

THE PARENTAL EDUCATION PLAN (PEP)

Guidelines for implementing a
parental education plan

GUIDELINES

- Self-awareness
- Communication
- Relationship
- Emotions



INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 1

Guidelines for implementing a parental education plan (PEP)

RE-ABILITY: Adult education to promote Relational Ability -

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Women's Support and
Information Center
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PRESENTATION

Dear Operator,

this is a useful guide to read the results obtained following the completion of the questionnaire aimed at providing a basic picture of the socio-relational and emotional competences of the mothers who use our services. This tool is the result of intensive research involving approximately 50 mothers and 50 operators from different countries (Italy, Croatia, Greece, Romania and Estonia), who collaborated in the drafting of the questionnaire by participating in semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, focus groups in order to identify the key areas to be investigated. we arrived at the construction of a questionnaire containing 93 questions in its complete version and 45 in its short version, aimed at obtaining information on 4 areas: the area of awareness, communication, relationships and emotions. This is because on the basis of the theoretical reference model, Emotional Intelligence, we believe that developing greater competence in the areas indicated can help mothers to have greater self-confidence, a better ability to connect with their children, a greater ability to create a network around them, and a greater ability to face daily challenges by drawing on their own external and internal resources.

Your task is to support and help mothers to understand in which areas they need to work most and to propose activities to help them overcome the problems they encounter. In the guide you will find hints for possible activities to propose and you will be guided through the whole process leading up to the drafting of the EYP.

Reassure the mother that the scores obtained vary according to the moment they are living, the situations they have experienced and the different difficulties that life poses for them at a given time. The scores obtained are used for the restitution of the personalised "Parenting Educational Project" and this should be considered as a starting point for reflecting on the way of being a parent and dealing with situations.

The realisation of 'competent' parenting implies many relational, educational, caring and emotional abilities, which change and evolve over time in relation to individual, contextual and family changes. First, let us elaborate on the areas on which the questionnaire is based. These are four areas of competence (self-awareness, communication, relationship and emotions) identified as fundamental elements for developing and enhancing parenting skills, for each area specific sub-areas were then identified that provide a more detailed analysis.



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These are transversal and interdependent areas of competence that do not present clear separations from one another. Each of them internally contains dimensions related to the individual, the child, the mother-child relationship and the parental educational model had. specifically:

Awareness area

Subareas

1. personal experiences
2. educational syllabus
3. locus of control
4. educational parenting model

Communication area

Subareas

1. passive
2. assertive
3. aggressive

Relationship area

Subareas

1. empathy
2. trust in the other
3. emotional relations
4. network and social support

Subareas

Emotions area

1. recognising emotions
2. managing emotions
3. respond appropriately to the emotions of others
4. coping

Self-awareness area

Communication area

Relationship area

Emotions area

Consider these guidelines as an in-depth study of the educational needs of resident mothers in the facilities where you work, a tool to support your work. The objective is to update and train new skills to be transferred to the host mothers, in order to improve the ability to offer support and to initiate a renewal of professional practices.

The self-administration questionnaire is designed as a necessary tool for the construction of the EYP and for observing change following the identification and achievement of goals. During compilation, the mother will be accompanied by a reference educator, your presence will be useful to the mother who may need support (for understanding a question, for example) and it is useful to you who can note down any aspects that need attention and more work.



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Self-awareness area

Self-awareness, in scientific terms, refers to the ability to recognise one's own existence and that of others. From a psychological point of view, it refers to the ability to understand oneself and this involves recognising:

- one's own needs and desires
- strengths and weaknesses
- personal history
- ways of reacting to situations
- emotions and our reactions
- the habits and thought patterns we use
- social preferences

These are just some of the aspects that mothers should reflect on in order to begin a path of full self-awareness.

Knowing oneself allows one to learn to make predictions on how to deal with various everyday situations, thus being able to live more prepared for events, with the ability to be able to choose situations, behaviours and attitudes that are more functional to achieving our goals. Being more aware also increases one's ability to analyse, understand and review events, with the consequent possibility of not making future mistakes and adopting appropriate behaviour. Things are not as they seem to our senses at a very quick and instinctive first perception, so developing awareness also helps to improve our concreteness and effectiveness.

Self-awareness arises first and foremost from self-observation, an observation to be made without judging oneself, training oneself to observe, listen and hear oneself, means understanding what can be improved and what one must accept constructively and critically.

Being able to always have self-awareness is not easy as it requires one to observe oneself objectively and make the most functional and useful choice without letting oneself be overwhelmed by one's feelings.

By training self-awareness, it is possible to gain self-confidence, and in this way the mother will have a better chance of finding personal fulfilment than someone who does not possess or cultivate it.

Within this area, four sub-areas have been identified:

- *Personal experiences*
- *Educational style*
- *Locus of control*
- *Educational parenting model*

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES



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This sub-area aims to investigate the mother's awareness of her experiences, the causes that led to her placement in the community, and her ability to choose the best solution for her and her children. It is fundamental to make mothers reflect on how much their experiences and moments of difficulty have changed their way of life, personality, ways of observing reality and making decisions. Possessing an adequate awareness of one's own experiences enables the mother not only to have a good relationship with herself but also to be able to entertain functional interpersonal relationships. Acknowledging one's own resources and identifying and sharing goals enables one to do work on oneself that will constitute positive baggage for personal and parental growth. Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"I am here to protect my children"***

The need to be placed in a community is dictated by the fact that the mother feels that her children are not living in a protective environment, the choice, which could be personal or dictated by the services, aims at protecting the children and the mother could be more or less aware and involved in this decision. If the decision is not shared and therefore might have been a forced placement, the mother might not agree with it. One of the future goals to be achieved will be to lead the mother on a path of reflection on her own life context, the difficulties she has experienced, situations of violence suffered (direct or assisted) and the issue of child protection.

- ***"I am experiencing a difficult time from which I will soon emerge".***

Acknowledging that she is experiencing a difficult time is an important aspect, timing is another element to work on. The mother often fears long periods of time in the community, but it is not the quantity but the quality of the time spent and the willingness to use all her resources to get out of a difficult situation that is important.

If the mother does not share the idea that she is going through a difficult time, here too it will be necessary to get her to reflect on why she is in the community and to recognise that everyday life is made up of good times and difficult times that sometimes need more professional help.

- ***"I decided to ask the services for help"***

The decision to seek help may be determined by trust in the services or by seeing this as the only possible way to protect herself and the children. The mother also may not have had any power of decision but may have been 'forced'. In cases where the issue of guardianship does not concern the mother but only the child (for example: a child ingests hashish and the court orders the placement of the child in the community and where the mother also agrees) the mother may feel forced into a placement in order to be close to the child, not being aware at first that the guardianship process also concerns an awareness and will on her part.

- ***"Right now I feel I need help"***

In anticipation of the drafting of the PEG, it is crucial to consider the time in which this question is administered.



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In the first insertion period, the mother may not need help in her opinion (a statement dictated by not sharing the insertion project, for example), here it is necessary to work on the opportunity that the community context and the services' take-over offer to guest mothers, i.e. that of being able to receive concrete, close and present help that can be a reason for growth.

On the other hand, at the end of the course, the mother may agree with this statement and therefore feel that she has achieved all her goals and no longer needs help from carers and services and is able to live independently.

- ***'Community/shelter placement was the only possible choice'***

By 'only possible choice' we can mean: the mother has no valid support network for an alternative pathway (e.g: the mother following a report of violence suffered does not have a relative or friend who can take her in for the time being) and for this reason she could not evaluate other alternatives; or the intervention of the services did not leave any possibility to evaluate a different support pathway and for this reason there was no possibility of choice; or the mother considers a pathway within the community to be necessary, as she can receive adequate support from an educational team that will accompany her towards a pathway of awareness of her situation and the achievement of an independent life.

- ***"I am convinced of the choice I made, that is, I asked for help".***

The mother will only agree if the inclusion was her choice, it is important to understand and make the mother question what her motivations were for asking for help and to recognise the strength she had in a difficult time in completely changing her own life and that of her children.

- ***"I think there may be other solutions (staying at home and getting help, going to live with my parents for example)".***

In the event that the mother does not agree with placement in a care facility, she may feel that there are other types of solutions. Considering that the court and the services have deemed a protection pathway characterised by community placement to be necessary, the objective to be achieved will be to foster an awareness that the possible solutions were not adequate for the moment of difficulty and the achievement of child protection objectives.

- ***"I am aware of the goals to be achieved"***

With this statement it is necessary to understand what the mother's goals are, which may not coincide with or may not be the totality of the goals identified by the team and services.



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Based on the score obtained:

ADEQUATE AWARENESS OF ONE'S OWN EXPERIENCE (23-32)

The mother is fully aware of her own experiences. This enables her to have a good relationship with herself and to have functional interpersonal relationships. She is able to recognise her own resources and is aware of the motivations for entering the community. She identifies the necessary goals to be achieved to improve her parenting skills.

DISCRETE AWARENESS OF ONE'S OWN EXPERIENCE (16-23)

The mother is not fully aware of her own experiences, she understands that she is going through a difficult time but needs to be supported in setting realistic goals and becoming fully aware of what has led to the difficult situation.

LACK OF AWARENESS OF ONE'S OWN EXPERIENCE (8-15)

The mother has no awareness of personal experiences and how these have influenced her way of being, her ability to relate and her parenting skills. She is not able to recognise the possible resources present, has no awareness of the motivations and stay in the community.

EDUCATIONAL STYLE

This sub-area intends to analyse the educational style adopted by the mother, no specific style will be identified but the answers will tell us whether or not the educational style is appropriate for the healthy growth of the children.

The mother will adopt a style, also referring to the model adopted by her parents, and also her experiences and relationship with her partner mean that she lives her parental role with her own specificity and adopting a unique approach, the important thing, however, is that this approach is consistent and functional.

Being able to reflect on the style adopted and the strategies used to bring up their children is an opportunity to stimulate change in crystallised situations and to get mothers to set out with clearer ideas and goals.

The parenting style considers both the level of control, by which we mean the pressure exerted by the mother to stimulate appropriate behaviour in her children, and the level of support, understood as emotional closeness, willingness and ability to meet needs. It is the balance of these two components that decrees the positivity or negativity of the emerging parenting style.



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Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"I talk to my children so that they respect the rules".***

The mother may have doubts about how to understand the term 'rules', as she may consider the rules to be those she imparts to her children and believes to be right or the rules shared within the community. There is not always full agreement between what the mother considers necessary for her children to respect and what the educational team tries to share. It may be useful to analyse any dissonance and reflect, together with the mother, on which rules are most conducive to a serene growth for the children and an appropriate and respectful social life.

