: _____ Date: _____

VALUES: WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME?

This worksheet is to help you understand what is important to you. For each item, please fill or mark a circle on how important they are. Please be honest an take your time!

Very important = ●●● Important = ●● Little important = ●

Not important = leave blank

Having good grades — ○ ○ ○

Being good at sports — ○ ○ ○

Having fun — ○ ○ ○

Being popular and famous — ○ ○ ○

Have a lot of money — ○ ○ ○

Have material goods — ○ ○ ○

My religion — ○ ○ ○

Being clean and organized — ○ ○ ○

Being careful and safe — ○ ○ ○

Being creative — ○ ○ ○

Learning new skills and information — ○ ○ ○

To keep trying and not give up — ○ ○ ○

Able to do things on my own — ○ ○ ○

Being responsible for my actions — ○ ○ ○

Spending time with family — ○ ○ ○

Having good friends — ○ ○ ○

Being honest — ○ ○ ○

Helping others — ○ ○ ○

Being respectful and fair — ○ ○ ○

Being thankful — ○ ○ ○

Being able to forgive others — ○ ○ ○

My name: _____ Date: _____

VALUES: WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME?

Thank you for completing the worksheet!
We hope you learned something about yourself.
Here are a few more questions to think deeper about your values.

Of all the values you marked as "Very important", what are the top three most important to you and why?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Of all the values you marked as "Little important" and "Not important", what are the top three least important to you and why?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Which values do you think your parents will choose as very important to them?

_____

Which values do you think your close friends will choose as very important to them?

_____

9. What Am I Good At?

(preparation activity for the exercise "Values and Talents into Action")

Level of difficulty:
Easy

Topic(s):
self-awareness, self-worth

Objectives:
- To raise children's awareness of what talents are
- To gain insight into which talents and strengths a child has
- To understand how strengths are like a superpower
- To help parents and teachers understand what talents a child has

Time:
45-120 minutes

Age:
8-12

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Printing of the talent sheets (Annex 5)

Materials
Talent sheets for each child, pencils/markers/crayons and pens

Implementation

1.

Introduce children to the concept of what talents are: the purpose of this step is to raise some awareness of the existence of talents, what they are and that we all have them. We recommend that you share the information provided below in your own narrating way with your class.

Every person has things that they are very good at by nature. This doesn't mean we are all Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo or Beyoncé, but in regard to ourselves, we all have something that we are good at.

It is sometimes difficult to recognise your own talent and that is why others, such as teachers, friends and parents are a great support. We often don't recognise our own talents, because they come so naturally to us that we think 'anyone can do this, it's very easy'. And those exact things that come so easy to someone are often their talents. This could be being courageous, being very creative, recognizing the needs of animals, being a good listener, being able to express thoughts very clearly to others, or being able to resolve conflicts. Anything that a person is good at 'by nature' can be called a talent. The difference with an 'acquired strength', which is something that someone

is only good at through many hours of training, is that these kinds of strengths often don't bring as much joy and energy as a talent. They sometimes only cost energy. Someone can become very skilled at doing administration, simply because of many hours of education and experience, but if it doesn't bring any joy when applying this quality, it is most likely not a natural talent.

It is very useful for any person, and especially for children, to know what their talents are because it will give them a sort of superpower that can help them deal with challenges in life, be happier and make the world a better place. Research has shown that it works much better if people in a team manage to employ their own unique talents and focus on how they can apply these even more, than when every member focusses on their 'weaknesses' and tries to improve these. This latter approach has very minimal impact and often costs a lot of time, energy and frustration.

When introducing the topics of talents, it is important to mention that each person has its own unique talents and allowing people to use them in any kind of context will favour their own wellbeing and that of the group (e.g., sports team, work, school, family) context. An example can be made using the narrative of a football team: every player plays in a position where their unique talents are best expressed. Making the goalkeeper the striker is often not a good idea. It probably won't make the goalkeeper very happy because it is not his talent, and the team will have more difficulties scoring goals. However, there is always the possibility of improving certain qualities and that is, of course, also to be encouraged. We don't intend to say that children should only focus on their natural talents, but having a clear sense what we are naturally good at will help us navigate through life. And throughout life, new talents may show up as we are being placed in new situations or new settings for which we need to explore and develop parts of us that we maybe never 'thought we had in us'.

There are many uncovered talents simply because the child has never been in a position to explore them. Good reflection or start-up questions are 'What do you love doing? Or 'What have you been interested in trying?'

2. [optional]

The purpose of this step is to become more familiar with recognising talents in others through narratives as trying to find them in yourself can be quite a big step for a child. Depending on the time available, you can do an individual (or group) exercise in which you ask the children to make a drawing (or simply mention) their favourite animal. Together, or individually, you can try to understand which talents this animal has, which can be more than one. A dog is of course very good smelling, but he can also be great at cuddling. An ant can carry up to 5.000 times its own body weight, and is very dedicated to both its task and role in the community.

You can do this activity in many ways, based on the characteristics of the group: individually, smaller groups or with the entire classroom.

People often choose an animal with talents that are either similar to their own or complementary. Asking the child why they like the animal and if they think there are similarities between them and the animal may give you some extra insight.

3. Talent show: myself

This step aims to help children recognise their own personal talents.

Hand out the talent sheet and ask the children to do a little brainstorm about their own talents (first sheet). At this point it, can become quite challenging for children to honestly look at themselves and recognise or name talents. A little help from the teacher can be very valuable at this point when you see the child is being challenged.

The second phase is to ask the child to make a drawing of themselves in which their talents are being expressed and can be recognised.

4. [optional] Talent show: my classmate

The purpose of this step is to help children recognise talents in others and to also receive positive feedback from classmates about what their own talents are.

