

# MINDSET Educational programme

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# Understanding the Bullying Mind

## Concept

The first definition of bullying came in 1997 through Olweus, who determined it to be “*the moment when someone is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more people*”. In the author's subsequent versions, this definition has undergone some changes, since less explicit forms of bullying have been added, such as the exclusion of the peer group or the act of spreading rumors about colleagues (Martins, 2009). Moreover, Bullying is considered part of aggressive behavior and has some very specific characteristics and actions.

To consider that we are facing a situation of bullying, the following conditions must be met:

1. violent behavior occurs without apparent motivation and is intended to disturb and cause discomfort to the other;
2. aggression has a repetitive nature and endures over time and;
3. there is a clear asymmetry of power that can be physical and / or psychological. The imbalance of power can originate in different ways, either through a physical advantage (size, age or strength), social status in the peer group, as a popular student over a less popular student or superiority in numerical terms ( a group that targets an individual) in relation to a target that has no means to defend itself (Olweus, 1997).

## Psychological Characterization of Bullying Offenders

## Types of Bullying

There are several forms of Bullying, but there are two that stand out, being considered the main forms of expression of this phenomenon:

**i. direct physical bullying:** it consists of a “face-to-face” confrontation between the aggressor and the victim, with physical attacks such as beating, pushing, stealing, damaging the other's objects on purpose, extorting money or threatening to do so, insulting or offending, compelling or threaten peers to perform tasks of a servile or humiliating nature against their will, among others;

**ii. direct verbal bullying,** which encompasses all the actions of the aggressors that include insults, abusing the other, “making fun of”, disrespecting, making racist comments or highlighting any deficiency or weakness of others;

**iii. indirect bullying,** which is more concealed and therefore less visible, and is usually carried out by a third person or without confrontation with the individual, including the exclusion or rejection of someone in activities by a group, disseminating rumors or lies and making it effective of malicious actions (Farrington, 1993; Matos & Gonçalves, 2009).

## Two patterns that characterize aggressive children

Aggressive children can be characterized as:

i. reactive aggressors, that is, they react or are stimulated very easily. These aggressors use mental schemes to interpret the different situations, neglecting the clues given, which causes excessive attribution of hostility towards the intentions expressed by the peers (Martins, 2009; Dodge & Frame, cited by Martins, 2009). For this reason, aggression is a retaliation or defense in relation to the colleague's behavior, thus dealing

with a reactive aggression, that is, a reaction to a situation that is perceived as threatening (Crick & Dodge, 1996).

ii. proactive aggressors, that is, in relation to information processing, at the level of the response decision, in which the children evaluate the possible feedbacks and the respective consequences of each response made, the choice always falls under aggressive responses, in order to deal with interpersonal situations and conflicts, since these children believe that they will be able to achieve a better performance in this way, and in this sense, achieve the goals they desire. (Martins, 2007; Crick & Dodge, 1996). This group, which does not differ from children who are not aggressive in the first stages, is also characterized in that in the third stage (which corresponds to clarifying objectives and positive responses to the situation), choosing instrumental objectives, that is, that allow them to gain dominance over others and for the assets that belong to them, compared to most individuals, who normally choose relational goals, taking into account the approval of peers (Martins, 2007; Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996).

### **Psychological characteristics of Bullying Offenders**

A distinctive characteristic of the typical aggressor is the fact that his aggression is directed towards peers, although it can be directed towards other agents, such as teachers or parents (Olweus, 1997). As previously mentioned, the concept of bullying is associated with a systematic imbalance of power between those who attack and those who are victimized. Highly aggressive children show a tendency to look for conflict situations, with an interest for peers to watch them (Wachtel, 1973, quoted by Besag, 1989).

According to Pereira and collaborators (2009), the existence of a unique physical and psychological profile cannot be considered with regard to the role of aggressor in the

bullying situation.

The stereotype of bullying has been changing, not corresponding to a previous profile of a boy who is not very intelligent, overweight and aggressive, who attacked the other in order to feel better for a pure demonstration of physical aggression (Haber & Glatzer, 2009). However, this imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim is not based only on matters of physical superiority. There are situations in which they present themselves as someone small and fragile in comparison to their peers. However, what is common in the profile of the aggressor of Bullying is his/her positive attitude towards aggression and violence and its use, compared to other students in general.

The perpetrator of bullying seems to be generically popular among his peers (Bruyn, Cillessen, & Wissink, 2010), they are characterized by having a high impulsivity, evidencing a need and even pleasure in dominating and intimidating others, showing a tendency to involvement in antisocial behaviors.

Barros, Carvalho and Pereira (2009) reaffirm this position by stating that the aggressor feels satisfaction in playing the role that allows him/her to carry out actions of threat, physical violence, satire and mockery of those who are inferior to the level of the exercise of power.

Moreover, the aggressors seem to obtain pleasure from the suffering caused to the other, thus demonstrating the lack of empathy towards the victims (Harris & Petrie, 2003), which in turn is seen not only as a fundamental element in the individual's personality, as well as well as the quality of interpersonal relationships and the prevention of aggression between peers (Britton & Fuendeling, 2005; Cann, Norman, Welbourne & Calhoun, 2008; Davis, Mitchell, Hall, Lothert, Snapp & Meyer, 1999; Joireman, Needham & Cummings, 2002 , cited by Veiga & Santos, 2011), but also a distinguishing factor between aggressors and their peers that reveal effective leadership skills (Haber & Glatzer, 2009).

Thus, despite having greater difficulty in creating friendly relationships (Boulton, 1999), feeling unhappy at school, being rejected by a large part of their classmates (Martins, 2007), these individuals are usually accompanied by a small group of more insecure and anxious individuals, in which they exercise their leadership (Haber & Glatzer, 2009; Carvalhosa, Lima & Matos, 2002; Olweus, 1997). Aggressors are more likely to adopt risky behaviors, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, consuming illicit substances and entering episodes of delinquency and violence (Haber & Glatzer, 2009; Carvalhosa, Lima & Matos, 2002).

The family context is characterized as an environment of little affection and endearment, with problems in sharing what they feel, feeling a greater family distance (DeHaan, 1997), which causes them to create feelings of hostility towards the environment that surrounds them (Olweus, 1997).

Most of the studies carried out consider that the aggressors have a high self-esteem (Olweus (1997); Haber & Glatzer (2009), taking into account that this concept represents the positive or negative orientation towards oneself.

According to Haber and Glatzer (2009), one of the main difficulties in dealing with aggressors, in the context of prevention and intervention, is related not only to their recognition but also to the difficulty on the part of observers and the school community in imposing these individuals. These individuals are valued by teachers, coaches in extracurricular activities. The authors also consider that these children want to become popular in their school, in order to gain social prestige.

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## Helping victims overcome their past experiences

Cyberbullying will leave victims feeling helpless and cornered. They feel as if it is pointless to take any course of action, believing that it can only lead to more cyberbullying. The result of taking no action leads to the victims falling like a downward spiral, and it will lead them to feel as if they are losing complete control over their life. For this to stop, it requires taking back control and starting handling the situation appropriately. Pushing back against cyberbullying safely and ethically, by themselves and with the assistance of friends, trusted adults, and whole communities will facilitate victims to overcome their difficulties, heal, and even begin to assist others.

The media attention that's being paid to high-profile bullying cases has cultivated an environment where teens are fortunately a lot more willing to come forward with their stories and experiences. As a most trusted and efficient method, researchers recommend talking to a trusted adult regarding the situation. If no adult is available, cyberbullying victims are inspired to speak to a friend who they'll charge. The vital factor is to avoid keeping the truth about your situation a secret. A lot of people suggest first trying to ignore the bully. Cyberbullies might not continue harassing a victim if there's no response. Thus victims are inspired to not move with the instigator.

Cyberbullies are trying to find a reaction from their targets (Mapua 2018). Like net trolls, the thought is to easily deny them the factor they're trying to find - a response from their victims. Victims should avoid retaliating or seeking revenge on the bully by completing the same attack; paying back can also produce a cycle where the victim responds with another attack whenever a bully attacks and things endlessly return and forth. The violence and level of attack might increase, creating an even more significant threat.

In some cases, a victim may set in motion events in which the bully might attempt to attack the victim face-to-face or cause physical harm. To boot, retaliating might lead victims to even more significant problems, even though they didn't begin the cycle

themselves. A simple plan is to remain calm and avoid reacting out of fear or anger. Once cyberbullies elicit a robust response from a target, they'll typically boast regarding this as a victory later; they will even post screenshots of victims' reactions for laughs. Responding directly to the provocations will almost surely prolong and complicate the situation even more.

### **The critical role youth workers have in the process**

The topic of cyberbullying has enormous meaning and significance in modern-day society, so it is essential to consider all the aspects influencing cyberbullying (CB). The fact is that we are constantly neglecting one of the main aspects of cyberbullying that remain persistent, and that is to provide the critical help needed by victims that have gone through cyberbullying. But how do we help them? Who is at the forefront of that process? They are youth workers, and in this subchapter, we will shortly discuss their role in helping victims overcome their past cyberbullying experiences.