- ***"I express affection towards children with outward expressions (kisses, cuddles ...)"***

The mother may not be used to expressing affection with kisses and cuddles but adopts different ways of showing it. The different ways may be dictated by having had parents who were themselves detached or who rarely expressed affection in this way. Putting the mother in front of the possibility of modifying her own ways of expressing affection could make her reflect on what she has missed and what she could not let her children miss, beginning to be more affectively present with kisses, hugs, cuddles ...

- ***"I am used to dialogue with my children".***

In the event that the mother has newborn children, support her in imagining the relationship while growing up and thus the possibility of having a dialogue with her children and the importance of communication in their future relationship. The mother could start conversing with the child from an early age. An interesting aspect could be to understand what the mother means by dialogue, and if she herself asks what is meant by 'dialogue', we could say that we mean trying to understand her children, their thoughts, their dreams, the emotions they experience, but also their difficulties, doubts, insecurities.

The mother should have an open and serene dialogue, simple but profound, considering that each evolutionary stage experienced by the children requires recalibrating the methods and times for dialogue, recognising the children as progressively more mature and aware interlocutors. This is an open and flexible process, which must always be able to adapt to the changes and different stages of growth of the children.

- ***"I used to reprimand my son/daughter for 'wrong' behaviour "***

The mother, in relation to the child's age, may, from an early age, adopt punishments (e.g. taking away a toy, not putting him in her arms, letting him cry) and so it is necessary to assess, also in relation to age, how the mother is used to punishing her child. The mother must be able to read the child's behaviour, therefore not consider it 'wrong' a priori, but try to understand the reasons why the child behaves in a certain way rather than another (he may be tired, he may not know how to handle frustrations, he may be stressed, he may want to draw attention to himself).



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It would be useful, ask the mother, to give some examples by reporting a situation in which her child behaves in a 'wrong' way and her possible sanctioning reaction, and to reflect together on whether those were functional or not and what other possible strategies could be adopted.

- ***"I am willing to question my way of educating"***

In the event that the mother is willing to question her own way of educating, it will be useful to understand what, in her opinion, are the aspects that need to be worked on, what she intends to change, and what, in her opinion, are the problematic aspects of her own educational model. It is essential to remind the mother that there is no single way of bringing up her children, but that there are ways that may be more or less suitable for their growth.

If the mother feels that her model is adequate and does not want to question it, it will be useful to give the mother some practical examples, observed by the team, which may show the need to evaluate new strategies in specific situations.

- ***"Faced with a behaviour of my son that I would like to sanction I raise my voice."***

The mother might raise her voice because she feels that her children will listen to her in this way, or for example because in this way she knows she is mortifying them and they will then stop behaving inappropriately. It might be useful to propose practical examples where the team has adopted effective communication with the children without raising their voices and the consequences.

The mother may find it difficult as to which response to give because she does not always find it useful to raise her voice to sanction her child, but has done so in the past under certain circumstances. The mother in this case must take into consideration whether she uses this way of reprimanding her child most of the time or there have been only a few times in the past.

- ***"Faced with a behaviour of my son that I would like to sanction, I slap him."***

The use of violence could be seen as a useful method to make the child behave inappropriately. Again, it is useful to make the mother reflect on the consequences of the slap and how incisive it was with regard to whether or not the child may behave inappropriately according to her point of view (fear of receiving more slaps, taking this sanction as an example of behaviour in other circumstances ...).

- ***"I involve him/her in the choice of things to do".***

The mother may consider it more or less important to share with her child the things to do, she may not even involve him in those that concern him most, imposing a certain activity. If this is the mode of intervention, it is necessary to understand why the mother does not consider it necessary to involve her child or inform him about things to do, or if she does so occasionally what the occasions are.

- ***"I involve him/her in the decision-making process".***



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The possibility of involving children in the decisions to be taken also depends on the choice to be made and the age of the child. Choosing together and not substituting oneself should empower the child who will feel part of a family life project. The mother may always consider her child to be too young for her to make a decision and take his place even with respect to choices that concern him. The team has the task of providing the mother with strategies and ways of sharing choices with the child with respect to the age and extent of the decision.

- ***"Rules within my family are shared".***

Sharing rules requires that all family members know and abide by rules, it is important that children also understand that there are rules and that these, according to their age, are respected. It is important to understand whether there are shared rules, how they are shared and how they are questioned.

- ***'I am willing to listen'***

The mother might more or less agree with this statement, it would be interesting to understand if she is willing to actively listen, with the aim of truly understanding the point of view, motivations, thoughts and expectations of others, suspending any judgement. The mother might be willing to listen to her family and children, but less inclined to listen to the services or the educational team because she might not consider it useful for her.

Based on the score obtained:

APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL STYLE (28-44)

The mother provides the child with a positive rule system, with clear, consistent rules appropriate to the child's level of development, explaining the reasons for these rules. This allows the child to follow them in a democratic, shared and participative manner. The mother does not resort to punitive methods and encourages the child to communicate its feelings.

INADEQUATE EDUCATIONAL STYLE (11-27)

The mother imposes rigid and unchangeable rules on her children without explanation, tends to lose patience easily and uses a high tone of voice in order to be heard. The mother does not demand responsible behaviour from her child and does not exercise control or authority over him. If the mother does not exercise her authority, the child cannot rely on safe guidance. The absence of clear and consistent rules leads to confusion in the child and from this may also result in problems in future social relationships.



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LOCUS OF CONTROL

The expression locus of control literally means the '*place through which control is exercised*', more simply we can define it as the degree of control perceived by each individual over life events.

The type of locus of control of each of us is influenced by personality, culture and family of origin, as well as by a series of positive or negative reinforcements received throughout life.

The family is the first environment in which the child learns to give meaning to events, its actions and their consequences, so the development of the locus of control is greatly influenced by family style.

There are two types of locus of control: internal (internal attribution of control: I control my life) and external (external attribution of control: fate controls my life).

For example, people with an internal locus of control grew up in families that place particular emphasis on commitment, responsibility and constancy in achieving a goal; conversely, those with an external locus of control are more likely to have come from families that exert little control and do not regard taking responsibility as central. But with the passage of time and different life situations, it is possible that the locus of control may change.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"A lot of what happens to me is probably only due to chance".***

The mother may not hold herself responsible for the events that led to her placement in the community or other events that occurred, but feel that bad luck or good fortune played a decisive role in her life. Awareness of the fact that making decisions or not making decisions at a certain time can have an influence on the present but also on the future is a fundamental aspect in order to be able to build a conscious and realistic life plan.

- ***"I can only control my problems if I have external support".***

The possibility of external support is always important, in every person's life, but it is also crucial to assess the ability to handle problems independently and to know how to ask for help at appropriate times. The mother might consider as 'external support' a service, the community, the family, the partner, the friendship network; it is important to understand what this external help is for her, how much she can count on it, and how valuable it is for a possible resolution of the problem.

- ***'Achieving success is a matter of hard work'***

Acknowledging the need to work, to achieve goals, to question oneself in order to achieve success is an important aspect to work on in order to give a sense of independence and full decision-making power over one's own life. Mothers placed in the community are often unmotivated or do not see how their situation can change, dictated by the fact that they feel alone and deprived of everything, which is why it is important to work on their personal resources and abilities and make sure they



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achieve short-term goals in order to reach the final objective (which often coincides with an autonomous life path alongside their children outside the community context). Success requires time, work, good and bad days, commitment and patience.

- ***'Luck has little or nothing to do with success'***

The mother may feel that luck can completely or totally influence the achievement of success or not, it is important to understand in which situations she feels luck has determined success/failure (e.g. 'bad luck caused him to be placed in the community, my son accidentally swallowed some medicine, he was sick and they called social services at the hospital'; 'I was arguing with my husband for trivial reasons, he pushed me slightly and by bad luck I hit a corner and hurt myself'...).

- ***"I think that a person can truly be the author of his own destiny".***

Complete awareness of one's own abilities makes a person feel like the author of his or her own destiny, regardless of whether he or she is lucky or not. She should be accompanied along a path that makes her aware of the fact that nothing is literally fateful or decided except our daily actions. What we do has a direct reflection in life, just think of the range of possible reactions we can have to a negative or positive event.

- ***"I am confident in my ability to deal successfully with the problems that will confront me in the future".***

Mothers may be more or less in agreement in recognising that they have skills that are useful in solving and coping with the problems that life presents. Strengthening these capacities or realising that one has skills or the openness to acquire new ones is a fundamental aspect of pursuing a life project.

- ***"When I make plans I am sure that I will be able to carry them out."***

What we set out to achieve is not always achieved and this may lead to failure or simply to a different way of achieving a goal. The mother must be aware of the fact that along the way, not only in relation to the community placement, but also in life in general, it is possible that the plans made along the way require changes, dictated by life situations that we had not foreseen. The mother must be aware of this possibility, overcome her sense of frustration and use her own resources to overcome the difficulties.

- ***"It is up to me to solve my own problems and mistakes".***

The mother must be able to balance her own ability to solve problems and her ability to ask for help in times of difficulty. It is important to reflect on the 'mistakes' / 'problems', what they are for her, if they are present in her opinion, whether one can really speak of 'mistakes/problems' and whether it is possible to consider receiving help to change a behaviour, to remedy the 'mistake/problem', what this help could be and who she could ask for it from.



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○ *'People are victims of circumstances beyond their control'*

Mum may have this view of an absence of control over events regardless of the actions taken. We cannot always control all circumstances and all eventualities because decisions made by other people may or may not influence our lives (e.g. the judge's decision to place mum in a community), but we must bear in mind that we have the power and the faculty to intervene, without being victims but doers.

Based on the score obtained:

INTERNAL LOCUS (23-36)

The mother with an internal locus of control believes that her life and her current condition depend on the way she behaves and acts; she holds herself responsible for everything that happens in her life and believes she is in full control.

OUTER LOCUS (9-22)

The mother with an external locus of control believes that any success or failure depends on external factors, perceives events as unpredictable, shows low self-esteem and low self-efficacy.

EDUCATIONAL PARENTING MODEL

Being a parent is a unique growth opportunity that allows you to develop new competences and possibilities to reflect on knowledge, skills, abilities (personal, professional, social...) and use them in everyday life. The skills we possess are also the result of the experiences we have had, and in fact being a parent depends on the children we have been, the educational models and the parents we have had.

The mother in her relationship with her child will take into account, consciously or unconsciously, the style of education she had and the experiences she had as a child, and this may make her take into account possible 'mistakes' made by her parents, not to be repeated in her family context.

The mother should remember the child self and understand how much the educational model she had was more or less constructive for her, whether she nowadays has similar ways with her children and how she would have liked her parents to behave towards her.

The practitioner's task is to listen and identify the salient aspects of the mother's life and use them as a source to produce greater awareness of her own past. Often we are not able to give an objective



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and lucid reading of life events and to do so we need someone from the outside to help us give a new letter.