Ask the children to work pairs with someone they like and trust (if possible). Then hand out Sheet 2 of Annex 5 and ask children to do the same thing as in step 3, but now in relation to the other child: (1) listing to some talents and (2) making a drawing. The children may also start nice conversations and share with each other what talents they recognise and how they see these being expressed.

The drawing part can also be made more fun. You can, for example, ask them to draw the classmate as an animal that has their talents, or to make a new superhero character of the other person (that has their talents).

5. [optional] Talent show: my parent / caregiver

The purpose of this step is to receive positive feedback from an adult closely involved in the child's upbringing and for the parent/ caregiver to learn and discover the child's talents.

This step requires children to take the exercise home and ask one of the parents/caregivers to fill in Sheet 3 of Annex 5. The exercise is exactly as in the previous step but then filled in by an adult that knows the child well. Instead of a drawing the parent/caregiver can also select a few pictures of the child in which the talents can be recognised.

6. [optional] Applying the talents

This step has the purpose of helping children apply and further develop their talents in their day-to-day life.

Here you invite children to think a bit more out of their comfort zone. The task is to stimulate thinking about how the children can apply and further develop their talents further in day-to-day situations.

For example, you can ask them:

- How they could use these talents in challenging situations or how these can be applied to improve the social dynamics in the classroom.
- You can also simply help them to think about how they can further develop their talents.

Similarly, you can ask the children if they would like to learn certain new things that they have always been interested in. For example, if a child has always wanted to learn to play the guitar, there may be a hidden talent. If you can help the child to make a plan of how they can actually realise the development of a new talent, you help them realise that talents are nothing without a certain dose of dedication and perseverance.

The more concrete the plans are, the more likely they will be realised!

7.

Invite the children to share the results of the session with parents/caregivers and other people that they feel safe with. Of course, don't force them to share anything they don't want to, as one of the things that happens during this session is that the trust between teacher and child is strengthened, which is a wonderful and important thing in the classroom.

Reflection / Debriefing

Continuous reflection is an important element in this exercise, as for each step you could deepen the level of understanding by reflecting. In the steps above some guiding reflection questions are provided. During the sessions and at the end of the session you can have a general reflection moment asking for example:

- What did you learn about yourself today?
- What did you learn about others?
- How would you like to share the things we talked about today with your parents/caregivers and how do you think they can help you?
- How can we help understanding each other better in our classroom?
- How was it to talk about talents? How is it to recognise them in yourself and in others?

Variations

Some options for variations are provided in the description of the activity. The group setting for this activity is not specified, and you can experiment with doing it with the entire group, smaller groups or pairs or, of course, a mix where you go from entire classroom activity to smaller groups to the entire classroom again. Please use your own experience and intuition when you work with your own classroom.

Tips:

The key learning element of this session is in its reflection. As a facilitator you can also share your own talents with children.

It is important to establish emotional safety rules so all children will feel at ease to share such personal things.

Use the activity to build and strengthen the emotional bond between you and the children and between them. It's a wonderful thing to be able to know what goes on inside such a young human being and to understand what they think makes them special (mostly unconsciously!).

This activity is a preparation for the activity 'Values and Talents into Action' which you can explore with children as a next step.

My name: _____ Date: _____

What do you really love doing? Or what have you been interested in trying?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Please draw yourself in the square below, making it clear which talents you think you have.

Name of your talented classmate: _____ Date: _____

Which talents do you recognize in your classmate?
What do you think their superpowers are?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Please draw your classmate in the square below, making clear which talents you think they have.

This drawing was made by: _____

Name of the talented child: _____

Date: _____

Which talents do you recognize in the talented child?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Please draw the talented child in the square below, making clear which talents you think this child possesses.

This drawing was made by: _____

10. A Different Story

Level of difficulty:
Medium

Topic (s):
critical thinking

Objectives:
- to develop critical thinking of pupils
- to raise awareness on stereotypes and how they influence our perception of other people
- to provoke discussion about the topic "are things/people the same as we perceive them?"

Time:
30 mins

Age:
8 - 11 years (6 - 24 pupils)

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Choose a picture from a magazine, the internet or your personal album that relates to the theme you would like to address in your activity. Cut the picture into two pieces in such a way that each half separately "tells a story", but when put together give a "different story". Stick the two halves on separate sheets of paper. Prepare at least one picture per participant.

Materials
Pictures related to the topic (see examples in Annex 6) you would like to address - printed and cut in half, as well as paper and pencils, for each child.

Implementation
1. Tell the group that you are going to give each of them a picture and that, individually, they must write down what they think the picture is about, who the characters are, what is happening, where the action is taking place, etc.

2. Give each participant a copy of the first half of the picture and ten minutes to think and write their story – to create their own version of what they see and thus become creative writers.

3. Ask the participants to share what they wrote. If the group is big, this can be done in small groups of 4 to 6 people or in pairs. The teacher can divide the groups/pairs in advance.

4. Give out the second half of the picture and ask children to review their impressions of what they have seen. Ask them to compare their own stories with the stories that the whole picture shows – how similar or different are they? How would they modify their story now?

Reflection / Debriefing

Structure the debriefing around the questions that would help to provide an analysis of the ways in which we organise and review information. The following questions will help.

- What did you think the picture was about?
- Who were the people in the picture? Where were they? What were they doing? Why were they there?
- What made you imagine these things (rather than other things)?
- What were your assumptions based on?
- Did the picture have a different meaning to different members of the group?
- In what way did your thoughts and perceptions change when you saw the whole picture?
- In real life, when something happens or we see only a small part of the "picture", we nonetheless try to make sense of it.
- What happens if you then look at it again, in a wider context, and get a different point of view?
- Do you change your mind, or do you stick to your original position?
- Why is it hard sometimes to be honest about changing our minds?