Frequently, in regards to cyberbullying, social workers' main task is to work towards the prevention of cyberbullying. But inevitably, CB will occur one way or another; they can just try to help reduce its effects. Therefore, it is vital for youth workers to respond to the needs of the cyberbullying victims and do it efficiently through supporting them and being able at their disposal. Also, their importance is viewed in the fact that they present the link between the school, community, and home (Kelly, 2009, 39)

Being a victim of some sort of violence can result in the victim forming boundaries around itself and questioning its actions. So naturally, one of the main principles should be the work on facilitating the empowerment of the victim, as the CB is not something that can be dealt with in isolation. Additionally, another form of providing help through youth workers is by having them act as advocates (informally), decisiveness, and the

ability to act more confidently in helping victims is one of the reasons (Zastrow, 2017). This conclusion is drawn from the fact that youth workers do possess the right knowledge and experience regarding evidence-based interventions, and most importantly, they will know how to reach the goals of individuals, organizations, groups, families.

From everything that has been said, it is evident that youth workers have a critical role in helping victims overcome their traumatic cyberbullying experiences, which they will be able to do with the expertise and the knowledge they possess in this field.

### **Contributions of positive parenting**

As discussed in the previous subchapter, the potential impact and the help that the social workers can provide for the victims in terms of overcoming their experiences with cyberbullying is massive, but they, of course, have certain restrictions and limitations. The most notable one is the inability to be at the victim's disposal 24/7. Therefore, it is only natural to conclude that those who can have the most palpable influence are the parents. They are the ones that young adults spend the most time around throughout their upbringing, and how they are being parented can have a positive or negative consequence that can prove to be a lasting one, even going into adulthood (Morgan et al. [2012](#)).

With that in mind, the first advice when deciding on their approach to the problem is to always try being encouraging, try to see the bigger picture, listen, and be invested in finding a solution to the problem. The lack of positive interest, especially on the father's side, can greatly slow down their children's recovery.

From this, it is evident that the most important thing is to talk to the child, letting them know that they aren't guilty of being chosen as a victim (which is the state of mind you

enter once a victim of cyberbullying). Be comforting and supportive because going through that experience; it is of vital significance to show that they are not alone. Parents could tell a story of someone they knew, or someone that is well known in public, who has undergone a similar experience and come out of it as a good success story, both in their lives and recovery paths.

Most importantly, parents themselves should invest time into researching the possible solutions to the problem and equip themselves with helpful information to provide the best answer for their child's issue and implement it through their pattern of behavior.

Finally, the best solution for parents could be considering signing up for an intervention program best suited to the victim's experiences after weighing all options available. It has been found that this can actually improve and increase child-parent communication in regards to bullying.

The overall conclusion is that parents should strive to accomplish and have positive family management characterized by open communication between the child and themselves for the sake of the child overcoming the experience they have undergone (Mulvey et al. 2018), as it will clearly lead them down the good path of recovery because cyberbullying in many cases starts but could also end within the family circle.

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## Influencing self-esteem. Increase in self-awareness

Self-awareness is perception of yourself, your psychics, needs, motivation, feelings, thoughts, actions and instincts. It is not born together with a person but it is built throughout life experience. Though it is pledged inside of us and everyone is passing approximately similar steps/stages.

Most important function of correctly formed self-awareness is that it identifies the quality of life, as a person will be more capable to solve his/her problems and will be less influenced by different psychological disorders.

There are different theories about the stages of self-awareness, though there are 4 main ones identified:

**Stage 1:** Discovering "self- me" (approximately at the age of 1 yo)

**Stage 2:** Separation of results of your own actions of actions of other people (2-3 years old age). During this time the child starts using correct personal pronouns. He/she starts defining different feelings caused by outside objects or actions.

**Stage 3:** Building the competence of self-evaluation, appearance of self-awareness (around age of 7). This is a very important stage, when some important psychological elements which will be influencing the further life of a person are laid.

**Stage 4:** "Searching" yourself, your personal style. This is the stage of very active self-discovery. At this time the awareness of your psychological qualities takes place and self-esteem starts playing the important role. If stage three is passed very easily, there is a big chance that at stage four the person will get read of the largest part of the inferiority complexes.

There are main directions of building and forming the self-awareness:

- Forming of self-respect;
- Forming the whole picture about yourself;
- Awareness of irreversibility of time;
- Discovery of your inside world;
- Awareness of love;

All these directions are so difficult and complex that it is very difficult to give to the parents and/or youth workers any advice on leading young persons through these directions. Though, you can help a young person to form the correct self-esteem, raise the quality of not being afraid of mistakes and to be able to evaluate other people correctly.

Self-awareness is forming self-esteem. That's why we can do the important conclusion – correct formed self-awareness is influencing the quality of life and self-appreciation. During the development the young person or teenager is trying to identify his/her psychological qualities and these factors are helping him/her:

- Combination of “Me-real” and “Me-ideal”. “Me-ideal” is the perception of yourself as an ideal person, the person you would like to become as a result of the realization of your opportunities. This comparison might lead both to positive and to negative consequences. If the child is targeting the “result” this may lead to forming of low self-esteem. If you help the young person to get the satisfaction and happiness from the process itself, then the conflict between “Me-real” and “Me-ideal” will not happen. Though you need to have a very careful approach, because there is a big chance to make harm.
- Evaluation of the results of your activities: It is known that you need to praise people also for their efforts. If you praise someone only for the results this may lead to

serious psychological problems. If a person is accepting an unlucky situation normally it will not affect his/her self-esteem. That's why it is very important that the child/teenager understands that he/she is praised for efforts, for trials and for the process of the activities itself.

- Rating by others and status in the group of peers. You can not avoid to be rated by others. It is important to separate the rating of others from your own personality. If a teenager has created a situation and he was criticized for it you need to explain that this is just a particular opinion of someone and that is the evaluation of the action done and not the personality. In the group of peers you are also evaluated/rated often and here it is very difficult to advise something. To act out of the box or not, to be evaluated/rated or to evaluate/rate others – there is no right answer. Youth will start serious interpersonal conflicts and often without a reason.

Self-esteem is built in these three aspects. It is important to talk to young people, to identify wrong self-perception on time and help to form a correct opinion about him/herself. Remember that if the personality is unformed it is very easy to imbue anything and it will be very difficult to avoid it afterwards. That's why helping the child to form self-esteem as he/she is not able yet to do it correctly and absorbs everything that is said about him/her.

With the correctly formed self-awareness a person becomes self-sufficient, sure in his/her own forces, and also independent from opinions of others, free in his/her behaviour with awareness of the limits/borders of this kind of freedom. Youthwork plays a big role in this process.

Self-esteem is quality of the personality, which core is positive self-evaluation of own skills, talents and competences as sufficient for reaching the important goals and satisfaction of his/her own needs.

Self-esteem consists of the following components as:

- Ability of setting the limits;
- Ability of saying “no”;
- Pragmatism, ability to plan his/her own life, following his/her own philosophy of life;

Self-esteem plays an important role for reaching success in life. It is impossible to be always self-assured, hesitations in one's own forces and competences are normal. Most importantly how the person deals with these hesitations. Ideally you need to analyse why you have these hesitations and solve the problem. If you do not have enough experience you need to work harder in this direction. If you do not have enough knowledge you need to enrol yourself in relevant courses, read specific literature etc. For a person with high self-esteem all hesitations and obstacles are temporary and he/she is able to analyse his/her problems, solve them and move on.

But normally the reality is different. Hesitation in your own knowledge, competences, choices, strengths turn to be so high that turn into strong fear that in critical situations might block all actions and force you to stop planned things. These hesitations bring lowering the self-esteem that could become quality of the personality and spoil someone's life for many years.

How to increase the self-esteem:

Low self-esteem is never without a reason. Normally, its roots come from childhood. Best way of course to get rid of low self-esteem is to work out the reasons it was caused by. If low self-esteem is caused by a number of unlucky events, it makes sense to work out the causes that brought these unlucky events and how to avoid them in future. If low self-esteem becomes a feature of the character and it is popping up in different situations it's better to seek help of a psychologist to find its cause and work it out.

If low self-esteem has not yet a part of someones personality or pops up only in specific situations, there are ways to support yourself.

Some possible tips:

**I. Watch out your posture.**

Have you ever noticed how a person who has low self-esteem walks? That's correct, he/she squats, looks at his/her feet. It looks like he/she tends to attract less attention. In contrast, people with good posture, who look at the person during the conversation seem to be self-assured and look more appealing to others. That's why we need to watch out how we keep our posture and how we are interacting with people. At the beginning it will become a habit. Also by following this advice you can improve your health.