The questions posed are also intended to make the mother reflect on the educational methods implemented with regard to her children, rethinking herself as a child and reflecting on how her children may feel if educational methods are adopted that are not suitable for a serene growth, may lead her to question the educational model adopted.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"To sanction your behaviour, your parents/guardians used to raise their voices".***

Regardless of the answer given, it is important to understand whether the mother remembers any specific situations in which the parent raised her voice and whether she shares that mode to this day. This could lead to a reflection on the ways in which the mother has acted in situations similar to the one in which she is a parent today.

- ***"To sanction your behaviour, your parents/guardians used to slap you".***

The violence suffered could be justified and belittled by the mother, investigating the emotions she felt could make her feel closer to her child if she acted in similar ways.

- ***"Your parents/guardians involved you in decisions".***

The way in which decisions were shared may have set a positive or negative example to the mother, who may remember an event in which she did not consider such an opportunity functional.

- ***"Your parents/guardians were willing to listen".***

Through this question we can investigate in which ways and in which situations, the mother felt listened to and in which less and whether these experiences helped her to dedicate time to listening to her children and to understand their importance.

- ***"Your parents/guardians expressed affection with outward expressions (kisses, cuddles, saying 'I love you')"***

It is possible that one of the parents may have been more inclined to express affection with outward expressions, it would be helpful to understand which of the parents, under what circumstances, what shortcomings they felt and how this, in your opinion, is reflected in their relationship with their child.

- ***"Your parents/guardians used to have a dialogue with you".***

Dialogue is an important aspect within a relationship, the mother should reflect on how important the presence or absence of parental dialogue was for her.

- ***"Your parents/guardians used to reprimand you for 'wrong' behaviour "***



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The mother should remember what punishments were given to her, whether she found them useful and constructive, and whether she repeats the same methods with her children.

Based on the score obtained:

APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL STYLE (18-28)

The mother received a positive rule system from her parents, with clear, consistent rules appropriate to her level of development, and received explanations regarding the reasons for these rules. This allowed her to follow them in a democratic, shared and participative manner. She did not grow up with punitive ways but was always encouraged to communicate and share her feelings.

INADEQUATE EDUCATIONAL STYLE (7-17)

The parents gave the mother rigid and unchangeable rules without explanation, used to lose patience easily and use a high tone of voice to be heard. The parents exercised either too much authority or not at all by being permissive and causing the mother confusion.

ACTIVITIES

No.1 Think of a situation that often makes you sad, take pen and paper and describe it, who is there? What is happening? Where are you? Are there other people? When you have described the scene, divide the paper into two columns:

- In the first column write the title 'What is in my power', here you will describe by points everything you can personally do to handle the situation, everything that depends on you (e.g. smile, be prepared, feel confident, have the knowledge, etc.).

- In the second column write the title "What is not in my power", here you will describe by points everything that you cannot do to manage the situation, because it depends on other factors or other people (e.g. gruff character of a person, my husband is always out, it is raining, there is no money, there is little time...)

Now you have the full picture, take a sheet of paper and make a circle, divide the part that indicates what is not in your power and colour it in, in the remaining part write down everything that is in your power. Reflecting on what you can do and what you do not have the power to change will reduce the problem.



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No.2 Embrace 'doing nothing'

Accept that a day may not even be busy. Claim some time for yourself and set aside some time to do nothing. Relax, be bored, fantasise: do whatever you want as long as it allows you to enter and stay connected to your inner self for a while.

No.3 "Connect with your body "

For this exercise you could set an alarm clock or memo at an unusual time. Stop your activity for a minute and concentrate on your breathing, your posture, relaxing any contracted muscles and other possible signals that your body is communicating to you.

No. 4 'Keep a diary'

Warning: keeping a diary does not necessarily mean writing pages and pages of reports or memoirs every night. A notepad on your bedside table (or a note on your smartphone) can suffice to write down your mood and at least five things that happened during the day. You may struggle at first, but this exercise will train your observation and awareness skills.

No.5 'Get to know a state of mind'

Start by doing this exercise in the presence of an emotion that you perceive negatively, such as anger or fear. Focus on what you feel: how do you feel? What triggered your reaction? How can you get back to feeling good? How do you think the other people involved
feel
~

No.6 'Exclude the background'

TV at dinnertime, an active mobile phone ringtone, accompanying music or an earpiece in your ear are all practices that, while not bad in themselves, promote your disconnection from the world around you. Every now and then, give up the reassuring buzz of the background and focus on essential sounds, such as the voices of others.



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No.7 'Who am I'

This exercise is particularly useful in situations of anxiety or high stress, and is absolutely versatile because you can practise it in any context.

1. Notice five things you can see. Look around and pick out something you would not normally notice, such as a shadow or a small crack in the ground.
2. Notice four things you can feel. Become aware of four things you feel in the present moment, such as the texture of your trousers, the feel of the breeze on your skin or the smooth surface of the table where you are resting your hands.
3. Note three things you can hear and focus on the sounds around you. For example, a bird, the sound of a refrigerator or the sound of traffic from a nearby street.
4. Notice two things you can smell. Pay attention to smells you are not usually aware of and see if they are pleasant or unpleasant. The smell of nearby pine trees, the beach if you live on the coast or a fast food restaurant near your home.
5. notice the taste in your mouth. Focus on the taste of the present moment. You can chew gum, eat something and even notice the taste in your mouth without swallowing anything.

This is an easy exercise that can quickly bring you to the here and now. The time you spend with each sense is up to you, but each object of attention should last one or two minutes. This exercise helps you return to the present with a more conscious state.

No.8 'I am'

This activity should enable the mother to reflect on the relationship between what they think of themselves and what they think of their child (the table can also be used for other reference figures). Divide the sheet into two parts and write down, without thinking about it too much, who you are and who your child is

'PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS'

The film is based on the true story of Chris Gardner, who invests all his savings in developing bone density scanners to sell to doctors. Between bankruptcy and bankruptcy, his wife leaves him, also abandoning their son. Both are faced with a difficult situation that forces them to live on the streets and start from scratch. This film encourages reflection on happiness, dreams, sacrifice, frustration and overcoming difficulties, teaching what values are, the ability to overcome obstacles despite adversity.



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"BEING A PARENT TODAY" Pierluigi Benes

In fact, the story is an ongoing search by Marco and Alessandra for what could make them better parents, and is set against a backdrop of the sea, nature, travel, work, sport and the splendour of fascinating places such as the city of Trieste, Friuli Venezia Giulia and its surroundings. There is also the couple's desire to rediscover happiness in small things and to return to travelling, a purpose that has been put to sleep by the fear of not being able to manage the child properly. It will be very interesting to follow their events, to understand both how they will try to answer the educational doubts that beset them and how their relationship will evolve.

Communication area

Communication is a fundamental process that meets physical, social, psychological and instrumental needs and consists of an interchange of meanings between people. The communicative act consists of various elements:

- broadcaster
- receiver
- context
- code
- channel
- message

Everyone is able to communicate with others, but we are not always able to understand the complexity that communication holds. Through communication we express our ideas, needs, thoughts and emotions and can listen to and understand those of others.

In addition to the content of the message, it is also crucial to observe how this message is expressed; this can be done through the para-verbal channels (tone, rhythm, speed, timbre) and the non-verbal channel (facial expressions, gestures, posture, proxemics), and consistency between these two channels will constitute effective communication.

Effective communication involves knowing how to express oneself congruently in any context, how to express one's ideas, needs, opinions and feelings, how to give feedback, how to ask for help and how to listen actively.

As with all relationships, knowing how to communicate between the members of one's family is crucial for: the peace and harmony of the family itself and for the healthy development of children.



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One must bear in mind that *dialogue begins before birth and grows over time*. One begins to communicate with the child even before it is born, in the womb, in fact, the child begins to feel the mother and the outside world, this communication will evolve and change over time and according to the developmental stages the child goes through. Communication is a channel through which parents enter into a relationship with their children and at the same time provide them with a model to follow.

Within this area, 3 different communication modes were identified:

- *Passive communication*
- *Assertive communication*
- *Aggressive communication*

PASSIVE COMMUNICATION

The main characteristic of this communication mode is the difficulty in expressing one's opinions or feelings. Who has a passive style:

- considers others better than oneself;
- fears the judgement of others;
- has a hard time refusing requests;
- tends to submit to the will of others;
- struggles to propose initiatives and make decisions.

In the long run, the combination of these beliefs, behaviours and emotions can cause the person to experience a sense of loneliness and a progressive loss of self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy.

Those who adopt a passive style may do so because they have a need to be accepted and think that being more attentive to others may help them in this. Or it may be a way to avoid being the object of aggression from others or the fear of being involved in a conflict or feeling inadequate to a situation.

Thus, a passive communication style can be implemented by those who feel inadequate in a situation, are afraid of the consequences of behaving differently, do not know their own needs, are afraid of appearing aggressive.

Passive behaviours are for example: letting others decide, not taking risks, standing on the sidelines, agreeing with the stronger personality, seeking approval from others, not reacting to criticism.

The parent, when adopting this mode of communication, gives in to the children's wishes and requests, does not express his or her opinions and feelings directly, fears judgement, apologises even when he or she should not.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:



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- ***"I try to avoid direct confrontation whenever possible, hoping that the situation will resolve itself."***

The mother might avoid confrontation for fear of the physical or verbal violence she experienced whenever she expressed her own ideas. She might also not consider herself 'equal' to a confrontation, feeling less and less compared to others. The mother could also ask for clarification on this question, perhaps giving an example of a typical situation, here the practitioner could give as examples: your son wants to stay out late but you do not agree; your son's father decides to buy your son a motor but you do not agree

- ***"In confrontations with my son/daughter I tend not to assert my position".***

The mother may decide to behave in this way for different reasons: because she feels guilty about her child's experience, because she is afraid of a possible reaction from her child, because she does not believe that her child can understand or tolerate the idea of a certain situation given the age and for that reason she goes along with it. It is important to understand why he/she does not consider it necessary to assert his/her idea/position.

- ***"I cannot express my ideas and needs".***

In which circumstances can you not express your ideas/needs: in the community, at school, at home, at work? Why is she unable to express them: fear of being judged, fear of violence, feeling less than other people? If the mother is often unable to express her ideas or needs, it is necessary for the drafting of the EYP to understand what the reasons are.

- ***'I try to avoid conflict'***

The mother may, in her first period of insertion, be afraid and for that reason may be afraid of conflicts and avoid them. A conflict could be constructive if we understand it as a divergence of ideas/positions/opinions, this provides an opportunity for reflection and growth without the use of violence (physical and/or verbal). Moreover, within the dynamics of a group of people (be it a family, members of a community, work team) differences are a natural aspect, understanding how to overcome them is a key factor for one's growth.