Variations

The exercise is easy to organise for both offline and online environments. For the online environment, you can send the first part of the picture to each student or provide a link where they can see the first part or show it to all pupils at the same time on the screen. When they finish the first part of the exercise (writing a story on the white paper), let them share with others in pairs or small groups, then show them the second part and proceed with the same flow as offline. You can use breakout room sessions for group work in an online environment.

You can let participants search for their own pictures in a magazine – pictures that would bring different meaning if it were shown in two parts. You can also develop activity further, by asking each pupil to find their own picture in a magazine and then create a common story by putting all the pictures together.

Tips

Try to find pictures or drawings that are appropriate for the group and relevant to their lives and needs, or which are about an issue that you want to explore.

This activity helps to see that the things/people are not what might imagine and think about them at first glance. Looking at a same situation from another angle and from a wider context on the same situation can be helpful – like when the second part of the picture is added. The idea is to encourage children to be more aware and critical of the things they hear people say, what they read, or the pictures they see, especially pictures in the news and in advertising. Writing and telling a story helps to develop creativity and story-telling skills.

Adapted from "Every picture tells a story" from the T-Kit on Intercultural learning of the Council of Europe.

Annex 6 – Examples of pictures

11. Discover the Importance of Communication

Level of difficulty:
Medium

Topic (s):
communication skills, cooperative behaviour

Objectives:
- To raise participants' awareness of the importance of communication
- To develop participants' communication and cooperation skills, as wellbeing is non-competitive
- To provide participants theoretical and practical background on communication and its processes

Time:
40 minutes

Age:
6 - 11 years old

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
In this activity, participants will work in pairs.

You will need a large space to set up chairs two-by-two and back-to-back (see photo), allowing at least 1.5 meters between pairs of participants; two blank sheets of white A4 paper per participant, one coloured marker for each participant. Set of two simple drawings for the facilitator (see samples in handout materials). Place the A4 paper and a coloured marker on each chair.

Materials
- Large space, chairs, A4 paper and markers
- Cards with hints for facilitator

Implementation

PART 1:

1. Tell pupils that they are going to work in pairs. Ask them to sit two-by-two and back-to-back. Tell them that each pair has to define who is going to be person number one and person number two.

2. Inform pupils that they are going to draw. Explain that number one is going to draw, and number two will explain what to draw, while they sit with their backs to each other, and cannot look at what the other participant is drawing. They will have 3 minutes to complete the task.

3. The task of person number 2 who is going to explain what to draw is to do it in a way that person 1 be able to replicate the original drawing. Ask all persons 2 to come to you and show them the drawing you want them to replicate (see example in Annex 7). Make sure that persons 1 cannot see what the drawing looks like. Explain once again that they are not allowed to see what the other is drawing and that their task is to explain what to draw so that their pair is able to replicate the original picture they are seeing (the drawing you are showing).

4. After that, the persons 2 return to seats. Tell the pupils that they will have 3 minutes for drawing once you announce the start of the exercise. They then perform the task, and after 3 minutes you announce that time is over, and they can no longer draw. Ask the participants not to show the drawings to others for now and start debriefing. Participants remain in pairs, sitting back-to-back as they were, for the debriefing exercise.

Reflection / Debriefing

Below is a suggestion for debriefing. Please, feel free to adapt the questions according to your pupils' needs.

- Was it interesting to make the drawing? Was it easy or difficult to draw?
- What made it easy? What made it difficult?

Tell persons 1 that they can now show their drawing. Ask them to raise drawings in a way that others can see them. Show participants the "original" drawing.

- Are the drawings similar to the original one?
- What is similar? What is different?

Pay attention to the drawings that are similar to the original one, ask the pairs what kind of explanation helped them to draw and get such a similar result.

- Ask participants whose picture outcome is far from the original. What kind of explanation is needed in order to make a drawing similar to the original?

Show participants the cards with original drawing and explain each of the hint cards, keep the dialogue with participants.

PART 2:

1. Tell pupils to now switch roles - the person who was drawing will now give the explanation and the other person will draw. Tell them that this time it is important to keep in mind all hints they already know. Invite those pupils who will explain what to draw to come to you and show them a different picture (see example in Annex 7). Repeat the same steps as the first part. When the 3 minutes are over, stop the drawing.

2. Ask the participants to show the pictures again. Show the original picture. Ask them whether this time the result is different / better? How did they manage to make it more similar?

3. Prepare some theoretical information on communication theory for children.

Annex 7

12. Emotional Museum

Level of difficulty:
Medium

Topic (s):
emotional literacy, self-awareness

Objectives:
- To improve pupils' emotional literacy
- To help pupils connect with themselves and their emotions
- To support pupils in understanding what they are feeling at a given moment

Time:
1 hour

Age:
6 – 11

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Paper sheets with the 6 main emotions written on it [fear, sadness, disgust, joy, surprise and anger]. Emotions written in colourful paper to be spread on the floor, pre-prepared. These emotions can be chosen from the wheel of emotions (see Annex 3) by the teacher, based on the students' profile and needs. There should be a balance between pleasant and unpleasant emotions.

There should be a part of the room empty, to allow participants to move and paint on the floor. This space can be ready before you start, or you can ask participants to help you set it up.

Materials
- Coloured sheets with different emotions/feelings
- Paper sheets with main emotions (joy, sadness, anger, fear, surprise and disgust)
- Music (different genres). It can be fun and upbeat.
- Speakers, A3 Sheets, markers, colour pencils, tape

Implementation

PART 1:

1. The paper sheets with the 6 main emotions are put on the walls. Try to leave space between them and use the whole room.