**II. Watch out your appearance.**

In principle, a person with good self-esteem does not care what he/she is wearing and how he/she looks like. He/she appreciates him/herself for the successes, knows what he/she can achieve, and others' opinions do not influence him/her much. But this is already the next step when self-esteem is increased which makes you independent from others' opinions. In the beginning, it makes sense to revise your style, clothes and select those that can underline your individuality. Outside positive changes will bring positive inside changes.

**III. Keep a diary of your achievements.**

Remember the saying: if you do not praise yourself nobody will praise you. Start praising yourself and do it regularly. For example, by the end of the day write down at least 5 points of your daily successes even if they seem to be small. Things like waking up with an alarm, cooking a lunch, watching an interesting movie – all these are achievements we deserve appraisal for, even if they seem minor for us.

#### **IV. Allow yourself to make mistakes.**

All people make mistakes. Everyone can make mistakes and it is very normal. Self-blaming will not bring anything good, because the mistake is already made and we cannot go back in the past to correct it. Though we have the chance to analyze the situation to not to repeat the same mistake in future. And this will be a great achievement!

#### **V. Learn how to separate your personality from your actions.**

Before a certain age kids are not able to separate themselves from their actions and before a certain age they can not differentiate if they did something bad or they are bad. Though the adults are able to separate it. If I did not have a successful meal today, this does not mean I am bad and I am not able to cook, this only means that today I have not managed to do it. And even if I am not able to cook, this does not define me as a person. I can be a professional, good mother, wife, good friend and at the same time I can fail to be a good cook. Remember that a person can not be good in everything and this is normal. Try to find your strong qualities and put more attention in them.

#### **VI. Increase your competences.**

It is not a big deal not to know something, it is a big deal if you are not motivated to get to know something new. Life is not standing still. You always need to improve your competences and increase your knowledge to stay up to date. New knowledge that you can apply can increase your self-esteem.

#### **VII. Have time for yourself.**

In our life there are so many functions that we need to fulfil daily that it's easy to lose yourself among them. How can you have good self-esteem if you even do not know what you want? Try to find your schedule for yourself. You can do things you like, meet up with friends, do sport, read a book – it can be anything that brings you pleasure.

### **VIII. Look for a balance.**

A person with a low self-esteem always hesitates and thinks that he/she has not finished something till the end and he/she needs to make more efforts. But as it is said, perfectionism brings nervous breakdown. It is important to remember that it's impossible to know everything and to be the best in everything. Though it does not mean that you do not need to do anything. You need to seek the balance in everything, not overload yourself but at the same time do not give concessions to yourself.

### **IX. Look for things that help you.**

There are a lot of materials on the internet about how to increase self-esteem. There are no universal methods for it, you need to try what suits you more. First and most difficult step is to accept that there is a problem, to have the motivation to solve it and to find your own ways to deal with it.

### **X. Look for support.**

To change – is always scary and difficult. It is not possible to take a magic pill or use a magic stick to improve your life. For any changes you need to work and in this case work on yourself, that could be very difficult without support. You can seek support from your family, friends, colleagues, psychologist, support groups and etc. This can be anyone you trust and who supports your wish for changes.

### **XI. Act!**

Just start acting. With small steps and you will manage!

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## Fostering Empathy

20.9% of young people reported that they have been cyberbullying or social media to cyberbully others. From research it is shown that 49.8% of young people between the age of 13-17 have experienced bullying at school in contrast with 14.5% of youngsters that experienced online bullying. Young people who experienced cyberbullying shared that this has negatively affected the way they perceive and process their emotions (69.1%), it affected their relationship with others (31.9%), their health (13.1%), and their school performance (6.5%)(Patchin, J.W., & Hinduja, S. 2020).

The above statistics shows that most of the bullying is still taking place in physical form. The high percentage of 49.8% demonstrates that most of the bullying takes place in schools. 13% of the cases of bullying at school are then carried on virtually. Before we go into the importance of empathy to reduce both online and offline cyberbullying it is essential to explain the context in which this is taking place.

### **Society today**

Today's society is built upon the premise that everything should be measured. This applies for academic performance, financial success, years of experience amongst many other things. This fact in itself is not a negative element in today's societies, what is negative is that this might create the idea that for something to be considered valuable it needs to be quantifiable, thus leaving important aspects in our lives which are not easy to quantify lagging behind. If we analyse our education systems and most companies which are an essential part of our communities, they mostly base the learning and the training on hard skills which are quantifiable. We all know what is the worth of a degree, Masters or PhD. Sometimes it feels like everything is targeting the education of the mind, leaving behind the body, which is full of emotions, feelings and

the feeling of being connected.

### **Introduction of technology**

The industrialised society, more individualistic approach and an emphasis on efficiency caused many individuals to lose connection with family members and friends. The need to feel connected with other members of the community is vital to the well being of individuals. Turner (1981) stated that social support is related to psychological well-being, meaning that the more a person feels he has friends and family who are there for him, the less likely he is to feel depressed and anxious. This loss in connection together with the increase in competition is seen in all aspects of the young person's life which include education, sports, leisure, and employment increased the level of anxiety amongst young people.

With the introduction of social media and the way it reached the 50 million users, thus making it a mass medium showed that social media addressed the need to be connected. To give an example of the explosive rate of the internet as a mass medium we can compare the amount of years which the TV took to reach 50 million users with the number of years that it took for the Internet to reach millions of users. TV took 13 years to become a mass medium and the internet took only 3 years. Social Media platforms like Facebook took 2 years to reach that mark, Instagram took 19 months and TikTok reached that mark in less than 12 months.

Social Media was spreading like a wildfire. This gave very little time to really understand the psychological impact which this innovation was having on the users, especially the younger generation which were using social media more than the older generations. What this meant was that everyone was trying to really capitalise on this new era with little knowledge on the effects which this was having on the users. The impact is now being studied especially on Millennials and the young upcoming generation which is known as the 'Snowflakes' generation. As McLuhan (1966) stated, 'We become what we

behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us'. McLuhan continued by saying that societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication.

To really understand young people and empathy, it is important to keep in mind that as youth workers we need to really understand the Internet and social media as a medium, understand its characteristics and how all this is affecting young people who are spending an average of 3-5 hours daily virtually connected. Patricia Greenfield concluded that "every medium develops some cognitive skills at the expense of others." Our growing use of the Net and other screen-based technologies has led to the "widespread and sophisticated development of visual-spatial skills." We can, for example, rotate objects in our minds better than we used to be able to. But our "new strengths in visual-spatial intelligence" go hand in hand with a weakening of our capacities for the kind of "deep processing" that underpins "mindful knowledge acquisition, inductive analysis, critical thinking, imagination, and reflection."

### **Cyberbullying and Empathy**

In his book 'The Shallows', Nicholas Carr (2010) described that the Internet and social media apps are built in a way to absorb all the attention possible. Carr, also argues that due to extensive use of social media and its functions, we are reducing our ability to reflect, thus he concluded this is also affecting our neurons and how these are changing and becoming more efficient in seeing important information which applies to us amongst the thousands of posts which we go through every day.

To understand Carr's argument one can think about the time when social media and internet was not available. Think about all the times for example when we were waiting for a bus, waiting in the line to buy something, sitting down in the doctor's clinic or simply being idle we would have either engaged in a conversation or started to daydream or imagine things in our head. Now that we all have our devices every minute, when we find

ourselves idle, we start browsing on the Internet, visiting our various social media apps, replying to emails etc. This fact is neither good nor bad, the problem is that today more than ever we are living our lives without stopping to reflect and to think on basic things like our feelings. Therefore, one can also argue that technology is maybe connecting us to the virtual world at the cost of the connection we need with ourselves.

Today most of the information young people need is found at their fingertips. All the effort is not being done to know things but to know where they find the things to know. If you ask a question which the answer is not known, youngsters will not try to think about the question and maybe discuss the possible answer with their peer, they will simply ask Google.

Therefore, before we speak about empathy we need as youth workers, to really figure out how we instigate more reflection practices in our everyday jobs when working with young people. The definition of empathy is the competence to understand what the others are feeling. Therefore, empathy would never be possible without the reflection element. To empathise one needs to know and be aware of where it is, that they stand in relation to the person with whom they need to empathise. On another level, they need to have the ability to reflect and understand the position of the person who they are empathising with. On a deeper level they need to reflect on similar experiences which they had which is similar to the situation being described and act accordingly. Therefore, the ability to reflect on one's own thoughts, feelings and emotions is vital.

As youth workers, it is essential to understand that due to the value which we put on efficiency, the effects of the Internet, Social Media and sometimes even our formal education system, young people are not being educated on a level of emotions. It is important to ask questions to young people we work with such as:

- When was the last time you stood still for 20 minutes doing nothing?

- When was the last time you reflected on where you are going?
- When was the last time you reflected on where you are?
- When was the last time when you were aware of your feelings?

