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Children and young people

Psychosocial skills: an operational framework for PSS experts and trainers

NOVEMBER 2026

● Volume II



LES COMPÉTENCES PSYCHOSOCIALES
Mieux avec soi et les autres

Summary

Psychosocial skills: an operational framework for PSS experts and trainers. Volume II

This operational framework constitutes one of the main reference and expertise deliverables produced by Santé publique France in support of the multi-sectoral strategy for the deployment of psychosocial skills (PSS). This strategy, which was formalised by Inter-ministerial Instruction 2022-2037, published on 19 August 2022, aims to "enable all children to develop their psychosocial skills from the earliest age, throughout their growth and in all settings", so that "the 2037 generation is the first to grow up in an environment of continuous support for the development of PSS." This document follows on from the French-language Framework for implementation among children and youth. A summary of the current state of scientific and theoretical knowledge, published in 2021 (Santé publique France, 2022) and from Volume I of the operational framework (Santé publique France, 2025). These expert works aim to build a common psychosocial skills culture, based on up-to-date scientific knowledge, and French expertise and experience. They also aim to promote the deployment of high-quality interventions and practices in all sectors involving children and young people.

This framework aims to promote understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying each PSS. It provides a clear and accessible summary of the main current consensus knowledge, despite the diversity of theoretical models that exist across disciplines and schools of thought. Underpinned by scientific and experiential knowledge, it is designed for informed practitioners (PSS trainers, PSS experts, PSS programme managers, etc.) and aims to support their field practice by providing actionable knowledge through knowledge transfer. **To facilitate learning the core psychological mechanisms that underlie PSS, these mechanisms are presented in the form of a list that links each psychosocial skill with its corresponding core knowledge and practical skills.** Mastering these mechanisms is key for strengthening one's own psychosocial skills and developing those of others. This conceptual and operational appropriation of each of the psychosocial skills should promote their embodiment in current practices and the implementation of high-quality formal and informal psychoeducational activities with children, young people and/or parents.

Designed by Santé publique France in collaboration with specialists (researchers and/or grassroots practitioners), this two-volume framework covers each of the twenty specific psychosocial skills of the updated classification published by Santé publique France in 2022 (the classification was subject to minor amendments to form and substance in 2025). An understanding of how each of the PSS operate and the analytical work carried out in producing this framework revealed the progressive nature of how PSS are learned.

The framework is structured around this progressive learning. Thus, in addition to being classified into three categories (cognitive, emotional and social) in line with the World Health Organization typology, the psychosocial skills have also been grouped into two major phases, each the subject of its own volume.

Phase 1 (Volume I) encompasses the first psychosocial skills of each category (cognitive PSS 1, emotional PSS 1 and social PSS 1). These primary skills can be considered to be the basic PSS, which aim to strengthen understanding and acceptance of cognitive, emotional and relational mechanisms.

Phase 2, covered in this second volume, deals with the secondary psychosocial skills of each of the categories (cognitive PSS 2, emotional PSS 2 and social PSS 2). These skills enable one to improve one's capacities for self-regulation and self-fulfilment.

As a continuation of volume I, this second volume follows the same format: it sets out the secondary general psychosocial skills: strengthening self-control and self-fulfilment (general cognitive PSS 2), regulating one's emotions and stress (general emotional PSS 2) and resolving relational difficulties (general social PSS 2). It covers 9 specific skills (4 cognitive, 3 emotional and 2 social) and 29 knowledge items and practical skills.

Thus, this volume completes the detailed presentation of each of the 6 general PSS, 20 specific PSS and 55 knowledge items and practical skills of the Santé Publique France updated PSS classification (2022, 2026).

This document (available on the Santé publique France website) constitutes an operational framework that should enable the various sectors concerned to develop intervention guides and practical resources with content based on and tailored to their specific audiences and settings. It contributes to knowledge sharing and the construction of a common vision of psychosocial skills. It represents a conceptual and operational basis for developing high-quality PSS interventions nationwide in this field.

KEYWORDS: PSYCHOSOCIAL SKILLS, WELLBEING, MENTAL HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS, VIOLENCE, ADDICTIONS, PREVENTION, HEALTH PROMOTION, PSYCHOEDUCATION, CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, PARENTING.

Logo: Compétences psychosociales : Mieux avec soi et les autres
Psychosocial skills: Better with oneself and others

The PSS activities presented in this document have been translated from French to English.