2. The coloured sheets with different emotions connected to the main emotions are distributed face down on the floor, so students are not able to see what is written on them. This is recommended, to allow the students to step out of their comfort zone. Otherwise, they will choose the ones they feel more comfortable with and connected to, for example.

3. Participants are asked to walk around the space, while the music is playing, and stand on one of the cards when the music stops playing.

4. One participant is asked to pick up the card they are standing randomly and to show it.

5. They are asked to tell a personal experience when they have felt the emotion on the card they have chosen. If they do not know the emotion, ask others to help. If no one knows the emotion in question, explain it to the group.

6. This is repeated with each participant, so all take part in the activity (start the music again, let them walk/dance, stop the music and follow the same structure)

7. When they have finished, they are asked to take in turns to place the emotion they worked with on the main emotion card they believe it is most connected to. This is repeated until all participants have chosen an emotion and have talked about it.

PART 2:

1. Turn up all the emotions facing down on the floor and the ones already randomly picked by the students.

2. Each participant chooses one of the emotions on the floor and, on a piece of paper, draws a picture that represents what that emotion is for them and/or how/when/where they feel that emotion.

Reflection / Debriefing

- How did you feel during the activity?
- How was it to connect feelings with moments in your life?
- Did you like to draw the emotions you chose? Why?
- Which emotions were new to you and had never heard of? Did anyone know them before and felt them? Could you explain them?

Tips

Depending on the students' age, there should be a limited knowledge about emotions and their name, and children may be familiar with only a few of them. However, teachers should encourage curiosity to learn new vocabulary on how to describe emotions. This also means the teacher should be ready to explain what each emotion is and give examples of different moments one can feel it. It is not recommended to have only one example of one situation, as this limits the way children see emotions and when it is ok or not to feel it, which is wrong.

The teacher should also give pupils freedom for sharing with each other, and let them present examples as well. The teacher should show appreciation after each child shares their personal story.

Online variation

The teacher can develop this activity in a Zoom class and use the platform Jamboard to represent the walls of the activity, with different pages for the six main emotions. The selection of the emotion can be done in a random way, for example, the child saying stop while the teacher is pointing at turned down papers on their camera.

13. Find Your Treasure

Level of difficulty:
Medium

Topic (s):
self-awareness, growth mindset

Objectives:
- To help children identify what they are passionate about
- To explore what dreams motivate them and make their heart sing
- To discover and establish together the sense of core purpose or life theme

Time:
at least 2 school hours (can be divided in multiple sessions)

Age:
9 - 11

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
No special preparation is needed, just the readiness to motivate and guide children through this hunt for their passion and grit.

Materials
Sheet of poster board, drawing pencils (or other drawing tools), magazines, photographs, glitter glue, stickers, other paper decorations.

Optional: to use a computer for supervised research.

Implementation
Have more than one session planned for this exercise. Pupils can even do it at home as homework for a longer period.

1. For this exercise, children can sit at their regular desk. It is an exercise that is best carried out individually, because it encourages self-reflection and introspection, so try to lessen distractions as much as possible. Allow plenty of time for this exercise – it is a foundational exercise that will bring a lot of clarity on how the child perceives themselves in the world.

2. Provide children with the materials.

3. In this exercise, children are encouraged to make a TREASURE MAP (which figuratively represents their DREAM). Using a sheet of poster board, each child creates the path of their life.

4. They start at the bottom of the poster, with where they are now, by drawing or posting images or text that reflect their current situation. At the top of the paper, they draw or post images or text that reflect what they wish to become as they grow up – their passions, hopes and goals (as imagined at their current age). Encourage them to give it their all, to really feel the passion inside, how it would be if they already were the person they wish to become…

5. Instruct children to draw or post images or text on how they intend to achieve their goal:

- What they think it takes to achieve their dream. Help them to break their big goals/dreams into small achievable steps.
- Encourage pupils to draw or post images or text of all their gifts and talents that will help them achieve their goals.
- Encourage children to present what they have created.

Reflection / Debriefing

- How do you feel after doing the exercise?
- Which part of the exercise did you enjoy the most?
- What have you discovered or learned about yourself?
- Can you tell why you want to achieve this goal in your life?
- Do you know a person or a role-model that has already achieved this?
- What can you learn from that person's experience?

Variations

You can adjust the activity, and instead of encouraging pupils to draw or post images or text of all their gifts and talents that will help them achieve their goals, you can invite them to make a mini interest-map where they write what they like to do, what their interests are (this can be a stand-alone, separate exercise).

The activity can be extended to multiple sessions, each clarifying the path towards the realisation of their talents and potential a little more. The flow can be as follows:

1. Invite pupils to draw or post images or text that reflect what they want to become when they grow up – their passions, hopes and goals (as imagined at their current age)

2. Encourage the child to draw or post images or text on what they fear the most on that path (possible obstacles). They can picture the things they think could hold them back from reaching their goal.

3. Encourage the child to draw or post images or text of possible solutions for those fears and potential obstacles. Allow them to think - if and when these obstacles occur, how can they respond?

4. Encourage children to search for and write on the board examples of famous people who have overcome obstacles and saw their dream come true against all odds (for example: Walt Disney, J.K. Rowling, Michael Jordan, etc.)

5. Encourage them to think how their goal can benefit others: their community, society, humanity.

Online variation can be organised with writing boxes and places where images can be attached. After you complete one stage, you press CONTINUE, and you are taken to the next step on the path and so on… At the end, the entire path to our goal with text and pictures can be displayed and saved.