When asked these questions, most individuals do not remember when was the last time they stopped to reflect on anything. This is especially relevant when it comes to young people, since they were exposed to social media, and other technologies from a very young age.

### **Types of Empathy**

In theory there are 3 types of empathy:

- Cognitive: also known as 'perspective-taking'
- Emotional: when you quite literally feel the other person's emotions
- Compassionate: when you really understand the other person's perspective and pain

The ideal kind of empathy would be the compassionate. In the words of Daniel Goleman (2019), "True compassion means not only feeling another's pain but also being moved to help relieve it". This type of empathy means understanding how they feel and why, and then doing something to try to help out.

### **Empathy in practice**

The following examples were taken from the blog focusing on how to help teenagers develop empathy found in the website [www.melbournechildpsychology.com.au/](http://www.melbournechildpsychology.com.au/) and

have been adapted to focus on young people and youth workers.

The following are ideas that can help young people to develop and build empathy. Empathy is a skill and an ability which allows you to respond appropriately to another person's feelings or behaviour. It is important to keep in mind that to develop empathy takes time, active listening and effort.

The best and most effective way to develop empathy in young people we work with is to engage in conversations with them. This entails using what is happening around them and introducing reflection through questions to give a deeper insight and meaning to the situations happening around and inside of them.

Ideas to help develop empathy:

- Discuss what is happening in the young people's life and ask them about how they feel about them.
- It can also help to discuss situations that young people might see on TV, video games they play and experiences they have at school. You can also ask them why they are drawn in to certain characters on TV or video games. A good example would be to watch the movie 'The Little Prince' and discuss the feeling of the characters found in the book/movie.
- Modelling is very important. The best example as youth workers is through our behaviour and how we act to certain situations. It is essential for young people to see your emotions and feelings, after all we are all humans. For example, if you are feeling emotional in a particular situation it is important to discuss it with the young people you work with. This will give them a living and practical example of how one can deal with emotions.
- Help young people to deal with stressful situations like going to a new place for

the first time. An example of this is to follow up a conflict which the young people experienced and ask questions to them to help them evaluate various situations and ways how they can react to them.

The following scenarios are being reproduced to provide hands-on examples of how the previous ideas can work in practice:

**Scenario 1:** Following a day at school, a young person that you work with, comes to you and starts telling you about their friend, Tom, who has been really bad-tempered in the last couple of weeks.

You can tackle this as follows;

Option A: "You sometimes behave in the same way too". (Hint: Young person is likely to walk out of the room in a bad mood)

Option B: "You just leave him alone for a while, he will change his behaviour eventually." (Hint: Attempting to solve the problem for the young person is not the response they are looking for. It does not help them to reflect into what is happening and it seems that you are cutting corners and not interested to really understand what is happening)

Option C: Preferred option: Asking questions. "Can you tell me more on how Tom has been behaving", "What do you think has been going on with him?", "What could be the reason behind his behaviour?", "Do you think there's anything we can do to help?", "If you were Tom, what would you like others to do?" (Hint: This option helps the young person put themselves in Tom's shoes (cognitive empathy) and think about the best way to respond (emotional empathy).

**Scenario 2:** A young person in your youth centre / youth group is refusing to attend the

fund-raiser being organised for the same youth centre / group on Saturday night because they want to hang out at a friend's house instead.

You can tackle this as follows;

Option A: "I think you are being really selfish. You have committed to the fund-raiser and there is nothing to do about it". (Hint: young person is likely to attend the fund-raiser but spend the whole time being ill-tempered and checking their phone)

Option B: "Fine, do not come. But just remember how much the others have worked very hard for this event and you will be letting them down." (Hint: The young person might consider his peers' feelings for a moment but quickly forget and enjoy a lovely Saturday night with their friends. They may feel guilty enough to come but will continue to resent you for making them feel that way)

Option C: Preferred option: Asking questions. "Okay, tell me why it is so important that you go to your friend's house?", "What do you think your evening will be like if you come to the fund-raiser instead?", "What do you think could be your role and contribution in the fund-raiser?", "Do you think your peers would mind if you do not come?", "If you can't come, what do you think you could do to make sure that the others still know that you care about this youth centre / group?" (Hint: The young person may or may not end up coming. If they don't come, they should be strongly encouraged to speak to their peers themselves to explain).

These conversations do not always go according to our plans. You may get a lot of "I don't know" and/or "whatever"s in answer to your questions. As youth workers, we should assess the situation and try and look for the best time to have these conversations. It is also important to choose the right tone of voice. This should be both curious and neutral at the same time as young people are very good at picking up the tone of voice. If young people suspect that you are having a conversation with a hidden agenda, they will not

open up and the conversation will not be fruitful.

Above all, try to remember what it was like when you were a young person. Empathy is not a natural skill we are born with but rather it is a skill that we can acquire. It is a skill which we can work on to develop it in ourselves and the young people we work with. A good start is to be in the moment and to be sensitive to our own emotions and to the emotions of those around us.

*"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."*

– Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

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## Understanding and using emotional intelligence

### **What Is Emotional Intelligence?**

Increased emotional self-awareness, ability to control and cope with the strength of one's emotions, and openness to others' emotions.

In a nutshell, emotional intelligence refers to the ability, power, expertise, or self-perceived ability to recognize, evaluate, and control one's own, others', and community emotions. The theory is enjoying considerable support in the literature and has had successful applications in many domains.

Individuals with high emotional intelligence are people who can handle criticism, are skilled in expressing their feelings, and are successful in sharing their feelings and understanding the feelings of others. As with cognitive intelligence, there are some differences between individuals with low and high emotional intelligence. Low level of emotional intelligence leads to situations such as despair, alienation, substance use, tendency to crime, violence, depression, eating problems, bullying and dropping out of school, early unwanted pregnancy or adolescent pregnancy (Goleman, 2010).

Emotional intelligence helps people prevent depression, anxiety, and violence, as well as preparing them to cope with bullying by controlling their own fears and finding support.

Aggression, drug abuse, and poor mental health are all predicted by a lack of emotional intelligence.

Individuals vary in their attitudes, interests, needs, and ways of communicating emotions. It takes tact and shrewdness to get through this, particularly if one wants to succeed in life.

This is where the idea of emotional intelligence helps a lot. Salovey and Gardner group

emotional intelligence under five headings: self-consciousness, emotion management, self-activation, understanding the emotions of others, and managing relationships.

- Self-consciousness is the ability to recognize an emotion as it develops. People who recognize their emotions maintain their lives more easily.
- Being able to manage their emotions means having the ability to easily overcome when a problem is encountered, people who fail to do so have to constantly struggle with restlessness.
- Self-activation requires using emotions for a purpose. It is necessary to use emotions purposefully for self-activation, control of yourself and creativity. A person who has the ability to mobilize himself can be productive and effective in what they do.
- Understanding others' emotions is considered as empathy and is one of the essential conditions for success in human relationships. Not being able to grasp what others are feeling is a deficiency in emotional intelligence.
- Being able to manage relationships is more like the ability to manage the emotions of others. These skills underlie leadership, popularity, and interpersonal effectiveness. People with these skills have a bright social life.

Emotional intelligence can be extended to a number of circumstances in your everyday life. Emotional intelligence can be exercised in a number of ways, including:

- Being able to accept criticism and responsibility
- Being able to move on after making a mistake
- Being able to say no when you need to
- Being able to share your feelings with others

- Being able to solve problems in ways that work for everyone
- Having empathy for other people
- Having great listening skills
- Knowing why you do the things you do
- Not being judgemental of other

### **What is Bullying ?**

Behavior with the intent to Hurt, Harass, Humiliate, Harm, and Hold power over others.

### **What is Cyber Bullying ?**

Cyberbullying is similar to the types of bullying that take place in the physical environment.

The main difference is that information and communication technologies such as the internet or mobile phone are used as a means of which virtual communication can take place. "Cyber Bullying" refers to individuals sending the information communication technologies password to others, intimidate, threaten, intimidate, harass written and written messages on a deliberate and regular basis. The evolving communication of the digital environment is undoubtedly the areas where cyberbullying is practiced or experienced.

In this context cyberbullying capturing images of victims via camera phones, sharing social media without their consent or knowledge, e-mail or cell phone messages, humiliating, mocking, threatening, sexual harassment or violent messages cover many behaviors such as defamatory.

Cyber bullying is a form of negative and harmful behavior performed to use the internet for purposes other than its intended purpose by young people as well. These young people use the internet as a channel where they can mock others. Moreover, they state that they do these actions just to have some fun.

### **Why does a person do Cyber Bullying?**

- Wants to feel powerful and to be in control of others
- Typically just knows how to show anger by doing something.
- Has low self-esteem and may have been a survivor of aggressive or offensive behavior.
- Bullies lack empathy and emotional sensitivity, both of which are important for healthy social interactions.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Cyber Bullying?**

- Bullies lack emotional intelligence
- Empathy, compassion, and an understanding of how to cope with and control emotions effectively all require emotional intelligence.
- Bullied children will use emotional intelligence skills to stand up and say no.
- Training for character and moral growth goes hand in hand with developing a balanced emotional intelligence

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Cyber Bullying is one of the competencies of emotional intelligence, and people with high emotional intelligence are expected to be good at dealing with anger. It is also thought that they are good at dealing with negative emotions and can manage this situation positively in any peer

conflict.

