

Report

Within the European Grundtvig project «**ENGAGING DISADVANTAGED PARENTS TO ACQUIRE PARENTING SKILLS – EDPAPS**» and in order a specific aim of it to be achieved, the association “ESPERIA” realized a workshop on 29 January 2014 on the hall of the Evening School . The main topic was the word communication and the duration of the seminar was three hours.

Sixteen people attended the workshop and all of them are members of our association. They are: Kokkovas Apostolos, Kalogianni Alik, Patera Anastasia, Mageirias Dimitrios, Lois Anastasios, Kontogianni Vasiliki, Papia Vasiliki, Panagou Georgia, Tsililis Euthimios, Oikonomou Panagiotis, Pitsakou Persefoni, Kalaitzidis Konstantinos, Katsakouli Hlektra, Loridas Nikos, Papanastasiou Ioanna, Kontotoli Marina.

At the first meeting which was held in Romania ,5-8 December 2013, we decided that each partner will realize a workshop with the title «Developing techniques for the abilities ment to approach correctly the specific need for developing and education». Considering that the acquisition of parenting skills is a necessary prerequisite in order parents to help their children, we focused on the meaning of the word communication, on the types of communication, on the factors which influence it and on the ways that we can follow in order to improve our communication with the children. Parallel, we underlined the signification of the emotional intelligence and the use of the I STATEMENT – words which will be analyzed below. We estimated that the combination of these factors can be the necessary background for parents and it can help them to boost the personality of their children.

The psychologist, Stamatia Gratsani, member of the mobile mental health unit in Trikala, was the coordinator of the workshop and posed the theoretical framework, giving us the stimulus to express our queries.

The material of this workshop will be posted on the website of our project [http://www.edpaps.eu/default tmp.aspx](http://www.edpaps.eu/default_tmp.aspx)



WORKSHOP: COMMUNICATION

Introduction

Communication is a complex concept and it defines all types of human relationships by the way it is conducted. It is a basic phenomenon which has been studied by many human sciences as Psychology, Sociology, Social Psychology, Social Anthropology, Psycholinguistics, etc., as well as the pedagogical sciences.

Definition

Communication is a process of creating, exchanging, interpreting, evaluating and utilizing symbols, signals, information and messages. Self – knowledge is an important element in communication and it includes two concepts: the person's skills and the person's social and cultural values.

The act of Communication could be:

- Verbal (through language)
- Non verbal (through body language and face expressions)
- Conducted through actions and omissions (eg. Being late for a date, not answering a question).

Regardless the framework or the content, communication is always emotional and therefore, never absolutely conscious.

Elements that affect the way we communicate and our behaviour:

- Skills in personal relationships
- Skills in active listening
- Cooperation
- Adaptability
- Endurance
- Consistent
- Flexibility
- Positive attitude
- Managing ability
- taking initiatives
- determination
- cooperation with persons from other cultures
- negotiation skills
- presentation skills
- skills in facing and resolving conflict and emergencies
- skills in accepting and making use of negative criticism

Non verbal communication / Body language

Non verbal communication transmits concepts and reflects our psychological situation. The tone of our voice, the way we look, we sit, we gesture conduct more than what we say.

In a verbal communication the total impression of the message consists of:

55% of body language

38% of voice characteristics

7% of words

At this point the significance of non verbal communication was underlined, as very often the majority of parents ignore the influence of non verbal communication in the psyche of their children. For instance, a look or our voice intensity can influence a child unconsciously much more and it could conduct messages that a parent could not imagine. This proves the complexity in the human relationships.

The “I Statement”

Accepting responsibility for your feelings is one of the most important communication skills you can acquire. A good rule of thumb is: "If you have a problem, make an I-Statement. Instead, we tend to express feelings and opinions without assuming responsibility for them. We tend to hide behind blaming others for making us feel the way we do, claiming "it" is responsible, or claiming "we" all feel this way.

I Statements are very useful when you are bothered by what someone else is doing.

They are a way for you to tell the other person without getting into an argument.

I Statements state what you are thinking, how you are feeling and why you feel that way. They most always begin with the word “I”. By following the steps of an I Statement, you are less likely to let your temper ruin the message.