Tips

Several studies indicate that children are more motivated to overcome obstacles in life and succeed when they have a set-point purpose in their life. By having a certain long-term goal to look forward to (for example, becoming a veterinarian or a doctor, or a policeman, a soccer player, etc.), they tend to accept problems as stepping stones towards that dream instead of blockages that tell them to avoid that path altogether. When the passion and grit is greater than the problem, they easily find ways to overcome obstacles.

Encourage children to use their imagination and to dream big by introducing the exercise with phrases like: "If one day someone writes a book about you, what would you like them to write in that book?" or "if everyone in the world was allowed to become something that makes them happy, what would you be?" or "what would you do if you knew you could not fail?"

This exercise is powerful, because visualising what children want to achieve helps them to develop a positive mental attitude and focus on their passion and purpose, while thinking about their fears helps them face inner obstacles, turning passion into real motivation.

Additionally, creating a dream board fosters grit because it helps children celebrate their passions and link those passions to specific goals they would like to achieve.

Additional resources:

- https://biglifejournal.com/blogs/blog/motivate-child?_pos=1&_sid=9ffdc5de5&_ss=r
- https://biglifejournal.com/blogs/blog/5-fun-goal-setting-activities-children?_pos=4&_sid=2f740b678&_ss=r

14. Talents & Values into Action

Level of difficulty:
Medium

Topic (s):
Self-awareness, self-worth

Objectives:
- To increase conflict resolution skills
- To understand how values are a life compass in decision making
- To understand how strengths are like superpowers, and using them gives you joy and energy
- To understand how to apply strengths and talents in day-to-day situations

Time:
120 minutes

Age:
6-11

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Before doing this activity with children, please make sure you have done the following activities with them:

- "Values: What is Important to Me"

- "Strengths & Talents"

Materials
- Each child needs an overview of their strengths and talents (or 'superpowers'). They also need to have the value sheets from Annex 5 of the exercise "Values: What is Important to Me".
- Paper to write on and pencil/pen.
- "I lose my mind when… and my reaction is…" sheets, one per child
- 2 bags, one large enough to hold sheets of paper, one with the names of all participants

Implementation
This activity is a follow-up of two activities: "Values: What is Important to Me" and "Strengths and Talents". These two preceding activities allow children to develop a sense of what their 'superpowers' are and what they care about in life (values). The purpose of the present activity is to put these into action and to experiment with applying them in day-to-day situations.

1. Integration of my superpower and values.

Step one requires some self-reflection about the previous two activities. Spiderman is a superhero with many talents (such as being able to 'shoot'

spiderwebs or to climb upon any kind of building) and also with many values (he cannot stand injustice, and wants to protect the good people). He uses his talents to cultivate or protect what he finds important in society. When talents and values are put into action in synergy, the impact on the group or society we are part of becomes amplified. Another way of explaining is that when one of the values is threatened (when there is injustice, in the case of spiderman), he feels the urge to get into action, using his superpowers to restore justice.

In this first step, ask the children to recognise any similar situation in their own life, when their values are put under stress and how they responded. Which of their qualities did they use? This could also be a strength that is not a superpower of course.

For example, many children become upset when they see injustice happening in front of them. The way they deal with this is sometimes primitive, expressed with verbal (name calling) or physical gestures (hitting). Other children are more eloquent and are very good at expressing being upset using their talents, such as staying calm and trying to understand the unmet need of both parties and trying to resolve things in a more peaceful way.

You can introduce this step explaining the spiderman metaphor (or something similar) and asking reflection questions such as:

- Why does spiderman only use his superpowers when he sees injustice?
- What other kinds of talents could spiderman have used to resolve conflict in his town (beneficial or not)?
- What do you think the outcome would be?

2. Create your own superhero

In this step you will ask the children to develop their own superhero, based on their own talents and values. Ask them to put the value sheet and the overview of their talents in front of them and to pick the three most important values and three best talents they have.

Give them some time to create their own superhero and think about the following aspects:

- What does your superhero look like?
- When does he get into action?
- What would he like his society (or classroom / schoolyard) to be like? What is the ideal situation?

3. Distribute the "I lose my mind when... and my reaction is..." sheets (one per person).

Each child writes what situation, person, context can make him lose control of their emotions, and what their reaction is in that case. Once all the participants have completed their task, they put the papers in a bag. In another bag, there will be the names of all the children in the group.

4. Theatre

The facilitator takes a piece of paper from the bag of conflicts and two pieces of paper from the bag of names. The children whose name was written on the

papers come out and role play the situation written on the paper, giving a conflictive response.

After this first play, the facilitator asks the children for alternative responses to that situation, where they try to work on the aggressive response, considering the values and talents of their superheroes/superheroines. Peers can also be asked to contribute with values and talents of their own superheroes. The scene is then re-enacted, taking into account the contributions of the superheroes/heroines.

Reflection / Debriefing

Continuous reflection is an important element in this exercise as for each step you could deepen the level of understanding by reflecting. In the steps above some guiding reflection questions are provided. During the sessions and at the end of the session you can have a general reflection moment, asking for example:

- What did you about yourself today?
- What did you learn about others?
- How would you like to share the things we talked about today with your parents/caregivers and how do you think they can help you?
- How can we help you understand each other better in our classroom?
- How was it to talk about talents? How is it to recognise them in yourself and in others?

Variations

You can prepare a bag with papers with different situations of conflicts that may occur in the classroom, school, home, etc. In another bag there will be the names of all the children in the group.