Lomas, Stough, Hansen, and Downey (2012) reported that emotion and emotion management and control dimensions in emotional intelligence significantly predicted adolescents' being victims of bullying. Accordingly, it can be said that young people with these skills will be less bully and victims.

Studies conducted directly or indirectly reveal that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and cyberbullying. There are studies showing that young people with low empathy levels are more likely to be bullies in the relationship between bullying or cyberbullying and empathy, which is one of the skills associated with emotional intelligence. Weakness of personal skills such as empathy and social responsibility are predictors of bullying in young people. When people with low social skills encounter relationship failures, they react aggressively or remain passive to the situation. Young people who perceive themselves as vulnerable, socially shy and unsure of themselves become victims of bullying.

From preschool to university classrooms, emotional intelligence must be a core component of bullying prevention initiatives. Taking a law-and-order approach, which is popular in many current systems, does not provide teenagers or adults with the fundamental skills required to control powerful feelings, which can lead to psychologically and physically harmful behaviors if left unchecked. The roll call of anti-bullying measures generally excludes gaining emotional intelligence: zero tolerance, "hot spot" surveillance, rule formation, and one-shot assemblies.

Bystander interventions, even though well-intentioned, may have unintended consequences. Encouragement of children to fight bullies, for example, can cause fear and put them at risk of retaliation. We know that current practices are failing our people. Emotionally intelligent children and adults are mindful of a broad range of feelings, from joy and peace to sorrow and frustration, and they use this awareness to

maintain healthy relationships. They experience greater well-being and fewer instances of depression, anxiety, and aggression. Their friendships are deeper, and they do well in school and at work. Those who lack emotional intelligence are more likely to have poor mental health, use illegal substances more often, and behave violently.

Fortunately, emotional intelligence, like math and reading, can be taught. It is easy to implement into a regular academic curriculum and has the ability to enhance classroom teaching and school environment. As a result, the school is healthier, with happy and more successful educators and students, as well as a reduction in bullying. But there's a catch: adults, too, need preparation.

The majority of us have never earned formal instruction in emotional intelligence. Teacher education, in particular, does not provide structured guidance about how to use emotion science to involve students in learning, model effective self-regulation techniques, effectively manage classrooms, or build a productive classroom environment.

How do we expect children to develop age-appropriate vocabulary and regulation techniques for communicating their feelings if their teachers haven't undergone enough training? Schools would not delegate geometry, algebra, or calculus to a teacher who lacked mathematics experience.

As Aristotle wrote, "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."

### **Key to CyberBullying Prevention: Emotional Intelligence**

- Education and teaching of emotional competencies are required for effective prevention.

- Early development of emotional intelligence skills in children is important because equipping them with social and emotional skills to cope with emotions and circumstances can help them escape bullying in the future.
- Teaching emotional skills from the beginning of a child's life is most critical because it's the first few years of life that the child's brain is most impressionable to adopting these teachings and behavior

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## Active citizenship and European values

### Introduction

The present chapter explains active citizenship and European values as part of our educational programme, which is focused on Youth workers.

The next lines are going to discuss and develop the bases which youth workers can transmit as knowledge about active citizenship as well as European values to the young people who will be beneficiaries of our educational programme.

To do this, this chapter is divided into two parts:

- the first one develops the concept of active citizenship and its evolution;
- the second part explains the importance of European values in the fight against bullying.

Both concepts will be explained from the point of view of this project: the prevention and fight against bullying through a positive mindset.

### Active citizenship

The human race since its appearance on earth has kept evolving and creating different groups of people in order to survive, until reaching the most modern societies: this evolution has been the result of revolutions or paradigm shifts consequent to military or political conflicts: in this specific case, the object of study makes it necessary to focus on modern societies that emerged from the appearance of modern states after the French revolution of 1789.

The evolution of the states has always been a consequence of the changes in the various political systems as a result of what society – intended as citizens forming a social group – requires; and actually citizens have been affected by those social changes.

The current situation of citizens' rights and obligations is different from how it was in the past centuries: rights and duties we claim nowadays are the result of struggles and sacrifices of people who fought for them in the past; but those kind of civil rights' struggles are still going on in some parts of the world, which have not yet acquired the same level of freedom that some Western societies have reached.

### **Concept of Citizenship**

Citizens in modern society can be considered as individuals with specific rights and duties: by that, each of them is exercising citizenship which can be defined as “Condition that recognizes a person a series of political and social rights that allow them to intervene in the politics of a country” (Lizcano, 2012).

Although the definition of citizenship may be very ambiguous, this concept is not only linked to the acquisition and exercise of these rights and duties, but is intrinsically linked to democracy. This democracy has had a constant evolution and continues to evolve to arrive at a political system that is as fair and equitable as possible (Horrach, 2009).

This progressive evolution of democracy and citizenship has shown the imperative need to exercise active citizenship and make it a catalyst of change in society itself, in order to reach a more equal society in which citizens are all considered as equal.

## Active citizenship - Concept

Active citizenship must become part of the educational programme since this kind of activism can provide opportunities for fighting against bullying and also in its prevention; it must be cultivated in all people so that they acquire the necessary skills to be responsible towards other citizens, apart from improving society by active participation.

As a result of the recent decades' social evolution and a number of revolutions in different countries, the concept of active citizenship has become even more important: this concept entails the active exercise of the rights and duties that a person claims when forming part of a society and being active in it. Therefore, the first thing to point out is a definition of active citizenship:

*"Active citizenship means people getting involved in their communities and democracy at all levels from local to national and global. An active citizen promotes the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes developing a combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference in society." (EUCA, 2021).*

This definition gives a clearer vision of what active citizenship means since it is not only limited to political participation or participation in policy execution processes, but it is about developing a series of competencies, as well as the ability to cultivate values that improve the person in their role within society.

All these competencies and values cannot be taught like any other area of knowledge: they have to be transmitted in both a didactic and practical way, according to a different approach than the formal and traditional one.

Apart from this, active citizenship's tools must be part of the very early age's of educational programme.

The values to seek by active citizenship's tools are democratic values, participation, ethics, fighting against injustices, and developing a positive mindset.

In this document, the development of a positive mindset represent an important aspect: specifically, when all the knowledge related to active citizenship is transmitted, it must be taken into account that positive and constructive thoughts are encouraged, because a positive mindset makes it possible to cultivate the critical spirit and the concerns to improve the society one's is living in.

### **How to transmit the active citizenship**

Teaching these competencies and values must go through practical techniques so that young people who benefit from this training can acquire it directly and quickly: through simulations and practical scenarios children and adolescents can exercise all this and get to understand its importance making this approach the best way of transmission.

On the other hand, it is essential to point out that educational institutions (schools and high schools) are the axis to develop this among young people; but along with them, other stakeholders - such as the youth organizations in which youth workers operate - are in charge of developing active citizenship's topic.

In the case of the prevention and fight against bullying, young people need to manage the right tools which will allow them to know what it is about and how it can affect their peers in terms of consequences.

For all this to be possible, these groups have to be aware of what it means to be part of society as citizens and have certain values to exercise them and help improve society.

Among values and active citizenship, there must be the maintenance of appropriate behavior with the rest of their colleagues, always moving from respect and education

which can help to fight and prevent bullying: if all children and adolescents were aware of the importance of active citizenship, many of the bullying situations would possibly not exist.

Therefore, in order to fight and prevent bullying, youth workers must be provided with a series of tools and knowledge about mechanisms: some of them can be practical sessions in which working on the concept that all people are different with different characteristics, which does not allow anybody to be disrespectful towards one another.

These kind of sessions must be based on positive-minded techniques that enhance diversity in society and among people, making it possible to live in a society made of different people who approach heterogeneity with a positive and constructive mindset.

Young people must get to identify when bullying is taking place and manage to stop it or take the necessary measures in order to prevent it from happening again. But only a positive mindset and approach can make it possible to eradicate bullying: no bad attitude can be corrected with a negative reinforcement but with a positive one.

Therefore, a positive mindset is central in fighting against bullying and preventing it.

### **Examples of active citizenship**

These are some examples of active citizenship which can contribute to clear out the present chapter, but also to explain the activism needed to develop a critical attitude in one's behaviour:

- Respect the system of justice and democracy
- Be aware of the change needed to improve the political system
- Have critical points of views about political issues

- Take part into political or civic organizations which have the aim to change things considered wrong
- Refuse all kinds of violence
- Be at the disposal to work with other people

### **European values**

Along with the defense of active and critical citizenship as a tool to fight and prevent bullying, in this educational program, also the development and dissemination of European values – and specifically, the values on which the current European society has been founded as an example of peace and prosperity for almost a century – are considered important.