- ***"I always need to be reassured about my choices".***

Insecurity could be caused by various factors, e.g. the fact that the mother has never had the support of family members since childhood, the fact that her husband/partner has always belittled her and decided for her, the fear of making mistakes. Understanding the position of mothers with respect to the various types of choice (family, social, work, personal) and understanding from whom they seek reassurance, from their partner, from the educational team, from their employer, from their parents, from their children, is a useful tool for identifying the goals to be achieved.



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ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Assertive communication can be defined as the expression of one's needs, emotions and opinions appropriately to the specific situation a person finds oneself in, without causing guilt or anger.

Assertiveness is not only expressed verbally but also through non-verbal communication, showing interest in listening to the people you are talking to, accompanying what they say with your facial expression, assuming a posture of openness towards the other and having a tone of voice that is clear and in line with the message you are sending.

A person who adopts assertive communication:

- is clear about what he wants;
- acts to achieve it;
- respect the rights of others;
- does not feel guilty;
- maintains a good opinion of himself, even if it is difficult or impossible for him to achieve what he wants.

This communicative style implies the ability to understand and listen empathetically to others, the ability to make compromises, to live relationships in an open and willing manner, and to accept the possibility that not everyone likes you or that sometimes a goal may not be attainable, despite your efforts.

Within the family, assertive communication represents the ability to recognise, respect and express one's own emotions, needs, preferences and desires by assuming an attitude of listening and empathy, accepting criticism, knowing how to refuse, admitting one's mistakes and having mutual trust.

Communication with children is an important factor in improving relationships and the family climate, and to do this we need to see them as thinking people other than ourselves.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"When my children speak I listen carefully without judging".***

Judgement may diminish a child's thought, problem or doubt, so although one may have different opinions on a particular concept, it is important for the mother to listen to try to understand the child's point of view.

- ***"In conflict situations with my son I try to mediate".***

The mother tries to find a solution to the conflict by finding common ground, this is only possible if one is free to express one's own thoughts. The mother may let her own point of view prevail without allowing her son to express his reasons, she may also not consider it important to find a mutually favourable agreement.



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- ***"I don't feel I have any difficulty expressing my needs, emotions and desires".***

The mother may have difficulty expressing needs, emotions and wishes with the team and not with friends or family. This could be dictated by the short period of insertion, previous insecurities, lack of trust in the operators. The reasons for what creates a difficulty are useful for understanding how to act.

- ***'I respect the opinion of others and am open to discussion'***

The mother may not always be open to confrontation, she may not be open to dialogue on certain topics (e.g. child rearing, time management, relationship with partner...) because she may feel that she is the only one who can decide and considers every opinion of others as a judgement.

- ***'I pursue my ideas with respect for others'***

Bringing one's own ideas forward is an important aspect, what makes the difference is how these ideas are brought forward. The mother may use unworkable methods, trying to make her own point of view prevail or belittling that of others.

- ***"I understand when others do not react well to what I am saying and I adjust my behaviour to make them feel more comfortable".***

Not on all occasions might the mother have this awareness and might not understand the discomfort experienced by those around her, might, despite being aware of it, not be able to find a way to change her behaviour.

AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION

The parent who adopts an aggressive communication style tends to only satisfy his or her own needs by prevaricating over the children, leaving little room for confrontation and tends to impose himself or herself, speaks directly and inappropriately. Those with an aggressive style believe they are always right, blame others for their mistakes, and are adamant and rigid about their positions. The aggressive style generates fear in the other person and hinders the transmission and understanding of the message they are sending, people who have to deal with an aggressive interlocutor can often feel devalued, disregarded and experience very frustrating experiences.

Aggressive communication is characterised by: a prevailing focus on oneself, a lack of importance attached to the interlocutor, a marked tendency to dominate the other, to condition or manipulate his or her behaviour, to command, not to question one's own way of seeing, to belittle the merits of others, to criticise, to pass judgement, to interrupt, not to let express.



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Using aggressive language to 'educate' one's children can leave a mark on children, railing at them with phrases such as: 'I am ashamed of you', 'You disgust me', 'You are a jerk', 'You are good for nothing' affects the child's self-esteem. Using aggression to educate is always counterproductive. The moment one shows aggression, even if only verbally, the child will no longer focus on his own actions and how to change them, but his attention will be on the parent's actions and behaviour. In this way, the parent completely fails the educational objective because the child is no longer focused on understanding what he or she is doing wrong and how he or she could do better, but is only thinking about how frightening the parent has become.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"In conflict situations with my children I let my authority prevail".***

The mother may not see fit to mediate in conflict situations but to assert her authority a priori without listening to the child. It is important to understand why she wants her authority to prevail, she may be relying on the parental model she has had, she may feel that this is the only way to get her children to listen to her and not rebel.

- ***'In discussions I tend to raise my voice'***

How often and on what occasions does the mother tend to raise her voice? Why does she use this means of communication? She may feel that this is the only way to get her child to listen to her, it may be the only known mode. We should lead the mother to reflect on how this mode, if adopted, negatively affects the child and whether the latter uses the same mode in a discussion.

- ***"I consider my arguments to be superior to those of others "***

The mother might feel superior to the interlocutor, e.g. she feels superior to her son and does not consider his arguments important; or she might feel superior to another user because she has a different cultural level or background; she might feel superior to the practitioner because she might not have enough experience. The mother should be aware of the importance of other people's thoughts, this could enrich her and questioning herself could be a reason for growth.

- ***"I think others are responsible for the things that happen to me."***

The mother should be fully aware that most of what happens in her life depends on her choices and actions, only with full awareness is it possible to start a path of change.

- ***'Other people's arguments bore me'***

Depending on the interlocutor or the arguments put forward, mum might get bored all the time, understand on which occasions, how often and with whom mum gets bored.



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Based on the score obtained:

PASSIVE COMMUNICATION STYLE

The mother with a passive communicative style tends to inhibit her emotions, feels oppressed and intimidated by others and shows difficulty in making herself heard. She tries to avoid conflict and hardly tends to satisfy her need to establish new relationships.

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION STYLE

The mother with an assertive communicative style assumes a behaviour based on the honest expression of her own feelings, needs, desires, thoughts and criticism, this without prevaricating the other and is able to experience relationships in an open and helpful manner.

AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION STYLE

The mother with an aggressive communication style does not accept that she can make mistakes and leaves little room for others, tending to impose herself by lacking objectivity in expressing opinions and evaluations. She manages to achieve her goals and realise her desires but at the expense of others.



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ACTIVITIES

NO. 1 'I WRITE TO YOU'

Write a letter to a real or imaginary character, you can tell them anything you wish. This activity stimulates you to express your feelings and emotions about another person, facilitates written expression of yourself and your feelings.

NO. 2 'POSITIVE MESSAGES'

Write a message addressed to your child that expresses the speaker's feelings and not a judgement on him/her. This activity aims to raise awareness of the importance of open and sincere communication.

NO. 3 'I CAN'

Complete the sentences and reflect on the answers:

"I am capable of ..."

"I can..."

"I am unbeatable..."

"Call me if you need ..."

"Of me it can be said that..."

"I have learnt ..."

"I have decided that..."



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NO.4 'BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION'

The practitioner should help the children to reflect on what makes communication difficult, through this activity the mother to improve her awareness of her own communication and the effects it can have on others. Indicate how communication barriers make you feel:

- Giving orders, commanding, directing
- Threaten, admonish, warn
- Judging, criticising
- Investigate
- Ironising, minimising

NO.5 'THE MIRROR'

Stand in front of a mirror, choose a comfortable position and try to tell your reflection a real or imaginary story. But without moving a muscle! Apart from those in your jaw that you need to speak, of course....

Try now to answer these questions:

Are you aware of involuntarily moving any muscles?

Which ones in particular?

Which body parts were you able to control most easily?

Which ones did you struggle to impose stillness on?

Have you experienced a growing sensation of warmth in certain parts of your face and body? (the parts that we usually also move unconsciously while talking and which, because they have to be controlled more, draw more blood).
peably while talking and which, having to be controlled more, draw more blood)

Are you aware of the amount of movements you usually make while talking?

What emotions did you feel during the exercise?



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"HELP ME TALK TO YOU. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN" Gilles Julien

The author explains what components are at play in parent-child communication (acceptance, listening, respect, understanding, compassion, love, bonding, motivation) and shows its fundamental importance for the child's growth and development. He then describes some practical styles and attitudes in which the components of communication are realised.

"THE BELIER FAMILY" (2014) - Directed by Eric Lartigau

Paula Bélier is sixteen years old and has been the interpreter and voice of her family for as long. Because the Béliers, farmers in Normandy, are deaf. Paula, who can hear and speak, is their bridge to the world. Paula, torn between work and high school, discovers at school that she has a voice to go far. Encouraged by her music teacher, she enrolled in a singing competition in Paris.



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Relationship area

The human being is a social animal and continuously experiences interpersonal relationships in the different contexts of life: community, family, home, work (...) and developing good interpersonal skills enables the potential to achieve better social health.

In order to have good relationships it is important to be assertive, able to assert oneself, to express one's ideas and needs, without prevarication, in fact an effective relationship means being able to assert oneself respecting the role of others but also one's own role within a relationship.

In our specific case, the mother-child relationship is established from birth and the relationship that will be established is an important premise for all the relationships that the child will have throughout life. Through the relationship with his parents, the child learns to recognise himself as a unique individual, to give meaning to his own behaviour and that of others and in general to the world around him. The experience of security takes place in a responsive and sensitive relational context and is characterised by:

- the feeling of being able to count on the other in times of need;
- the quality and consistency of caring interactions;
- the knowledge that they can know the environment and explore it without fear;
- to know that one can always return to the safe base in times of difficulty, from which one can then depart after having received comfort, reassurance and consolation.

Parents who are physically accessible and emotionally available, present and attentive, constant and predictable, and responsive to their children's needs become a fundamental personal legacy, which will enable them to activate their internalised resources in difficult moments of life.

In order to be an example for children, it is necessary to possess and work on certain elements: empathy, trust in the other, the support network and boundaries.

Within this area, four sub-areas have been identified:

- *Empathy*
- *Trust in the other*
- *Affective relations*
- *Network and social support*



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EMPATHY

Empathising means 'putting oneself in the shoes of others', sharing their emotional state by understanding the emotions they are experiencing and experiencing them in turn by trying to understand their reasons and intentions. The relationship between parents and children is necessary for the child to also become empathic: the moment the child is aware that his or her emotions are understood, felt, accepted and reciprocated, it will then be possible for his or her ability to empathise to develop. Empathic capacities include, not only the sharing of emotions, but also the ability to modulate affective experience by adjusting the intensity and duration of what one experiences in reaction to the other's feeling. In order to understand the emotions of others, one must also be able to recognise one's own.