Theatre: The facilitators take a piece of paper from the bag of conflicts and two pieces of paper from the bag of names, the children whose name was drawn play the situation, acting the conflict written on the paper. Then the performance is stopped, and we ask them for alternative responses to that situation, in which they try to work on the aggressive response, and take into account the values and talents of their superheroes/superheroines. Peers can also be asked to contribute with the values and talents of their own superheroes. The scene is then re-enacted taking into account the contributions of the superheroes/heroines.

Tips

The key learning element of this session is in its reflection. As a facilitator you can also share your own talents and strengths.

It is important to establish emotional safety rules so all children will feel at ease to share such personal things.

Use the activity to build and strengthen the emotional bond between you and the children and between them. It's a wonderful thing to be able to know what goes on inside such a young human being and understand what they think makes them special (mostly unconsciously!).

15. You Cannot Eat an Entire Pie All at Once!

Level of difficulty:
Medium

Topic (s):
Growth mindset, problem-solving skills, self-worth, being optimistic

Objectives:
- To help children understand that their current limitations (problems) are not set in stone, and with time and perseverance, they can and will overcome the obstacles they may be facing.
- To learn to view obstacles as challenges
- To support a growth mindset development in children, helping them divide a big problem into small manageable segments for which they can find solutions.

Age:
6 – 11

Time:
1 hour

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
No special preparation is needed, just the readiness to motivate and guide children through this hunt for their passion and grit.

Materials
A circle made of cardboard (it can be a paper/picknick plate), coloured markers

Implementation
Children can do this exercise at their regular desk. Allow plenty of time for this exercise. Try to lessen distractions as much as possible.

1. Ask children to think of a problem that they have (the "Pie") - the pie represents an obstacle the child is facing.

2. Now, instruct children to slice the Pie: ask children to section the circle into 4 to 8 segments and think of possible causes to the problem. Each slice is a different segment or cause of the problem. Explain that if we can divide the problem in smaller portions and look at its many causes, we are more likely to have an optimistic outcome!

3. For each slice, ask the children to think about whether their thoughts about the problem are permanent ("I'll never be good at math") or temporary ("My friend was talking too much and was distracting me") and whether they are responsible for it ("I should have asked the teacher for

help when I didn't understand") or others ("The teacher didn't teach us this material!").

4. In middle childhood, hopefully most children's problems will be categorized as "temporary" and they'll take at least some responsibility for causing the problem. Point out that these issues are temporary and within a child's control. Encourage them to think about how they can make positive changes to resolve them? Use open-ended questions, for example, "what would happen if you tried your solution?"

5. Congratulate children on their work! Celebrate their effort, determination, persistence!

Reflection / Debriefing

- How was it to do this exercise – easy/ difficult – why?
- What do you think would happen if a person never tried to solve their problems?
- How does it make you feel when you find a solution to a problem?
- What did you learn about yourself today with this exercise?
- Discuss how solving problems helps them grow and what happens if we avoid solving problems… Ask them "if you saw a baby learning to walk and they fell several times in front of you, would you tell them that is better to avoid learning to walk or would you encourage them to try again?"

Variations

Online variation with mind mapping, where the central problem is placed in a balloon in the centre of the page, and there are balloons of editable text attached to it where one can write the causes of the problem, establish ownership and responsibility, and the persistence of the problem. Each central problem balloon has an additional balloon attached where the possible solution is brainstormed.

Tips

Mastering problem-solving skills in childhood results in happier, more self-reassured, confident and independent individuals. When children tackle problems on their own, or in a group setting, they become more and more resilient. They learn to look at challenges from a fresh perspective.

Completing this activity will show children that many obstacles can be overcome with problem-solving attitude and perseverance.

To some children, even small problems can seem insurmountable obstacles, which they try to avoid at all costs. However, if adults give them tools to help them divide a problem into small segments (causes) in order to better see what is at the heart of the matter, children learn to see problems as a part of life and something that gives them opportunity to learn and grow. Understanding the different components of a problem, and what they think about it, gives children a sense of control, and the courage and optimism to overcome the problem.

A great tip from Kodable Blog (https://www.kodable.com/learn/problem-solving-skills-for-kids/) is to Emphasize Process Over Product. This means that, for a middle childhood pupil, reflecting on the process of solving a problem helps them develop a growth mindset. Getting an answer "wrong"

doesn't need to be a bad thing! What matters most are the steps they took to get there and how they might change their approach next time. As a teacher, you can support students in learning this reflection process.

Teaching them THE POWER OF YET is a great strategy to encourage them to accept the level of mastery they are at and move forward in life.

If they say, "I can't do this, it's just too hard!" Remind them to say to themselves, "I can't do this _____ YET.

If they say, "I'm not good at this!" Remind them to use YET at the end. "I'm not good at this _____YET." This gives a lot more room for improvement than just a plain "I'm not good at this."

"I don't understand this!" becomes "I don't understand this YET!"

"It doesn't work.... YET!"

"This doesn't make sense.... YET!"

Additional resources:

- https://biglifejournal.com/blogs/blog/how-teach-problem-solving-strategies-kids-guide?_pos=1&_sid=a550e0226&_ss=r
- https://www.kodable.com/learn/problem-solving-skills-for-kids/

16. Your Task Is My Task

Level of difficulty:
Medium

Topic (s):
Emotional regulation, empathy and compassion, Relationship building and maintaining

Objectives:
- To develop empathy among primary school students
- To enhance the ability to manage emotions
- To work through classroom conflicts

Time:
50 min

Age:
8-11

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
There is no preparation.

Children should also be part of the room setting, for example.

Materials
Chairs, paper, pen

Implementation
1. Teachers and students sit in a circle, with their hands on their legs or knees, they close their eyes and take three deep breaths.