In fact, since the end of the Second World War, the European continent has lived in peace, with the majority of the countries respecting the others and maintaining peace.

Moreover, European societies have been creating synergies which along with globalization made it possible to create different international organizations and the current European Union: this generated great social, economic, and political advances.

Although European integration has undergone different stages – of which the current one is not the best of – the construction of a well-connected society that shares many experiences is due to political integration itself, with the establishment of a series of common values that – despite social differences – all of them share.

These values – which can be identified as ethical or moral – are individual, as said before in this chapter. Besides being prerogative of the individual citizen, they can become a group prerogative as for the case of the European continent.

## **What are the european values?**

The values – which are considered European – have been acquired progressively, getting to forming part of the European societies and being defended by the European Union institutions, as shown in the Lisbon Treaty (2007) and in particular in article 2:

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society where pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and equality between women and men prevail.” (European Union, 2007).

Values such as respect for human dignity, freedom, respect for people and minorities are the most interesting ones, because they are directly related to bullying: they are essential for creating critical and active citizenship. Still, they are also fundamental for helping people to develop adequate social competencies: this means that – along with the use of a positive mindset – they can help to fight and prevent bullying.

One of the best results and examples of the acquisition of the common European values is represented by the Erasmus Programme, which during the last forty years has been the most powerful tool to unite people and societies.

## **How do you teach the european values?**

Teaching and disseminating the European values must bring – from a functional and didactic perspective – to their uptake as easily and quickly as possible: in this case, a positive mindset plays the main role in terms of dissemination of these values, since people who receive them must internalize them at their best while developing them according to a positive mentality in order to be more effective and fulfill their mission.

If all these values were developed in young people, many of the social problems derived from diversities in the society could decrease or even be eradicated.

The fundamental part of these values concerning the use of a positive mentality is that the use of these values could be reinforced thanks to it. At the same time, getting people to acquire a positive mindset makes it a challenge for them to acquire it along with these values themselves.

In conclusion, it must be enhanced that the fundamental role that these values play in European societies and what they have achieved, promoting the development of freedoms and social progress.

### **Final conclusion**

In conclusion of this chapter, it is necessary to make a brief recall of what has been explained:

- Firstly, active citizenship and the importance that it represents.

It cannot be ignored that when it is acquired by young people they can become actors of change and can acquire the necessary tools to fight and prevent bullying.

- Also, teaching active citizenship through a positive mindset can improve its acquisition.
- On the other hand, the European values that have resulted from the cultural and political trajectory of our continent get to build young people's ideology and thus enrich them from a humanistic point of view so that they can be better citizens who actively contribute to society and can share their traditions while respecting those belonging to other cultures.

Although having outlined it briefly in the previous sections, it is considered necessary to briefly mention how the themes developed are related to the object of study.

Both active citizenship and European values are concepts that must be practically developed for young people to acquire them as easily and quickly as possible and this must be done through workshops in which they get to know their differences and get to consider that they are all equal between each other.

Giving them the necessary tools which allow them to identify when bullying is occurring and how they can fight it through a positive mentality: this means that besides identifying it they have to get to choose the most functional techniques for fighting it while showing what is wrong in it and how it should be solved.

To conclude, the prevention and fight against bullying through a positive mentality must be considered as one of the fundamental parts of active citizenship and European values since both facets can contribute a lot in favour of the fight against bullying: it can help young people to become more aware and fight it directly while becoming active citizens aware of the need to participate in improving our planet.

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## Resilience and coping-mechanism

### What is Resilience?

Based on sound theory focused on the need to help children develop as a whole with the social competencies they critically need for personal and professional success, resilience advocates argue that we can teach kids how to “bounce back” or “overcome adversity” when they face it while growing up (Benard, 2002; Masten, 2009). And we know they will – in their schooling, in the workforce, in their health, and in their social and relational lives. More specifically, resilience is “the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social and academic competence despite exposure to severe stress...or simply the stress of today’s world” (Henderson & Milstein, 2003:7). Coping strategies are responses (behaviours, emotions, cognitions) that are successful (or unsuccessful) against cyberbullying (Perren et al., 2012). These include preventing cyberbullying by reducing the risks, combating cyberbullying, and buffering its negative impacts:

**Self-confidence**: One of the most cited sources about self-confidence refers to it as simply believing in oneself (Benabou & Tirole, 2002). An imperative mechanism to withstand cyberbullying should be the focus of parents instilling confidence and resilience to their children. That can come with the adoption of a new skill or focus on a hobby that can allow young people to become self-confident. Martial arts, sports and music are all incredible gateways to enhance a sense of confidence. The rewarding feeling of accomplishment can create a strong defence mechanism against threats and verbal abuse. When someone knows they can defend themselves on a physical level it consequently gives a sense of confidence. Many young people struggle in this fast-paced and highly competitive world, while at the same time the transformation process of teenagehood to adulthood can be confusing and overwhelming for many. A

great tool to equip at this stage is hobbies and creative outlets that allow young people to express themselves. By knowing your bodily attributes and physical strengths can be truly empowering. From a standpoint of self-defense and skill, martial arts can teach a variety of lessons. Martial arts teach young people to be comfortable with their body in performing movements that can disarm assailants, defend from attacks and instill a strong sense of confidence and discipline. Martial arts are not about violence and inflicting pain, but rather strengthening self-belief and being disciplined. Thus, preparing young people that in any situation they can defend themselves and be calm. As it is a series of modalities that teach how to control your emotions, most importantly anger.

Activities such as discovering hidden talents, joining a new club, playing a musical instrument, engaging in volunteer work, help them feel better about themselves. Plus, belonging to a group not only provides them with friendship opportunities, but it also can help them feel more secure and confident.

**Coping-mechanism.** Fostering emotional intelligence by having conversations about these issues is very positive. Providing emotional support and acceptance within the family will help to give children a sense of strong belonging and backup from home. This can be enhanced by encouraging to discuss openly issues of bullying that young people sometimes hide from their parents out of embarrassment. Parents can encourage repeatedly how to discuss uncomfortable topics, such as being bullied. This will reinforce the feeling of support from their parents and family. A great tool in developing strong immunity. A way for parents to instill defense over cyberbullying to their children is by having conversations with them about the world. In an open discussion about the reason of bullying which usually stems out of insecurities. It has been shown that students are more likely to confide in their parents than in school personnel when they

are victims of cyberbullying (Cassidy et al., 2011; Zhouet al., 2013); therefore, it is important that parents be prepared to respond in helpful ways if such a situation arises.

Also, parents could focus on encouraging positive thinking and equip their skills with tools on how to react to bullies. This could help them fend off any bullying and focus on maintaining their composure.

**Invasion of technology:** As technology is present in every aspect of our lives, young people are more vulnerable in entrapping themselves in bad habits and addictive behavior. As technology even for adults is addictive, imagine for young people how hard it is to take away their focus from applications and websites. This is why the focus on decreasing their use will allow young people to escape from cyberbullying and avoid unnecessary exposure.

On the other hand young people can be taught through education programs, how to react in case of cyber bullying. Some of the coping strategies suggested in the literature include what could be described as active strategies: Confront the bully, tell them to stop, or threaten to tell on them (Tokunaga, 2010).

In the studies reviewed by Perren et al. (2012), it was found that such approaches may, in fact, increase the problem rather than alleviate it because they are more likely to lead to an escalation of the bullying rather than to deter the cyberbully. Despite this concern, some researchers do offer suggestions in this vein: Block the sender; ignore the message; get the authorities to track down the number or ISP; contact the ISP; report abuse on message board; report the bully (if known) on an anonymous website; alert someone; change address/number; keep a record; ask the bully to stop and fight back (the least popular choice) (Monks et al., 2012; Smith & Slonje, 2010). Technical solutions such as blocking the cyberbully, implementing privacy settings, changing email address,

refraining from visiting a particular site, and keeping evidence of cyberbullying have been suggested as ways of using the technology to counter cyberbullying (Kowalski et al., 2012a; Tokunaga, 2010).

These days incite more exposure by requiring to share more photos, information and videos. This opens up new possibilities of being vulnerable to bullies. Exposure to the web as it is harmful without the right perspective and maturity. It is apparent that more and more ways evolve on being duped and scammed on the web. Parents should spend more time on educating their children about these things.

### **Role of schools:**

Schools should provide students with a proper learning environment. As technology evolves rapidly, so too must the school curriculum. In a related study (Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012a), parents also strongly recommended that school personnel develop lessons on cyberbullying and its effects and that students be given the opportunity to engage with the issues through open and frank discussion. Beyond merely teaching about cyberbullying, the curriculum should focus on empowering students in terms of digital literacy, technological skills, critical thinking skills, netiquette, e-safety, assessing their own online risks, measures to protect themselves, their reputation, and their privacy online (Agatston et al., 2012; Collier, 2012; Grigg, 2010; Marczak & Coyne, 2010; Perren et al., 2012).