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Résumé

Les compétences psychosociales : un référentiel opérationnel à destination des professionnels experts et formateurs CPS. Tome II

Ce référentiel opérationnel constitue un des principaux livrables de référence et d'expertise produits par Santé publique France en appui à la stratégie multisectorielle de déploiement des compétences psychosociales (CPS). Cette stratégie, formalisée par l'instruction interministérielle 2022-2037 publiée le 19 août 2022, a pour objectif de « permettre à tous les enfants de développer leurs compétences psychosociales dès le plus jeune âge, pendant toute leur croissance et dans tous les milieux », afin « que la génération 2037 soit la première à grandir dans un environnement continu de soutien au développement des CPS ». Le présent document fait suite au « Référentiel pour un déploiement auprès des enfants et des jeunes : synthèse de l'état des connaissances scientifiques et théoriques réalisé en 2021 » (Santé publique France, 2022) ainsi qu'au Tome I du référentiel opérationnel (Santé publique France, 2025). Ces productions d'expertise visent à construire une culture commune autour des compétences psychosociales, en s'appuyant sur des connaissances scientifiques actualisées ainsi que sur l'expertise et l'expérience françaises. Elles ont également pour objectif de favoriser le déploiement d'interventions et de pratiques de qualité dans tous les secteurs impliquant les enfants et les jeunes.

Le référentiel vise à favoriser la compréhension des mécanismes psychologiques sur lesquels s'appuie chaque CPS. Il offre une synthèse claire et accessible des principales connaissances actuelles faisant consensus, et ce, malgré la diversité des modèles théoriques existants selon les disciplines et les courants de pensée. Basé sur des connaissances scientifiques et expérientielles, il s'adresse à des praticiens avertis (formateurs CPS, experts CPS, responsable de programme CPS…) et vise à étayer leur pratique de terrain par un apport de connaissances opérationnalisables (« *actionnable knowledge* » en anglais), selon une démarche de transfert de connaissances (« *knowledge transfer* »). **Pour faciliter l'apprentissage des principaux mécanismes psychologiques qui sont à la base des CPS, ces mécanismes sont présentés sous forme d'une liste associant à chaque compétence psychosociale les principaux savoirs et savoir-faire qui lui sont propres.** Leur maîtrise représente un enjeu majeur pour renforcer ses propres compétences psychosociales et développer celles des autres. Cette appropriation conceptuelle et opérationnelle de chacune des compétences psychosociales devrait favoriser leur incarnation dans les pratiques courantes et la mise en œuvre d'activités psychoéducatives formelles et informelles de qualité auprès des enfants, des jeunes et/ou des parents.

Conçu par Santé publique France avec la collaboration de spécialistes (chercheurs et/ou acteurs de terrain), ce référentiel structuré en deux tomes traite de chacune des vingt compétences psychosociales spécifiques de la classification actualisée, publiée en 2022 par l'agence (classification qui a été légèrement ajustée sur la forme et le fond en 2025). L'analyse et la compréhension du fonctionnement de chacune des CPS, réalisées dans le cadre de ce travail ont permis de dégager une progressivité dans leur apprentissage.

Le référentiel s'organise autour de cette progressivité. Ainsi, en plus d'être classées en trois catégories (cognitives, émotionnelles et sociale) selon la typologie de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé, les compétences psychosociales ont aussi été regroupées en deux grandes phases, chacune faisant l'objet d'un tome.

La phase 1 (Tome I), regroupe les premières compétences psychosociales de chacune des catégories (CPS cognitive 1, CPS émotionnelle 1, CPS sociale 1). Ces premières compétences peuvent être considérées comme des CPS de base qui visent à renforcer la compréhension et l'acceptation des mécanismes cognitifs, émotionnels et relationnels.

La phase 2, traitée dans ce deuxième tome, correspond aux secondes compétences psychosociales de chacune des catégories (CPS cognitive 2, CPS émotionnelle 2, CPS sociale 2). Ces compétences permettent d'améliorer les capacités de régulation et d'accomplissement de soi.

Dans le prolongement du tome I, ce deuxième volume est construit selon le même format : il présente les secondes compétences psychosociales générales : renforcer sa maîtrise de soi et son accomplissement (2de CPS générale cognitive), réguler ses émotions et son stress (2de CPS générale émotionnelle) et résoudre des difficultés relationnelles (2de CPS générale sociale). Il regroupe 9 compétences spécifiques (4 cognitives, 3 émotionnelles, 2 sociales) et 29 savoirs et savoir-faire.

Ce tome finalise ainsi la présentation détaillée de chacune des 6 CPS générales, 20 CPS spécifiques et 55 savoirs et savoir-faire de la classification CPS mise à jour par Santé publique France (2022, 2026).

Ce document (consultable sur le site de Santé publique France) constitue un cadre de référence opérationnel qui devrait permettre aux différents secteurs concernés de développer des guides d'intervention et des supports pratiques avec des contenus fondés et adaptés à leurs publics et leurs milieux. Il contribue au partage de connaissances et à la construction d'une vision commune des compétences psychosociales. Il représente une base conceptuelle et opérationnelle pour développer des interventions de qualité et sur tout le territoire dans ce domaine.