2. After that, the activity starts: each participant is given a piece of paper to write a task or an action that they want the person on their right to do at that moment, in that class (it must be short, so that everyone can do it). The teacher should tell their students that the activity can be fun, sweet, sporty and weird and that it can involve other students as well: "Be creative!". The paper must contain the NAME of the person who writes it, the NAME of the person to whom it is written, and the task or action that you want them to carry out. Examples of tasks: give a hug, put your head in the rubbish bin, show your belly, go to the class next door and say hi to everyone (if this is a possibility).

3. Once the papers are written, the teacher collects them and reads aloud the actions that each person has to perform.

4. Then they are told that, in reality, the actions do not have to be carried out by the person on the right, but rather by themselves (each one completing the action they have written).

5. Finally, they are asked to carry out the actions (depending on the time, it can be one by one or all at the same time).

Reflection / Debriefing:

- How are you feeling?
- How did you feel when you heard the task your colleague chose for you?
- How did you feel when you found out you needed to do the task you wrote for someone else?
- Why had you thought about that specific task?
- Why did you choose a task you didn't want to do yourselves, if that was the case?
- What emotions did you feel when you were doing the task? Why do you think it was so?

Variations:

Pupils are told to write on a piece of paper what they would like to do at that moment in the classroom for 30 seconds/1 minute.

Pupils are asked to do it and, if they need someone to do it with, the teacher will pick the person who is six places away (to the left or to the right of the student), so that they get out of their comfort zone and not seeking the support of people they know best.

Tips:

Observe the children's reactions of throughout the activity, since there are moments of quick awareness that hold information that can be used for debriefing. If necessary, take notes for yourself to be later used in the debriefing part.

17. LEGO Tower

Level of difficulty:
Hard

Topic (s):
agency, communication skills, cooperative behaviour, social problem-solving skills, being active, playfulness

Objectives:
- to develop cooperation and initiative skills of pupils
- to explore ways of suggesting and implementing creative ideas and of dealing with problems
- to practice communication skills in a group and the sharing of responsibilities

Time:
30 - 40 mins

Age:
8 - 11 years (8 to 24 pupils)

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
Divide the class in smaller groups of min 4 and max 6 children. You can pre-prepare the groups and write them down on the board or flipchart paper.

Prepare the working stations for each group - the materials (see below), and space on the floor or a separate table for each team. Place the groups in a way that they do not disturb each other. You may also place chairs around the tables, or chairs in circles to specify the place for each group.

Materials
- LEGO bricks (at least 30 pieces) or other materials to build a tower - the same amount of bricks or materials for each team. The bricks can be of different shapes.
- Paper and pencils for pupils to scratch ideas (if needed).
- Tables - as many as the number of groups you will create (if they work on tables)
- Speakers and a laptop
- A list of motivating/dynamic music
- A countdown clock - digital or physical

Implementation
1. Invite pupils to imagine that they get into a designer- engineers factory or laboratory, and they are given the mission to design and build the tallest LEGO tower. Tell the pupils they are not competing with each other.

   You can formulate it as follows: “Dear engineers. We know that you are very bright and creative, and that you can build tall towers. This time, your

mission is to build the tallest and most stable tower from the materials you will get. The tower should be stable enough to stand independently, without any extra support (e.g. no one can hold it, it cannot be supported by a wall or some other objects). You have limited time: 20 mins to complete the task. Please discuss the ideas and cooperate with other members of your team."

2. Use a visible countdown clock to make the atmosphere more dynamic and (if appropriate) put some motivating music on for the engineers to work.

3. When 20 minutes are over, tell them that time is up and give another 5 minutes for the teams to invent a name and story about the tower.

4. Invite the teams to think of:

    - the name of the team
    - the name of the tower
    - a few sentences about why their tower is special - different from others.

5. When the 5 minutes are over, invite every team to present their tower and tell the story. Invite everyone to visit the tables of each team and after each presentation, give any advice and congratulate each team for their work.

6. Once all teams presented their tower, invite everyone to sit in a circle for the common debriefing.

Reflection / Debriefing

Before discussing cooperation and working in a team for the task, acknowledge the contribution of everyone and every team. It is important that pupils feel that their effort and creativity during the task has been noticed.

- Invite each pupil to think how satisfied they are about the completed task, while counting from 1 to 5, and on 5 invite them to show with their fingers the score that illustrates how satisfied they are, where 1 is minimum - I am not satisfied at all - and 5 is max - I am very satisfied.
- Notice how many 1s, 2s, 3s, 4s, and 5s you have in a group. Ask pupils with different scores to comment why they are choosing such a score. Make sure that pupils from each team speak.
- How did you decide what tower to build?
- Which ideas did you discuss when building the tower?
- Did you draw a sketch or started building without a discussion?
- Why is it important to communicate when working as a team, on a task together?
- What is important for you when you work together with someone else?
- How can you support other team members when you work together?
- What can we do in our class so that everyone can feel good and involved in the future?