In fact, Yilmaz, (2011) found that, 'Most students do not know how to keep themselves safe in cyberspace' (p. 651). For example: Class websites where students and teachers are both users and producers; enabling online exchanges and collaboration on learning activities with other classes, schools and families; and the use of forums, wikis, and blogs, are all ways in which information and communication technologies can enhance

the classroom experience (Brighi et al., 2012). Rather than trying to remove all risks (which is difficult to do), it would be better to help students cope by strategizing with them about how to avoid harm (Collier, 2012). Finally, school climate plays an important role in influencing student behaviour in and out of school. Schools need clear policies that are communicated to all and enacted by all on a daily basis (including adults).

**Interests:** In order for parents to increase resilience of their children is to send them to summer camps to socialize and be taught vital life and social skills. Their social experience with other young people might help them grow out of their social circle and provide a way to gain more confidence in their social skills. This allows them to explore other possibilities and grow with experiences that otherwise wouldn't have in the city or their circle of friends. Also, during the winter time parents should explore options of signing their children to community centres to meet other peers, explore new hobbies and focus on new experiences.

All of the above have a purpose to teach young people how to stay safe online. Additionally, reducing their exposure on the internet and social media will allow them to focus on real-life activities.

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# Positive Psychology

As defined by the American Psychological Association, positive psychology is the research of human strengths, virtues, and positive human functioning that enables wellbeing. It discusses the psychological states such as contentment and joy and character strengths such as altruism, integrity, wisdom, and intimacy.

Positive psychology can also be considered a study of optimal human functioning. It seeks to understand the various processes and mechanisms that lead to desirable outcomes (Linley et al., 2006.)

## Fields of positive psychology

Positive psychology research can be divided into three fields or levels: positive **subjective experiences**, positive **individual features**, and positive **communities**.

**The first level** researches positive experiences like joy, wellbeing, satisfaction, hope, contentment, and optimism. It may discuss experiences and happiness of the past, present, and future.

**The second level** researches the positive features of the individual. As the first level is concerned with unique and subjective experiences, the second level discusses features that can be applied to many individuals. This level studies human strengths and virtues. This includes wisdom, courage, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, sense of justice, moderation, transcendence, overcoming obstacles, and how it can be applied to the individual.

**The third and final level** of positive psychology researches the positive features of a community or group level. This level studies and emphasizes civic virtues, such as

civility, social responsibility, altruism, tolerance, work ethics, and other concepts that develop communities that create positive outcomes. Such organizations may include healthy families or neighborhood communities, effective public institutions such as schools, socially responsible media, and groups that advocate civil dialogue.

The importance of positive psychology is argued as a type of psychology that fills the gap of what traditional psychology does not focus on, which are positive experiences of the individual.

"Traditional psychotherapy focuses on affairs that negatively affect the individual to fix what is wrong". Previous statement is made by University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin E.P. Seligman who argues that a different approach can be made with positive psychology. He argued that focusing on positive aspects of the individuals such as their strengths and virtues might "build on what is strong" instead of "fixing what is wrong". This type of psychology would then attempt to not only treat individuals but also help individuals improve themselves.

## **Positive Psychology Practices**

Positive psychology practices are strategies to increase happiness, wellbeing, and positive cognitions and emotions (Keyes, Fredrickson, & Park 2012).

Current research shows that psychologists have focused more on treatment than prevention (Bolier, Haverman, 2013). What is positive psychology doing for you is much easier to implement for prevention and changing mindset through different experiences, called interventions or practices.

### **Practices for youth to foster a positive mindset and prevent bullying**

## **Practice gratitude**

"If you want to find happiness, try to explore gratitude", as said by Steve Maraboli. Gratitude recalls strong positive feelings in the person who gives it and receives it (Schueller & Parks, 2013).

Gratitude practices are categorized into two parts:

- Gratitude to others by saying 'thank you,' or giving small tokens of appreciation to make others happy and in "good energy".
- As writing a gratitude journal, personal practices that we keep to ourselves and use when we need courage and support.

In any case, gratitude practices have proven benefits in increasing happiness and satisfaction (Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). Happy people will never find pleasure in hurting someone for no apparent reason.

## **Be involved in actions to evolve compassion**

Kindness, which is a trait or quality of friendliness and consideration, is considered an essential trait of happy people, studies show. Happiness and kindness are complementary aspects (Aknin, Dunn, and Norton, 2012). Practice of compassion or kindness boosters are acts that reinforce happiness and positivity.

Examples may include willing activities as gestures of goodwill:

- Gifts as a small token of love
- Volunteering
- Donating goods or money

- Helping people in need

This practice is not about the amount of money spent but the activities of kindness that promote happiness through altruistic and selfless contentment (Howell and Lyer, 2012).

### **Practice empathy**

Having empathy practiced is meant to strengthen positive emotions for personal and professional relationships, as healthy social bonds are considered significant factors for happiness (Diener and Seligman, 2002).

Effective communication, mindfulness of self and others, and broadened perspective are the cornerstone activities for building relationships through empathy interventions. This allows individuals to understand the perspective of others, which could build stronger connections to them (Davis et al., 2004; Hodges, Clark, & Myers, 2011).

### **Improve your optimism**

Practicing optimism is used as activities that create positive outcomes by setting realistic expectations. A move that can be considered an exercise within optimism interventions is the "Imagine Yourself" test. Participants of this exercise are asked to write about where they see themselves in the future, which can help them understand how positive they are about themselves and others, evidence suggests (King, 2001).

Another optimism exercise can be the "Life Summary" activity, made by Seligman, Rashid, and Parks in 2006. The practice is about assuming that we are in our optimal setting and situation and happy with our lives, which involves writing a summary of our lives. The method suggests that focusing on strengths, achievements, and other fruitful aspects. This helps to gain important insights into what can be improved by the individual in their daily life and what can be done to pursue a more optimal life.

## **Value yourself**

Parks and Biswas-Diener in 2013 defined strength as the internal capacities and value of the individual when referring to positive psychology. Evidence from studies suggests that when an individual has awareness and acknowledgment of power as connected with strength, it can help reduce symptoms of depression and may help with contentment. Therefore, activities that help people become more aware of their capacities and value to themselves and others are suggested.

## **Practice planning**

Meaning-oriented practice helps with understanding what is meaningful to the individual in their life and why and what are the necessary steps needed to achieve that meaning. Studies argue that a person with clear goals and expectations has a higher likelihood of feeling contentment and happiness (Steger, Kashdan, & Oishi, 2009).

The theory of the hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow helps in this intervention. It can be seen that the highest level of demand for an individual can include self-enhancement and self-esteem, traits that are needed to achieve the defined meaning. What can help are smaller-scale exercises like finding meaning in daily activities and setting realistic goals. What also matters is finding effective means to reach those goals and reflect on certain thoughts and emotions (Grant, 2008).

Meaning-oriented practices have been known to have been used for treating people with stress disorders, notably PTSD, which was described by Folkman and Moskowitz in 2000. These types of practice guide individuals in regaining certain positive emotions and coping with their trauma's after-effects.

## **How do positive psychology practices work?**

Similar to the differences positive psychology and traditional psychology have, their practices also focus on various aspects. General psychology tries to change the individual at a cognitive or affective level (meaning - one should change).

On the other hand, positive psychology practice is directed towards improving what is currently present with the individual. Specifically, their strengths and virtues are described, such as meaning, optimism, empathy, and strength.

Because of the principles of "improving what is good" rather than "fixing what is bad," positive psychology seeks to target the root of an individual's problem rather than treating the symptoms of the cause. This can help the individuals perceive the source of their problems, a holistic approach to embodying change.

A 2016 study of a sample size of 695 participants, with an experimental and control group, seeks to find the effectiveness and efficacy of positive psychology practices. Their point measured two operating factors for these interventions' success, shifting attention from harmful to positive emotions and internalizing positive emotions. The study has shown that the subjective feelings of wellbeing had improved significantly to the experimental group from before and after the positive psychology practice (Wellenzohn, Sara, Proyer, Ruch, Willibald, 2016.)

## **Fundamentals of Happiness that Improve Well-being**

In his works during the 70s and 80s, Michael Fordyce found that students in a happiness program derived more joy and contentment because of his fourteen fundamentals of happiness psychology, giving credibility to the effectiveness of positive psychology interventions.

The fourteen fundamentals of happiness include:

1. Increase in activity and busyness
2. Spending more time socializing
3. Increase of productivity at work
4. Being organized and well-planned
5. Reduction of worries and negative contemplations
6. Decrease of expectation, and having realistic ones
7. The practice of positivity with optimistic thinking and reasoning
8. More focus and mindfulness of the present
9. Development and maintenance of a healthy personality
10. Increase of empathy
11. Focus on being your natural self
12. Having positive thoughts instead of negative ones
13. Value and maintain close relationships
14. Thoughts and considerations of increased happiness.