Empathy is a fundamental capacity that underlies pro-social behaviour and can help one to use assertive communication, have social exchanges, encourage diversity, and regulate the flow of unpleasant emotions and aggressive behaviour.

Putting oneself in the shoes of others is useful in order to be able to act empathetically and provide comfort and help to those in need, but not only.

We can speak of *cognitive empathy* (taking another's point of view), *bodily empathy* (feeling with), *empathic concern* (wanting to help the other).

Working on empathy allows us to have good relationships even with those who are very different from us in terms of their experiences, their origins.

Being empathetic is therefore an important social competence, whereas a lack of empathy can be at the root of aggressive or antisocial behaviour. One of the ways to do this is to train in active listening. According to Thomas Gordon, the main rules for authentic listening are:

- pay attention to the details of communication, capturing both verbal language and body language;
- show understanding, both through short verbal expressions and through posture, gestures, smiles and other facial expressions;
- show interest;
- mirroring: this involves rephrasing in one's own words what the other has expressed, including emotions.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- **"My children confide in me easily".**

Children, depending on their age, see their mother as a point of reference and are able to confide in her easily, they speak without fear, the child feels fully understood and trusts his mother, he knows that what she has confided in him will remain a secret. In the adolescent phase there is a lack of communication, as the boy prefers to confide in his friends, but if a relationship of trust has been established with his mother during childhood, he will know that he can always count on her and ask for help in times of difficulty.



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- ***"I can recognise the merits and qualities of my children".***

The mother is able to recognise her child's merits, extols them and tries to enhance their resources. The mother may pay more attention to aspects of behaviour perceived as excessive, this attitude is absorbed by the child and this may make him feel belittled and/or inadequate. The mother is not always able to see what the positive aspects are, this may be dictated by the child's age (adolescent, for example), but focusing on virtues, qualities and resources allows the child to feel recognised and gratified by one of the most important figures in his or her growth.

- ***"I make an effort to look at the situation from another perspective to put myself in the other person's shoes."***

The ability to identify other points of view, besides one's own, requires work and acceptance of different views and of the other. The mother may feel, based on a specific situation, that she is totally right and that she does not want to look at the situation from another point of view, the possibility of reflecting on this aspect will allow the mother to give different meanings to unpleasant situations (e.g. the causes that led to placement in a care facility if carried out by the social services, the mother may have agreed to placement in the community in order to be close to her children without sharing and understanding the reasons that led to the placement and therefore an immediate protective action for the child).

- ***"I am aware of the impact my actions have on others".***

Every action has a consequence, e.g. the decision to move away from the family home and ask for help also had consequences in the lives of other people. Deciding to be placed in the community and move away from the family home, deciding to no longer have a relationship with her partner, deciding to change schools, these are just some of the examples that can be given and that could help the mother understand that each of her actions does not remain an end in itself but will generate consequences that also affect other people, such as her children.

- ***"When I listen to my son, I try to tune into his emotional state to better understand what he is telling me".***

Listening is a fundamental condition to be able to give solid emotional support to one's child, it is not always easy to listen to a child when they are in pain, when they are not well, when they are telling themselves. Tuning in to the emotional state means actually listening to the child, even in their 'wrong' ways of manifesting their inner world, but in any case the mother tries to get closer by feeling their needs, fears and doubts deep inside.

- ***"I perceive my children's feelings and moods by looking at their facial expressions and posture".***



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Feelings and moods can be conveyed verbally but also through facial movements, body changes and postural changes. Some facial expressions may manifest more than a single emotion; if a person claims to be angry and displays behaviour consistent with worry, it is more likely that they are trying to hide a feeling of fear. Conversely, a worried person who displays provocative and aggressive attitudes is likely to be concealing a feeling of anger.

The mother should exercise this ability to be able to read her child's moods even without the child speaking or expressing a concern.

Based on the score obtained:

GOOD LEVEL OF EMPATHY (15-24)

The mother with a good level of empathy is sensitive to her child's emotions and also to those of others. She can easily identify emotions and perceive feelings, without letting herself be overwhelmed by them.

LOW LEVEL OF EMPATHY (6-14)

The mother with a low level of empathy does not recognise the emotions of others, cannot easily establish new relationships, cannot attune her emotional state to that of another person.

TRUST IN THE OTHER

The term trust derives from the Latin 'fidere': 'to trust - to have faith' and was originally used to refer to the trust placed by men in the gods, with the hope that some external agent could guide and protect a person, guaranteeing him good fortune in every situation.

Today, we can define trust as a *feeling that characterises the relationship we have with ourselves and with others*; it is based on the feeling of being safe, on the certainty of being able to count on others and on our abilities. Trust is a mobile feeling that is built, discovered and transformed over the course of life and the different relationships we establish.

According to 'attachment theory' (Bowlby), trust, understood as the availability, sensitivity and responsiveness of the reference figure is the pivot around which the mind builds balanced internal operating models and the expectation of receiving support, reassurance and backing from it is considered central to the development of a resilient, proactive and open personality.



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At the basis of every relationship there is a fundamental component that is mutual respect, and this is also the case with children: as they grow up, they develop their own personalities and have specific needs and requirements, not only material or nutritional, but also emotional.

Maslow created a hierarchy of needs by distinguishing them into 'primary' and 'higher'. The former include the physiological, protection and security needs and these are fundamental, especially during the growth phase, since a neglected child becomes an insecure adult and therefore needs to be protected and cared for so that he or she can 'rely on': it is in this context that trust is born. Trust, satisfied through recognition of the other's needs and personality, is reinforced if the child knows where to turn.

Every age has its own dynamics and its own complex situations to deal with, but if we structure them on the basis of trust, we are likely to be able to experience them in a more serene and beneficial way for everyone.

It is in fact not only a great growth for children and young people but also for parents and adults who are involved in the upbringing of the youngest members of the family.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"I easily establish a relationship of trust with others".***

The mother may find it difficult to enter into a trusting relationship, either because of personal experiences or because of a current situation (difficulty in trusting the team or services); understanding the reasons that do not allow her to trust can support the practitioner in proposing specific activities that allow the mother to regain the ability to trust.

- ***"I understand when it is best to ask for someone's help."***

The mother who puts herself in a closed situation may not feel the need to ask for help or may not trust the interlocutor and therefore prefers to solve problems without anyone's support. It is also necessary to understand the help that the mother may require: financial, practical, emotional, supportive ...

- ***"I like to confront others about issues in my life".***

Due to unpleasant personal experiences, the mother may not want to share certain aspects of her life, due to lack of trust, fear of being judged, fear of not being understood. Confrontation requires questioning oneself and looking at issues in one's life from a different point of view.

On the other hand, the mother may find it necessary to discuss certain aspects of her life with the educational team and the services in charge, or she may confront herself and ask for support in all areas of life, thus resulting in a lack of autonomy and independence.

- ***"I seek comfort in times of difficulty"***

The mother may be seeking comfort at a particularly difficult time, it is helpful to understand who she is used to asking for help from: her family of origin, husband/partner, children, the care team, friends, support group.



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- ***"I easily meet new people"***

The mother might easily meet new people but not trust people she has just met, it is useful to understand in which contexts the mother finds it easiest to establish new friendships, also if she manages to make new acquaintances how much she can rely on these new people.

- ***"I have a hard time getting into intimate situations".***

Intimacy includes all aspects of a relationship: physical, sexual, mental, emotional; and can be experienced in different contexts (between lovers, parents, children, friends, siblings, colleagues). It does not depend on the nature of the relationship but on the degree of emotional contact and the relationship established, whether it is open, honest and based on mutual trust.

Based on the score obtained:

GOOD SENSE OF TRUST (18-24)

The mother with a good level of confidence feels she has the tools to cope with a situation and rely on others to support her and give her strength in times of difficulty. Being able to rely on others also enables her to have confidence in her own abilities and resources. In times of difficulty, she is able to ask for help from people she trusts (family, friends, acquaintances) and is able to establish new, healthy relationships with ease.

DISCRETE SENSE OF TRUST (12-17)

The mother with a fair level of trust succeeds in establishing new relationships but shows some difficulties in asking for help and trusting completely, preferring to have few people around and not easily confronting problems, events or doubts concerning her life.

POOR SENSE OF TRUST (6-11)

-The mother shows difficulty in trusting others, she is hyper-vigilant towards signals perceived as dangerous for her and those around her, this is to protect her from her fears. She does not trust anyone and prefers not to meet new people, in times of difficulty she does not ask for help and takes charge of everything.

EMOTIONAL RELATIONS

All bonds of affection have a different intensity and importance, there are knots that are easily untied, others that are more solid, others that are too tight. The first tie that unites us to another



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person, throughout our lives, is the umbilical cord from which we receive nourishment for the first nine months, this relationship will continue in a different but continuous way once we are born. As the years go by, we experience relationships in all their facets: love for ourselves, love for a man or woman, love for friends, love for children, love for work, love for the community in which we live. And it is useful to reflect on how fundamental these bonds and their nature are to our balance and how each of them occupies a central role in our lives.

When an emotional relationship becomes a tightening, asphyxiating bond or, even worse, an obsessive bond in which the balance between giving and receiving is altered, love can turn into a habit of suffering to the point of becoming a true 'emotional addiction'.

Being able to count on valid and effective emotional relationships is important to be assertive, capable of asserting oneself, declaring one's needs and opinions while respecting other people, their ideas and needs without prevarication or submission.

Every person needs to be able to feel themselves with someone else, to be able to show themselves weak and vulnerable but also strong and secure.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"I help my children feel better when they are down".***

The mother is able to understand her son's difficulties and the moments that make him sad and on these occasions she puts in place a helping action, it is useful to understand how she helps him whether by listening, welcomes him and/or comforts him physically in a hug, remains silent with him, tries to encourage him to speak.

- ***"I maintain my identity in an affective relationship".***

Interpersonal boundaries make it impossible to create preconditions for a difficult relationship, feeling these boundaries allows us to be in emotional contact with the other, understanding them and feeling understood. Not shaping ourselves and not always pandering to those in front of us sets us free and allows us to be other than those around us.

- ***"I maintain deep emotional relationships"***

Deep emotional relationships mean relationships that are really important to the mother and that she can rely on. It could be a family member, friend or partner, having a deep relationship can be an asset in a mother's life. Understanding who the mother can rely on is helpful in understanding what future resources might be.

- ***"I consider myself an open and outgoing person".***

Being extrovert and open involves having no difficulty in relating to others; the mother has no particular difficulty in opening up to those around her. It must be taken into consideration that being outgoing and open does not actually hide weaknesses and the mother wants to appear 'strong', preferring to conceal her difficulties.