When to use:

- When you need to confront another about his/her behavior
- When you feel another person is not treating you right
- When you feel defensive or angry
- When you need to let someone know what you are feeling and why.
- When another person is angry with you
- When you want to tell someone how their behaviour is hurting you.

You will have a greater chance of getting your point across when you use “I” Statements. This is simply stating to the other what is going on for you, rather than blaming and attacking the other person.

Here are ways that you can create an “I” Statement and be assertive

USE "I" AND NOT "YOU"

- When I'm....
- When I....
- I think that I.....
- I feel that I.....
- My concern is.....

TALK ABOUT THE BEHAVIOUR NOT THE PERSON

- When I think I'm not being heard I feel
- When I'm shouted at I

- When I'm sworn at I get.....

DESCRIBE HOW THEIR BEHAVIOUR AFFECTS YOU

- I get really scared when
- I feel embarrassed when you
- It really hurts me when

STATE WHAT YOU PREFER

- I would like....
- I need to....
- What I'd like to see happen is....

Examples:

1. "I get worried and upset when you are late and don't phone me. I want you to phone so I'll know where you are."
2. "I feel hurt when you call me names. I want it to stop. It's fine to tell me how you feel when you are angry."
3. "I feel frustrated when I have to ask you four or five times to take out the rubbish, and I don't like having to nag you."

The use of I Statements is one of the ways to improve the relationship not only with our children but with other people generally. Besides "good relationship" is not reflected only in the communication with members of our family. It is a skill which can be implemented in our relationships with other people. However, its cultivation could equip children with abilities, in order to deal with their feelings more effectively. For this reason, it was underlined the value of parents' and children's practice in the use of these statements.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

During the last two decades, Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) and Howard Gardner's *Frames of Mind; The theory of multiple intelligences* (1983) have become a signpost in contemporary psychology. These theories offered the basis for a number of studies and interventions which have connected scientific research, psychological practice and the planning and implementation of prevention projects and promotion of mental health both in school and in family.

The continuous search of effective ways of upbringing and supporting children is due to the alarming realizations worldwide. Research data from many countries show an increase in psycho-social and emotional problems, as well as, in problems connected to school adaptation and progress of children and teenagers. Furthermore, a large percentage of children born every year belong in high risk groups that could develop these problems.

Long term studies in families show that the emotional upbringing in the family affects positively the emotional intelligence and mental health of children. Positive **emotional education** is mentioned in all skills which build **emotional intelligence**.

That is, skills in understanding, expression and management of feelings, in self control, in empathy, in quality communication, in the process of resolving conflict and problems, in being assertive, in personal responsibility, in self knowledge and self acceptance.

Emotional education concerns all children and adults who are involved in any relationship with children. It concerns parents, teachers, grandmothers, grandfathers, relatives – and in general, all people who take care of children or guide groups of children. Nevertheless, emotional education requires that adults should learn new skills: **we, adults, should learn and practice in deeper and more essential ways of communication, so as to be able to “teach”, to “train” children in social and emotional skills.**

Actually, it is about all those skills needed in all human relationships, either with children, or with adults. It is necessary for us to grow personally, too. We have to struggle to learn so as we can teach our children more. It is only then that we can start a real and open communication between us and our children.

Empathy: the foundation of emotional education.

Empathy is our ability to feel the emotions which another person feels. As parents with empathy, when we see our children crying we can imagine ourselves in their places and feel their pain. And when we see our children tap their feet out of anger, we can feel their disappointment and rage.

If we are able to transmit our children this kind of deep and personal emotional understanding, we show faith to their experiences and we help them calm down. When we want to understand our children’s experiences , we help them feel that they have a support. They know that we are by their side. When we avoid criticizing them, reducing the sharpness of their feelings, or diverting them from their aims, then they let us enter their world. They tell us how they feel. They express their opinion. Their motives are made clearer and they are better understood. Our children start trusting us. In this way, if any conflicts came up, we can resolve them together.

Empathy is the skill to understand how our children feel, so we can respond in a better way.

Last but not least, the approach of the concepts “emotional intelligence” and “empathy” evinced the complexity of human relationships and the necessity each parent and each person who is involved in the education of children, should “work” with himself.

Consequently, a better relationship with our children prerequisites a better relationship with ourselves.