## Fostering positive thinking

### Introduction

Positive thinking makes sense for many people, even when first heard. Whereas when examined; Beyond the meaning of the word, it emerges how much it is related and correlated with many points in our lives. These two words, dating back to ancient times, have led philosophers, thinkers, and sociologists to think about the concept itself over the years. We tried to give the truths and wrongs about the concept, techniques and explanations, which are trending again today with the waves of spiritualism and inward journey.

### What Is Positive Thinking (And What Is Not)

Positive thinking is a concept that does not have a clear scientific definition, and its definition continues to be developed by experts. However, comments can be made about it as follows; To think positive is not to be blindly optimistic in a pink fantasy world, positive thinking is not to deny the negative. As in life itself, positive and negative concepts are intertwined in our thinking system. Just as light and dark, day and night complement each other, positive and negative thoughts complement each other. We can compare this to the Yin-Yang poles in eastern culture. One of the oldest written sources of Chinese culture, the book named "I Ching"[1] (Book of changes, book of transformations. Just as we cannot deny the night and claim that there is only a day, we cannot deny the negative and say that there is only the positive. So what we call positive thinking is to accept the negative as well as the positive, and to realize that the two are a whole, that they are the opposite poles of a whole, but pay attention to the positive. Positive thinking is seeing and evaluating our problems together with their pros and cons and seeking solutions in this way.

Contrary to what people think, the intertwining of positive thinking with negative thinking is not a bad thing, it keeps us from being a hopeless dreamer and makes our thoughts more realistic. In this way, we become individuals who have their feet on the ground but are more likely to see the positive in life thanks to positive thinking. In addition, another advantage of this intertwining is; It is the ability to turn our negative thoughts into positive ones with the right perspective. Of course, the opposite is possible, but being pessimistic when talking about positive thinking will not help anyone.

### **Positive Thinking And Physical Health**

As a result of scientific research, convincing evidence has begun to provide a direct link between positive thinking and physical health. According to the scientific findings that support this opinion, positive thinking has many benefits, from lowering blood pressure to relieving cough and headache, as well as relaxing the mind and reducing stress.

There is evidence that people with positive thoughts recover faster after coronary artery bypass surgery (Scheier & Carver, 1987)[2]. Its positive effect on the heart and blood vessels is not limited to this, but it has been observed to be beneficial in balancing blood pressure and reducing the risk of heart attack.

One of the benefits of positive thinking to physical health is its effect on the immune system. Positive thinking, which acts as a protector against non-chronic colds and allergies, even seems to improve the quality of life of cancer patients (Naseem & Khalid, 2010)[3]. These days, when it is known that the immune system is directly affected by motivation and stress, the effect of positive thinking, which has an important place in keeping the morale of human beings high, is undeniable.

### **Positive thinking and cognition of happiness**

Happiness is defined in the dictionary of the Turkish Language Association as "the state of pride of reaching all aspirations completely and continuously, dignity, holiness, happiness, happiness"[4] and it is a relative concept that has been defined by numerous different definitions until now. While the reason for happiness is different for everyone, what we feel when we are happy and its effects on the body are almost universal. Throughout history, humanity's search for happiness has not ended and this search has been reflected in literature, culture and even trade.

Studies about neurons between the lobes of the brain confirm what the ancient philosophers said that much of happiness depends on one's perception of the outside world. In the light of this information, if we consider it true that one should seek happiness inside, not outside; It would not be wrong to say that this should start with positive thinking. By turning our perception of the world from negative to positive, many ordinary visuals, situations and events we witness in daily life will take on different meanings for us.

We can base this thought on a change in mood, similar to that of when a person is in love. Thanks to the positive perception of the world, the world will look like a more livable place, the apples will be more delicious and the songs of the birds will be more enjoyable. For these, we do not even need to change the world, it is enough to change our view of the world.

Famous American illustrator Mary Engelbreit[6] said, "If you don't like something, change it; If you can't, change your perspective on it." This sentence, which is one of the shortest summaries of thousands of words, beliefs and philosophical approaches that support the direct effect of one's perspective on happiness, summarizes how we will see it the way we look at us. There are many things that human beings are not satisfied with in life but can not afford to change. We often encounter this and similar situations in our lives. However, instead of getting depressed or whining for a long time in the face

of situations that we cannot afford to change, we can approach from a different perspective and change our thoughts on that subject fundamentally and show a positive perspective.[7] This is completely in our hands, nothing else and nobody else.

### **Self fulfilling prophecy**

Self-fulfilling prophecy was first described by sociologist Robert Merton. If we go through a daily example, if you believe that the day will be bad when you wake up, even if positive things happen during the day, you are likely to ignore them and focus on the negativities and spend the day badly. Merton explains this situation as “New behaviors resulting from the wrong evaluation of the event or circumstances cause the wrong to happen”.[8]

If we associate this definition with our subject, that is, "positive thinking", it will be useful to expand the above example a little more and look at the difference between two people who started by hoping for a good day and got out of bed with the opposite intention. The things the first person does during the day; a smiling face in the mirror, the other people with whom he smiles, a mindset ready to learn from the bad things that happened to him during the day and the peace that covers him when he puts his head on the pillow at night. However, for the other person, even if the day is not negative, he will start neutral, perhaps his responsibilities will begin to disturb him even before he wakes up, he will go to work / school without paying attention to the beauty of his environment because he sees life as a marathon, and he will think about how empty his day is before he sleeps. It is quite difficult for this second person to feel peaceful, happy and excited about tomorrow before going to sleep, especially compared to first person.

The connection of self-fulfilling prophecy and positive thinking is not just one's own

thoughts. The positive expectations and positive thoughts of our environment about us also push us to fulfill the prophecy. Thanks to our friends, family and loved ones who tell us they trust us, we can feel more capable, successful and talented. In this case, we may even be ready to do more than we can to satisfy them or not to frustrate their expectations. Thus, positive thinking is a mindset that should be applied not only by us, but also by our environment.

### **Effective methods to help you think positively**

After writing a long article on positive thinking, it would not be right not to share methods that will increase success on the subject. The methods listed below carry little clues to increase our power of thinking positively during the day. We may even be using some of them frequently in our lives without realizing it, while others will lead to small or big changes in your perspective on life and will open the doors for you to think positively.

**1 - Importance of progressing:** Sometimes we may experience moments in life that we can't see ahead of us and cannot predict what will happen afterwards. Going forward without knowing where you are going can be scary and risky; but you never see what happens at the end of the road if you don't progress. Keep your faith strong and believe that you will reach the point you want to reach one day.

**2 - Let it flow:** When you start living by letting the events flow, you will realize that you start to have unforgettable moments. When things develop beyond our control, trying to adapt to the situation by accepting rather than complaining will take you one step further.

It may rain the day you plan to go on a picnic. It's up to you to continue your picnic and dance in the rain, delay or complain all the time. What keeps our lives different and dynamic is that the things we planned don't go well.

**3 - Listen to yourself:** Meditation can be too spiritual and abstract for many of us. Whatever your approach to meditation, whether you believe it is effective or not, it will be good for you to create opportunities to look back at yourself and listen to your inner voice. Whether you call it meditation, prayer, or relaxation, remember to take time for yourself, no matter what.

**4 - Mistake or habit:** It's not your fault once you make a mistake, but it's up to you to make the same mistake the second time. If you are constantly trying the same solution in a problem-solving phase, but cannot achieve success, it is time to try new ways. Changing your solutions or plans is not to give up your dreams about the future; it means changing the way you are going to reach that dream.

**5 - Review your past:** Positive thinking doesn't just mean pushing aside negative thoughts and suppressing emotions. Negative thought patterns can reveal unresolved problems within us and points we need to heal emotionally. Do you notice that the feeling of self-doubt arises over and over again with certain patterns? Situations or people that trigger negative self-talk can point to areas in your life that you need to change or improve.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in the article above, we talked about positive thoughts, the ability to think positively and their effects on our lives. With positive thinking, which is a factor that affects a person's daily life, mental state, physical health and world perception, we can be more peaceful in our inner world and more accommodating and peaceful in the outside world. With the help of this method, which advises us to turn our eyes inside before outside, we can rethink our priorities and wishes. Just as countries try to overcome internal threats before external ones in order to survive, one must fight

internal dangers before external ones. When we do not pay attention to our physical and psychological health, the damage from external threats will increase.

The positive thinking method is a powerful resource in order to be more resistant to dangers such as bullying, cyber-bullying and negative people, which can occur in every moment of life, and to converge to the minimum of the damage it can cause us. As with life itself, there are ups and downs in our way of thinking, we may not always stay at the level of positive thinking, but just like concentration, if we allow ourselves time and opportunity to regroup when we realize that it is dispersed, we can look at life with more positive eyes.

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