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○ *"I spend most of my time alone"*

Spending time in solitude is useful for reflection, but if the mother tends to spend a lot of time in solitude this could mean that she has difficulty sharing time with other people, she may not trust anyone and prefer to be alone, she may not feel the need for a moment of sharing with the team or the other guests.

Based on the score obtained:

- **GOOD ABILITY TO CREATE EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (15-20)**

The mother who shows a good capacity to create and maintain effective relationships also builds healthy social contexts of interactions that acquire positive meanings for her and those close to her. She shows respect, empathy and active listening in relationships, thus maintaining a reciprocal relationship.

- **FAIR ABILITY TO CREATE EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (10-14)**

The mother is capable of embarking on new relationships even if she prefers to focus on herself and her family, putting the possibility of cultivating other relationships on the back burner.

- **POOR ABILITY TO CREATE EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (5-9)**

The mother who shows little ability to create effective relationships fails to maintain her own identity in her relationship with others and does not show good empathic skills. She lacks meaningful relationships in her life and fails to be a positive reference point for others. She is an introvert and solitary person who hardly shares time with others. She is not capable of helping and being close to the child in times of difficulty.

NETWORK AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social network and social support, over time, have been defined in different ways: "information that leads people to believe that they are loved and regarded, valued and held in esteem and/or belong to a network characterised by mutual communication and commitment" (Cobb, 1976); "the degree to which a person's basic social needs are gratified through interaction with others who provide emotional or instrumental help" (Thoits, 1982); "the social resources that people perceive to be available, or that are actually provided to them, in both formal and informal contexts" (Cohen et al., 2000).



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One aspect to consider when talking about networks and social support is the perception of the support received, i.e. how much support the person feels they have and how much support they actually receive (i.e. the actual implementation of behaviours that support the person) which may not coincide and give a distorted view of the situation, perceived support can influence people's quality of life regardless of the help they actually receive.

Social support is often identified as an important protective factor for negative situations and is the key to strong relationships, helps the person to cope with stressful situations, and implies having a network to turn to in times of need, but not only. Knowing that we can count on a support network makes us feel loved, cared for, valued and part of a whole in which we are alone.

The social network and the related support may come not only from the family but also from friends, work colleagues, community services, the educational team, associations or groups. One aspect to be observed is not only the quantity of support received but also its quality, which can be a more or less important factor for the person.

For the mother placed in a protective context, the presence of a support constitutes a security, she does not feel alone and knows she can count on the help of someone she trusts to cope with difficult moments.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"I recognise which services to turn to if I have difficulties".***

The services on the territory are different and this makes it possible to give more targeted answers to the different problematic situations, but this is only functional if related to a correct knowledge of them. The mother may not know all the services present and therefore not know what they are for and whom to turn to.

- ***"I have a friendly support network to turn to in case of need".***

The presence of a valid friendship network is also a valuable resource for the mother in view of a pathway out of protection. In its absence, it is useful to work on the possibility of building one and how to do so.

- ***"I can count on my family and their support".***

Family support, especially in difficult times, allows the mother not to feel alone, understanding which family members she can count on allows her to consider them as resources for the future.

- ***'I have confidence in the services'***

A relationship of trust is built over time and decisions taken by professionals are not always shared (e.g. a community placement, the mother may prefer to stay at home and be able to access services independently without the need for institutionalisation). Having full trust in the services allows the mother to feel free to ask for help and to consider them as a resource in her life.



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- ***"I go to my children's school meetings and take an interest in their education".***

The mother may not consider it important to go to school meetings to find out about her children's schooling and consequently not give any weight to their education, in which case it is useful to work on the importance of education for her children and to follow them through.

- ***"I try to create relationships with the parents of my children's classmates to network".***

Parents of children's mates can be considered a valuable growth support not only for the children but also for the mother herself who would have the opportunity to feel understood and to have different and perhaps even good examples to follow.

Based on the score obtained:

GOOD SOCIAL AND SUPPORT NETWORK (18-24)

The mother with extensive social networks is able to draw on resources that support her in her parenting skills. She can count on her own family and supportive friendship networks to accompany her in times of difficulty. She is aware of the services available in the area where she lives and knows which ones to turn to in times of need.

DISCRETE SOCIAL AND SUPPORT NETWORK (12-23)

The mother shows that she has people she can rely on and who make themselves available in times of support, but tends to solve problems by relying on herself and not making use of the services available locally.

POOR SOCIAL AND SUPPORT NETWORK (6-11)

The mother without a solid social network does not have people (family and friends) she can rely on in times of difficulty. She has little confidence in the services and is not interested in knowing all the services that are present and available.



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No.1 The five good habits

1. Speak clearly. Being honest is the most important element in building trust. Manipulative words and actions risk instilling doubt in our children's minds and will prevent them from trusting us. Children are very intelligent in assessing what is right and what is wrong. So let us avoid twisting the truth and tell it as it is. With age-appropriate language, of course.
2. A commitment is a commitment. Our children watch us and look to us for the example that matches the words expressed. We therefore learn to keep our commitments. When this becomes impossible for us then we avoid excuses and always tell it like it is. It is important to recognise that we have failed to keep our commitment. Even adults can make mistakes, this is a great lesson.
3. Listening before talking. The way we listen is important in our relationship with our children. Too often we end up taking for granted what they want to tell us or say to us. This, however, prevents us from getting to know the feelings of children and young people and being able to open up to them. The aim is to find out what really worries them or makes them happy. By letting them talk in listening mode, we allow them to recognise their own emotions and feel taken into consideration.
4. Respect first. Giving attention is an important and necessary form of respect to build a solid relationship based on trust. Seeing children and young people as young and less experienced than us, we make the mistake of not valuing them. Respecting them means valuing their thoughts, opinions and being young. This also increases their self-esteem.
5. Transparency. When it proves complex to provide detailed information, then we adopt the principle of clarity. We reassure our children by telling them that we are not hiding anything but are protecting them. Let us use simple words and focus on clear communication. The more we provide distorted and confusing information, the more we damage the ground of trust.

Building trust and learning to trust children is a challenging and lengthy process but one that leads to a very valuable goal. We allow ourselves to live each day with quality interactions, genuine and honest conversations.

And we help to ensure that when our children need help they will come to us for it because they will have the certainty of being understood, welcomed, listened to and respected.



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NO.2 'MY RELATIONSHIPS'

Think about the people around you and divide them into:

- UNIMPORTANT PEOPLE
- VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE WITH WHOM I HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP
- VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE WITH WHOM I DO NOT HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP
- PEOPLE WITH WHOM I HAVE A DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP

NO.3 'RULES AND PLAY'

Conveying the rules in a playful way and handling tantrums. Trying to convey the rules also through play, imagination and creativity is a very useful resource.

It is often a good idea to convey the rule in a playful way, making the child the protagonist, involving him/her in an exciting situation. In this way the tantrum can be better dealt with (e.g. the 'hare game to go home when you are in the garden or in another pleasant place for the child, who does not feel like going away'). Anger, impatience, parental nervousness as a response to tantrums do not help: when possible, let us train ourselves to play it down, to involve the children at home in activities to be done together, starting with small daily tasks.



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"WONDER "

It tells the life story of Auggie Pullman, a 10-year-old boy born with a malformation on his face, Treacher Collins syndrome, which forced him to live from one hospital to another because of his 27 operations. His life was spent within the walls of his home, with his family and his dog Daisy. His mother has been in charge of educating him so far, but the time has come for him to learn about the world and face his greatest challenge: going to school for the first time and trying to be accepted by teachers and classmates, despite being different from the rest. It was his mother who took care of his education until the time came for Auggie to get to know the world and face his greatest challenge: going to school for the first time and trying to be accepted by teachers and classmates, despite being different from the rest.

"THE SON"

Here the filmmaker tells the story of 17-year-old Nicolas whose parents have painfully separated. The mother struggles to understand and contain her son's malaise and therefore turns to her ex-husband, who has meanwhile remarried and is the father of a newborn child. The father, animated by the best of intentions, tries to intercept every sign of improvement from his son, generating a short circuit of misunderstandings. He is actually unwilling to admit unhappiness, which in his eyes as a successful man would turn into an accusation against of him.

"PERFECT PARENTS DO NOT EXIST." Valentina Giordano

This book is a concrete help for all those who wish to bring balance and love into their relationship with children, making peace with their own imperfections and living the extraordinary adventure of parenthood with courage and confidence.

Valentina Giordano, mindfulness teacher, through simple techniques that take just a few minutes, guides you to reconnect with the resources that are already within you, such as presence, understanding and kindness. It happens to all of us to be absorbed in brooding over the past or planning for the future, or to be distracted by anxieties and worries, thus losing touch with life as it flows, with our children and ourselves, with what really matters. This book is a concrete help for all those who wish to bring balance and love into their relationship with children, making peace with their own imperfections and living the extraordinary adventure of parenthood with courage and confidence.



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Emotions area

The word emotion derives from the Latin 'movere' (to move) and the prefix 'e' indicates a movement towards something. It can therefore be defined as an alteration or change in an individual's habitual state. This feeling has consequences not only on a psychological level, changing our state of mind, but also from a physical point of view as certain parameters of our body change, such as breathing or heartbeat. Emotion therefore involves a shift from one state to another and we can define it as 'a complex system of interaction between the organism and its environment that underlies all behaviour but also all relationships. Emotions are a fundamental aspect for every human being and are important both for relating to oneself and to what one is experiencing and feeling, and for relating to others, in which case emotional regulation occurs through a two-way process involving all the members of a relationship, who can read and understand each other's emotions and mental states; this emotional exchange takes place through implicit, non-verbal communication. Emotional expression also passes through the way we direct our gaze at someone, the tone of our voice, our body posture, in other words, all those communications that often cannot be translated into words but which profoundly express the emotions circulating between people. Our emotions therefore tell us a lot about ourselves, the experiences we have, but also how we interact with others.

When we talk about emotions, we do not distinguish them into positive or negative but these can be pleasant or unpleasant, this is because all of them are useful and functional, even anger or sadness for example, as each of them conveys a message. Working on emotions improves the ability to read and distinguish them (anger, sadness, interest, fear, joy, surprise, disgust, trust, shame, love...). The education of emotions is one of the fundamental tasks for every person, but especially for parents, as emotions are an essential component of their children's growth, thus helping them to develop emotional intelligence. This is why it is necessary to know and train the area of emotions in order to be able to help those around us.

Within this area, four sub-areas have been identified:

- *Recognising emotions*
- *Managing emotions*
- *Responding appropriately to the emotions of others*
- *Coping*



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RECOGNISING EMOTIONS

Developing the ability to recognise emotions not only allows one to have a deeper knowledge of them, but also helps one to understand the deeper reasons behind that particular emotion. Although it may seem easy to recognise emotions, one must consider that each person can interpret them differently. We can distinguish anger, sadness, interest, fear, joy, surprise, disgust, trust, shame, love, considering that none of them are negative but are all normal emotions.