Variations:

- If this is appropriate for the class, you can bring a competitive element - that the team that builds the tallest tower wins.
- You can prepare an example of the towers you asking the teams to build. Then the task would be to build the exact same tower. After explaining the task, invite one or two representatives of each group to come to you - they will be the communicators of the team. Their task is to remember the construction, number and colours/forms of bricks, and getting back to the team to communicate this information. They can only verbally participate in the building process - their task is to explain to others how the tower looks and instruct other team members in the building process. When time is over, you fix the result and proceed with presentations and debriefing. You can also continue the exercise, by giving a chance for pupils to add extra elements in the tower, and then finish the task and proceed with the debriefing. If the teams are very quick, you can provide different examples of constructions to build.
- You can also do a variation where each team member is given a specific role to play, which the pupils choose by themselves or by chance. For example: the 2/3 builders, the architect, the supervisor, the inspector, the communicator. Each role can have a certain character: the inspector is quite critical and talks about possible risks; the architect decides what to build; the supervisor decides how to build, the communicator makes sure that the team members communicate with each other, and the 2/3 builders have to do the actual building work.
- You can also experiment with different kinds and quantities of Lego pieces provided for each team in the beginning (life doesn't give each person the same quality and quantity of resources). In this case, you add an additional learning element and the experience of pupils can become more profound.
- If you have longer time for a workshop, minimum 100 mins, you might want to use a longer version of the activity with the break for reflection in the middle of the process when pupils are building the tower. In this case, (see point 3) give the pupils 20 minutes to work on the tower. When 10 mins are over, invite them to take a break and introduce a reflection moment. This is very powerful because it gives them space and time to experiment for the second half. You can, for example, ask the following questions halfway:
    - How do you think you collaborate with your team members?
    - How do you communicate with other team members?
    - What do you do when things don't seem to work out well?
    - How do you feel about the behaviour of other team members?
    - How do you think your behaviour comes across to other team members?
    - Are you more focussed on the final result or on the process of collaboration?
    - What would you like to experiment with in terms of your collaboration skills / team work / communication skills for the second part?

Continue by giving another 10 minutes for the teams to finalise their work, then follow from the point 4 forward.

Tips

It is important you encourage every pupil to engage. You can also assign the roles to each of them (as mentioned above).

With younger pupils, you will need to support them more. Think of inviting older pupils or colleagues to support the teams and encourage their thinking when developing stories.

You can use your creativity and use other materials to build towers.

Adding the reflection in the middle of the building process may support pupils to clearly understand that the activity is not about who makes the biggest tower. It is about learning about yourself and others. It is important that the final debriefing is thoroughly done.

Additional resources

Some inspirational examples:

https://seriousplaypro.com/2014/09/11/team-building-activities-with-lego-bricks/

18. The Orange Game

Level of difficulty:
Hard

Topic (s):
problem-solving, decision-making, ability to express thoughts and opinions, agency, communication skills, social problem-solving skills, being respectful of the needs of others

Objectives:
- To develop conflict management skills
- To discuss ways communicating in conflict situations
- To explore conflict resolution ways/strategies, what it means to be aware of your own needs and respect the needs of others
- To practice expressing thoughts and opinions

Time:
30-40 min

Age:
8-11

Materials

An orange or oranges, a space with as many tables as the number of groups you divide pupils into (e.g. 1 table per 6 pupils), a watch

Step by step description of the activity

Preparation
- This activity works well for 6 - 24 pupils.
- Think how many smaller groups you would like to divide pupils into.
- Make sure you have enough space for all groups, tables and oranges prepared.
- Make sure you have permanent access to a watch.

Implementation
The main idea of an exercise is that children compete for the possession of an orange and discuss how to resolve conflicts.

1. Explain that the group is going to play 'the Orange Game'. Divide the children into two teams. Ask Team A to go outside and wait for you. Tell Team B that in this activity their goal is to get the orange because they need to make an orange juice.

2. Go outside, and tell Team A that their goal in this activity is to get the orange because they need the peel of the orange to make an orange cake.

3. Bring both Teams together inside and ask each Team to sit at opposite sides of the table - facing each other

4. Tell the Teams that they have three minutes to get what they need. Emphasise that they should not use violence to get what they want. Then place one orange on the table, and say, "Go".

Usually someone will take the orange and one team will have it and how the groups deal with the situation will be a surprise. Sometimes, groups will try to negotiate to divide the orange in half. At other times, they will not negotiate at all. Sometimes the groups will communicate further and realize that they both need different parts of the orange; someone from one of the teams will peel the orange, taking the part they need. Do not interfere. After three minutes say, "Stop" or "Time's up".

Reflection / Debriefing

Debrief the activity by asking question:

- How easy or difficult was the task? Why?
- Did your Team get what it wanted before the three minutes were up?
- What was your Team's goal?
- What was the outcome of the conflict over the orange?
- What did you do to deal with the situation/solve the problem/ resolve the conflict?
- Why is it important for people to communicate in order to resolve conflicts?
- Do people always communicate with each other when they are in a conflict? Why or why not?
- Do people always want the same thing in a conflict?
- Have you ever experienced similar situations in your life/school? What was the outcome?
- What kind of ideas do you have about how to act/behave/react in similar situations in the future? How can we communicate to resolve a conflict?

Ideas for action

Develop ideas about how to deal with conflict within the group/class. List these ideas on a chart and hang it somewhere in the room.

Variations

Adaptation for larger groups: Create four groups to have two 'Orange games'' taking place at the same time, by simply forming 2 Teams A, and 2 Teams B, and give the same instructions as indicated above. Have 1 Team A sit opposite 1 Team B, and the second Team A sit opposite the second Team B. Place one orange on the table between each set of Teams. Start and stop the activity at the same time. It may be interesting to discuss the different processes and results in each 'Battle'. You can also invite a colleague to support you if you work with two parallel processes.

You can use another fruit if you wish, or if oranges are not available.

Tips

- After three minutes, take the orange, or what is left of it, to avoid distraction during the debriefing. If pupils were sitting or standing next to the table, bring them into a circle for debriefing.
- During the conflict, you should not try to influence the results but be careful to emphasize to the children that there should be no violence to get what they want.
- You can invite the Teams A and B to sit on the opposite sides of the table. Be prepared to clean the table, as sometimes children become very enthusiastic and totally destroy the orange.

Inspired by the Compasito - the Manual on Human Rights Education with Children (Council of Europe - European Youth Department)

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

www.positivementalhealth.eu