The inability to recognise emotions does not allow us to know both our own and those of the people around us and this may result in emotional outbursts (e.g. fits of anger, crying...) without understanding what triggers them. We can observe this behaviour in a child, who has a nervous system that is still immature and not able to make the necessary connections to control moods; this stage will be overcome thanks to the emotional education for which parents and educators are responsible.

It is therefore essential that adults are able to recognise emotions so that they can be an example for the youngest.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"I can recognise my emotions when they surface (e.g. being able to distinguish anger from frustration, sadness from despondency, etc.)"***

The mother may claim to be fully aware of what emotions are and what the reasons for them are, and being able to distinguish between them enables her to read her children's emotions adequately. If she is not clear about the difference and tends to confuse the emotions, this could lead to confusion in her response and behaviour, in which case it would be useful to distinguish the emotions and offer her exercises to help her distinguish between them.

- ***"I sense my children's emotions from the tone of their voice"***

Knowing how to read a child's emotions requires constant training, and being able to detect them through the tone of voice allows the mother to know how to intervene without the child saying what emotion he or she is feeling (in the case of small children, the mother might understand what he or she is feeling through the type of crying).

- ***"I only need a glance to understand the mood of my child"***

Sight is also an important communicative aspect that allows us to get information about a given situation, the ability to read through a glance is another important aspect that every parent should train in order to respond promptly to the emotions felt by their children.

- ***'My children's emotional reactions surprise me'***



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The mother might be surprised at the emotional reactions of a small child, might not consider him capable of expressing an emotion and might not be able to distinguish the emotion felt. Or the mother might be astonished at an adolescent's unfavourable reactions and find herself at a loss as to the most appropriate behaviour for the situation.

Based on the score obtained:

GOOD ABILITY TO RECOGNISE EMOTIONS (12-16)

The mother is able to recognise her own emotions and to distinguish (happiness, joy, anger, frustration, despondency) and recognise those of others by being able to read both verbal and non-verbal language.

FAIR ABILITY TO RECOGNISE EMOTIONS (8-11)

The mother shows difficulties in clearly distinguishing and recognising emotions if they are not explicitly stated and consequently does not know how to respond to them correctly. She also shows difficulties in identifying her own emotions.

POOR ABILITY TO RECOGNISE EMOTIONS (4-7)

The mother cannot recognise the different emotions she feels and cannot read and recognise those of the people close to her, not even those of her son.



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MANAGING EMOTIONS

Emotion management does not simply mean controlling emotions, it means knowing how to use emotions as tools to act so as not to be overwhelmed by them, it is a balance that moderates the intensity of emotions and makes it possible to keep them manageable and tolerable. This work of management and balance moves on several levels, since emotion is a multidimensional phenomenon that affects the mind, body and even behaviour. If emotion occurs, there is a signal and an internal definition that must be explored and not repressed, so as to understand what aspects need to be taken into account in order to implement the behaviour. For example, when faced with a moment of anger, it is more useful to understand the aspects that led to this reaction and not inhibit it.

There are no negative or positive emotions, the ability to recognise them is also fundamental to acquiring the ability to cope with them, improves awareness and the ability to express them consciously.

Therefore, managing an emotion allows us to return to a state of psychophysical well-being and also to find strategies to modify a behaviour, ourselves or the environment. To experience emotions without pushing them aside or giving them no importance, to choose how to act without being overwhelmed by emotions, it is necessary to be able to recognise one's own emotions and to trace the causes that led to that particular emotion; this makes us masters of ourselves.

Managing emotions is not always easy, and is often also linked to the emotional upbringing received from one's parents, which is why it is important for parents to be aware of their emotional world.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"I easily lose my temper when I am frustrated or angry with my child".***

In moments of anger and stress, the mother is unable to manage her emotions and engages in inappropriate behaviour. In situations where she does not remain calm, it is useful to investigate the causes of this behaviour and to suggest new strategies for managing moments of stress.

- ***"When I feel anxious or in a bad mood, I can calm myself down."***

The strategy of calming down alone may be functional on some occasions, the mother may feel the need to find a moment of her own to get through a difficult moment. But the possibility of asking for help and finding a different outlet for loneliness might help her to look at a situation from a different point of view.

- ***"When I feel angry with my child, I can no longer control what I do or say".***

Through this question, it is useful to understand how often it is difficult for the mother to deal with anger, it would be useful to have a situation reported as an example to allow reasoning about



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the reasons why the mother is angry, why a certain behaviour annoys her and what prompted the son to behave that way.

- ***"I strive to control insecurity and fear in order to achieve my goals".***

Controlling an emotion does not mean repressing it but it is useful to face it and accept it in order to cope with it. Achieving a goal is never easy and may give rise to worries, such as whether it will be achieved by a set deadline, or whether certain external agents may change an ideal situation and thus hinder it, fear and insecurity are fundamental emotions that allow one to be more motivated.

- ***"I can manage my emotions when the unexpected happens".***

Faced with the unexpected, reactions can be different and even disproportionate; knowing how to manage emotions means being free but at the same time having great self-control.

- ***"I am impatient"***

Here again, it is useful to understand what circumstances make the mother more impatient and what the alternatives might be, by giving a practical example we could propose different behaviour to her.

Based on the score obtained:

GOOD EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS (18-24)

The mother with good emotional management skills is patient even in the face of events that provoke anger/ sadness/frustration in her. She is able to remain calm with her child even at times of great stress.

FAIR EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS (12 - 17)

The mother shows difficulty in mastering her emotions, tends not to deal with them and this generates confusion and a sense of frustration. She fails to understand the meaning that emotions have for her and consequently on her child. She is not always able to express her own feelings, moods and opinions.

POOR EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS (6-11)

The mother shows an inability to modulate or bring her emotional experiences, her internal experiences and her verbal and non-verbal behaviour within the norm. In moments of stress she is unable to remain calm and tends to exasperate the situation.



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Recognition of the emotions of others is a fundamental element in all social interactions, as it enables the individual to respond appropriately to the needs and requests of others according to the emotional state of those in front of us. Similarly, this ability to recognise the other's emotions is fundamental within the mother-child relationship. The child from an early age is capable of recognising simple emotions and linking them to possible future actions, for example knowing that if dad smiles on the way home, he has had a satisfying day at work and will probably not cry out tonight.

Dialogue, the ability to listen, taking into account the emotions of those close to us, are essential elements for building a healthy educational relationship capable of generating a constructive exchange between child and parent. The child must feel free to express himself, the more the relationship is built on the secure but not intrusive or hindering presence of the parent, the more the child will acquire security and feel free to express what he feels.

From an early age, children try to express their emotions; it is the parent who knows how to read them and respond appropriately.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"If my child is nervous or agitated I try to be understanding".***

The mother should give her child the opportunity to express any feelings and intervene if this is followed by hurtful or inappropriate behaviour. Being understanding means understanding the state of mind she is feeling but still leaving room for her ability to express and feel.

- ***Thinking back to real-life situations, how did you behave in the following circumstances***
When my son/daughter gets angry I
 - contain his anger***
 - losing patience***
 - I embrace him and wait for him to calm down***
 - I ignore him until he calms down***

Anger needs to be recognised, accepted and channelled, and repressing it could be counterproductive. The child needs to accept its emotions in order to learn to manage them. The mother should be welcoming to the child, even during the manifestation of an apparently unpleasant feeling; often a scolding or judging leads to frustration, a hug, on the other hand, may be more effective than words. Furthermore, dialogue and getting the child to tell what made him angry can help him focus on the problem.

- ***When my son is sad I:***
 - I ask him the reason for his state of mind***
 - let him tell me about it***
 - minimize what happened***
 - waiting for him to pass***



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Sadness also needs to be expressed, the child will face several difficult moments during his growth, a cry or an outburst can help him to vent, this does not mean being fragile but having found an outlet.

- ***When my son is worried I***
 - I ask him the reason for his state of mind***
 - let him tell me about it***
 - minimize what happened***
 - waiting for him to pass***

Suppressing fear risks generating a feeling of inadequacy in the child. Reassure the child that adults also feel fear, for many things, but have learned to overcome it. Showing your children for who you are helps them to feel closer to you.

- ***When my son is happy I***
 - I am happy together with him***
 - I ask him the reason for his state of mind***
 - I bring him back to reality***
 - I tell him that happiness only lasts a moment***

The mother should leave her child free to express her happiness and should respond to her joy, taking care that the expression of this feeling, as well as all others, takes place safely and with respect for any other persons present.

As required by the question, it would be useful to have the mother report a concrete lived life situation in order to be able to give as truthful an answer as possible and to reason about possible intervention alternatives, observing the situation from the outside



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Based on the score obtained:

GOOD ABILITY TO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY TO THE EMOTIONS OF OTHERS (15-20)

The mother shows a good ability to recognise her son's emotions and therefore tries to share with him how he is feeling, asking his motives, how he is feeling and sharing with him the emotions he feels.

FAIR ABILITY TO RESPOND TO OTHERS' EMOTIONS (10 - 14)

The mother recognises her son's moods but waits for the latter's time to speak. She tends to bring the child back to reality, thus not sharing the emotion felt but minimising it.

POOR ABILITY TO RESPOND TO OTHERS' EMOTIONS (5 - 9)

The mother ignores the emotions felt by her child, rarely intervenes in situations of stress and despondency but waits for these to pass on their own without her support. She tends to lose patience in moments of stress and anger.

COPING

The word '*coping*' can be translated as 'coping', 'coping with', '*coping*' and is used in psychology to refer to a range of behaviours implemented by individuals to try to control and cope with conflicts, situations and stressful events.

The behaviour adopted in the face of stressful and conflicting problems and events, and the coping strategies adopted, depend on several factors: type and extent of the problem or event; circumstances in which the stress occurs; characteristics of the person.

As one can easily guess, therefore, the combinations of responses that can be implemented are truly many and depend in part on both the personality of the individual and the social environment in which the problem manifests itself.

Over the years, several scholars have proposed classifications for the different coping strategies, e.g. Weiten identifies four different groups of coping strategies:

- *Evaluation-centred*: the person modifies his or her thinking by distancing himself or herself from the stressful event or by employing denial;



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- *Problem-focused*: these people tend to want to address the underlying causes of their problem, trying to understand them and learning new skills that may enable them to cope better, trying to eliminate the source of the stressful event;
- *Emotion-focused*: the person tries to manage emotions that arise during the stressful or conflict event, in an attempt to reduce or prevent distress arising from it.
- *Employment-focused*: the person tends to focus on as long-term and stable employment as possible that can provide positive answers.

Let us analyse the statements that the mother will find in the questionnaire:

- ***"I can organise myself and keep calm when under pressure".***

How often this happens provides us with information about the mother's ability to manage her emotions, especially in times of stress. It would be useful to give some practical life examples to understand what is meant by an event that puts the mother under pressure and how she manages to keep calm (taking a walk, getting away from the problem, not responding to the problem).

- ***"In the face of difficulties I cannot react".***

Not reacting to a difficulty is in fact already a reaction, which must make us reflect in order to find a way to change our behaviour and get out of the problem.

- ***'In some situations I take action to find alternative solutions'***

Here again, it is useful to start with a practical example, which might be the situations in which the mother feels strong enough to find alternatives and which ones she feels she cannot cope with.

- ***"When faced with a stressful situation, I try to analyse the problem".***

Analysing the problem is desirable in any situation, especially when faced with a stressful situation, it is a skill that one acquires and needs to work on because when faced with a problem one often tends to want to respond immediately without analysing it.

- ***"I implement strategies to make situations less stressful".***

There can be different strategies and they are not always the best ones to solve a stressful situation, and one must also consider whether such strategies do not harm those around us.

- ***'Change does not frighten me'***

Change generally brings about a condition of uncertainty, not to be understood in a negative sense, not being afraid of what is to come indicates great confidence and the ability to handle the new and unexpected without letting emotions prevail.



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Based on the score obtained:

GOOD COPING STRATEGIES (18-24)

The mother shows good strategies for dealing with moments of stress, anger and despondency. She is able to explore her own capacities to cope with and master stressful situations, taking action to intervene directly in the problem. The mother also attempts to modify the negative emotional impact of the event on her and her child.

DISCRETE COPING STRATEGIES (12 - 17)

The mother tends to ignore the problem and live as if it does not exist, minimising it. In this way, the mother blocks thoughts associated with the problem and avoids related emotions, stifling them as soon as they surface, which makes her vulnerable.

POOR COPING STRATEGIES (6 - 11)

The mother with poor coping strategies accepts problems unconditionally and passively. She confronts the problem as if nothing had changed since it arose and, unconsciously, continues to relive the situations that contributed to its occurrence. He also responds emotionally disproportionately to the problem.

ACTIVITIES

NO.1 'PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE'

Through this activity, the mother tries to understand the emotional state of another person.

OBSERVATION PHASE: observe your child during moments of anger, sadness, happiness, stress and see how the child reacts, the posture he or she takes ...

PRACTICE PHASE: throughout the day, the mother should try out what her child has done in order to ask herself "who knows what she is feeling at that moment".



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NO. 2 "LISTENING

Read together the lyrics of a favourite song, a poem or part of a book that mum considers important or to which she is attached, reflect together on the words and the meaning given.

NO.4 "TAKE A PICTURE

Ask the mother to take a photo or choose a photo of a happy moment for her and her family, understand why she chose it and whether she still feels that happiness. She could take the photo with her and use it as a reminder, in times of discouragement, that there will be other happy moments.

" EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FOR A CHILD. A GUIDE FOR PARENTS" by John Gottman Joan Declaire

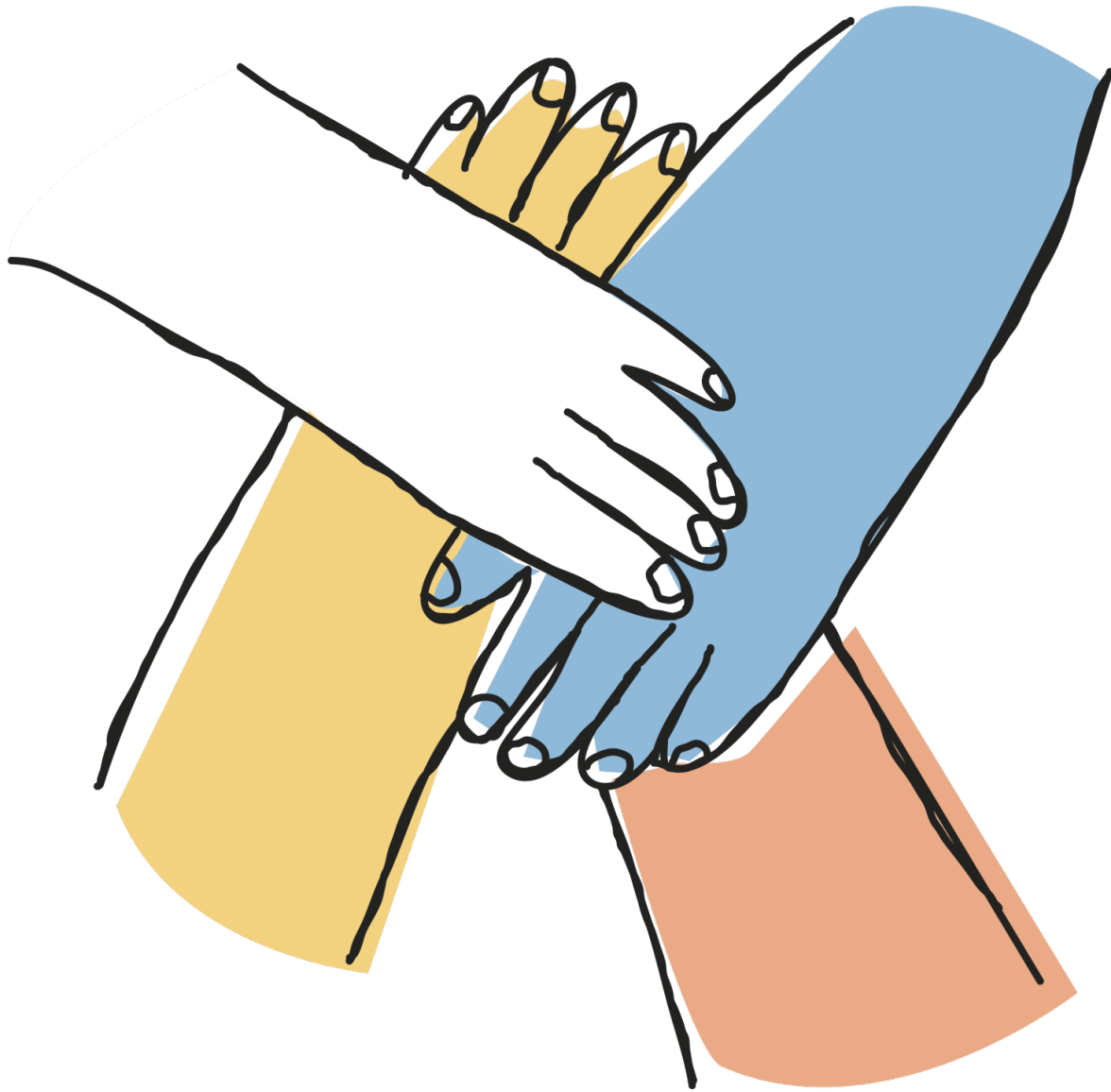
Every parent wonders about the best ways to educate their children to realise their talents and enjoy life to the full: in this growth path, a fundamental role is played by emotional intelligence, i.e. the ability to merge one's own attitudes with qualities such as empathy and attention to relationships with others. A psychologist known the world over for his studies on relationships between parents and children, Gottman shows in this book how parents can become good 'emotional coaches'.



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P.E.G.

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The PEG will be supported by software in which the operator can carry out a collection and analysis of the information gathered.

Within the EYP we will find an autobiographical sheet in which to indicate the experience, habits, and personal history of the mother placed in the community.

Potential aspects and difficulties will then be identified for the different areas and based on these:

- the educational objectives to be achieved
- specific activities and interventions to achieve the objectives (planning)
- monitoring and evaluation activities
- degree of achievement and progress made.



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This is work that must be done not only by the operator but also participation and sharing with the mother is essential for the instrument to be effective and thus a shared project can be created with, This tool will make it possible to outline the path to be implemented during the mothers' stay in the care facility, which will be built together with them, enhancing their sense of self-esteem and empowerment. This tool is innovative and specific with respect to building/rebuilding parenting skills and safeguarding the mother-child relationship. This tool can be used not only within the reception facilities, but in general in all situations of vulnerable families, including in the plan also the father figure, which in this case is not taken into consideration since it concerns women victims of domestic violence.

P.E.G



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Mamma	
Educatore/trice compilante	
Data di compilazione	
Periodo di osservazione	

STORIA FAMILIARE

AREA DELL'AUTOCONSAPEVOLEZZA				
POTENZIALITA'	DIFFICOLTA'	OBIETTIVI	INTERVENTI E ATTIVITA' PROGRAMMATE	VALUTAZIONE
				☐ Raggiunto ☐ Non raggiunto ☐ Raggiunto in parte



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AREA DELLA COMUNICAZIONE				
POTENZIALITA'	DIFFICOLTA'	OBIETTIVI	INTERVENTI E ATTIVITA' PROGRAMMATE	VALUTAZIONE
				☐ Raggiunto ☐ Non raggiunto ☐ Raggiunto in parte

AREA DELLA RELAZIONE				
POTENZIALITA'	DIFFICOLTA'	OBIETTIVI	INTERVENTI E ATTIVITA' PROGRAMMATE	VALUTAZIONE
				☐ Raggiunto ☐ Non raggiunto ☐ Raggiunto in parte

AREA DELLE EMOZIONI				
POTENZIALITA'	DIFFICOLTA'	OBIETTIVI	INTERVENTI E ATTIVITA' PROGRAMMATE	VALUTAZIONE
				☐ Raggiunto ☐ Non raggiunto ☐ Raggiunto in parte



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RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the theoretical presentation it is important to dwell on the setting and the attitude to take during the compilation, here are some tips:

- Uses an open and sensitive approach to questions
- Creates a comfortable and convenient environment
- Clarify the activity you are going to carry out (P.E.I. return, filling in questionnaire, activity proposal...).
- Consider the timing of filling in the questionnaire
- Dealing with the emotional impact
- Put yourself in a listening attitude
- Give time to accept the question and answer
- Try to answer possible doubts when faced with a question
- At the end of the questionnaire, reassure the mother that the results do not indicate whether she is a good or bad mother but indicate the aspects that need to be trained and worked on
- During the return of the P.E.I. you welcome concerns and misunderstandings, you must be clear about the objectives that need to be achieved and if one or more of them have not been met, try to reassure the mother and propose different activities to achieve them.

We advise you, before making use of it, to take a look at all the tools created and provided for the compilation of the P.E.G., so that you do not have any doubts when filling in the questionnaire, proposing activities and returning the P.E.G. It is useful to understand that this is a tool aimed at enhancing parenting skills, it is a path of growth that will require time and commitment, listening is the main element in order to understand what the person in front of us is telling us and what are the best strategies to put in place to support him/her in this path.

Good work!



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