MOTS-CLÉS : COMPÉTENCES PSYCHOSOCIALES, BIEN-ÊTRE, SANTÉ MENTALE, RÉUSSITE ÉDUCATIVE, VIOLENCES, ADDICTIONS, PRÉVENTION, PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ, PSYCHOÉDUCATION, ENFANTS, JEUNES, PARENTALITÉ.

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Abbreviations

AADA	Attention/Analysis/Decision/Action
ARS	Regional Health Authority
DGS	Directorate General for Health
EBM	Evidence Based Medicine
HDR	Authorised to supervise research
IGESR	Inspectorate General for Education, Sport and Research
Inserm	National Institute of Health and Medical Research
Ireps	Regional body for health education and promotion
PSS	Psychosocial skills
Staps	Sports science

Contents

Summary 2
Résumé 4
Authors 6
Contributors and reviewers 6
Psychosocial Skills Thematic Support Committee 6
Abbreviations 7

INTRODUCTION 10

STRENGTHENING SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-FULFILMENT 20

Achieving one's personal goals (C2.1) 23
1. Formulating one's concordant goals in a precise manner (PHASE 1) 23
2. Implementing committed actions effectively (PHASE 2) 25

Key takeaways (C2.1) 29
Key takeaways (C2.1 *continued*) 30
Examples of activities to develop the PSS Achieving one's personal goals (C2.1) 31

Managing one's impulses (C2.2) 34
1. Knowing what the ability for self-control is 34
2. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the state of the Inner Self 35
3. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the quality of the immediate environment 36
4. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by strengthening the cognitive capacities of the subject Self 36

Key takeaways (C2.2) 40
Examples of activities to develop the PSS Managing one's impulses (C2.2) 42

Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3) & Knowing how to ask for help (C2.4) 50
1. Observing and analysing a problematic situation 50
2. Using the problem-solving technique to resolve everyday problems independently (strategy 1) 51
3. Knowing how to ask for help to resolve problems that cannot be solved alone (strategy 2) 51
4. Knowing how to ask for help from emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations (strategy 3) 52

Key takeaways (C2.3) 54
Key takeaways (C2.3 *continued*) 55
Examples of activities to develop the PSS: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3) & Knowing how to ask for help (C2.4) 56

REGULATING ONE'S EMOTIONS AND STRESS 74

Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1) 76
1. Formulating a basic 'I-message' to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions 76
2. Formulating complex 'I-messages' to express one's unpleasant emotions 77

Key takeaways (E2.1) 80
Key takeaways (E2.1 continued) 81
Examples of activities to develop the PSS Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1) 82

Regulating one's pleasant emotions (E2.2-a) 94
1. Knowing the effective and ineffective emotional regulation strategies 94
2. Accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs (=basic emotional strategy) 95
3. Strengthening one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective strategies 95

Regulating one's unpleasant emotions (E2.2-b) **98**
4. Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis 98
5. Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation 100
Key takeaways (E2.2-a and E2.2-b) 102
Key takeaways (E2.2-a and E2.2-b *continued*) 103
Examples of activities to develop the PSS Regulating one's pleasant emotions E2.2(a) 104
Examples of activities to develop the PSS: Regulating one's unpleasant emotions E2.2(b) 110
Managing one's stress (E2.3) **138**
1. Knowing what stress is 138
2. Knowing effective stress management strategies (or coping strategies) 138
3. Reducing one's stress reactions using emotional experience-focused strategies 141
4. Addressing stressors using problem-focused strategies 142
Key takeaways (E2.3) 146
Key takeaways (E2.3 *continued*) 147
Examples of activities to develop the PSS: Managing one's stress (E2.3) 148

RESOLVING RELATIONAL DIFFICULTIES **165**

Standing up for oneself (and resisting social pressure) through assertiveness and refusal (S2.1) **167**
1. Knowing what social influence is and resisting social pressure 167
2. Communicating assertively 169
3. Refusing assertively 170
4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism 171
Key takeaways (S2.1) 174
Examples of activities to develop the PSS 176
Resolving conflicts constructively (S2.2) **194**
1. Calming down, observing and analysing a conflict situation 195
2. Using a support strategy to resolve a type-1 conflict (=one person has unmet needs in the situation) 197
3. Using a negotiation strategy to resolve a type-2 conflict (=two people have conflicting needs) 198
Key takeaways (S2.2) 202
Key points to remember (S2.2 *continued*) 203
Examples of activities to develop the PSS Resolving conflicts constructively (S2.2) 204

CONCLUSION **214**

Bibliographic references **217**

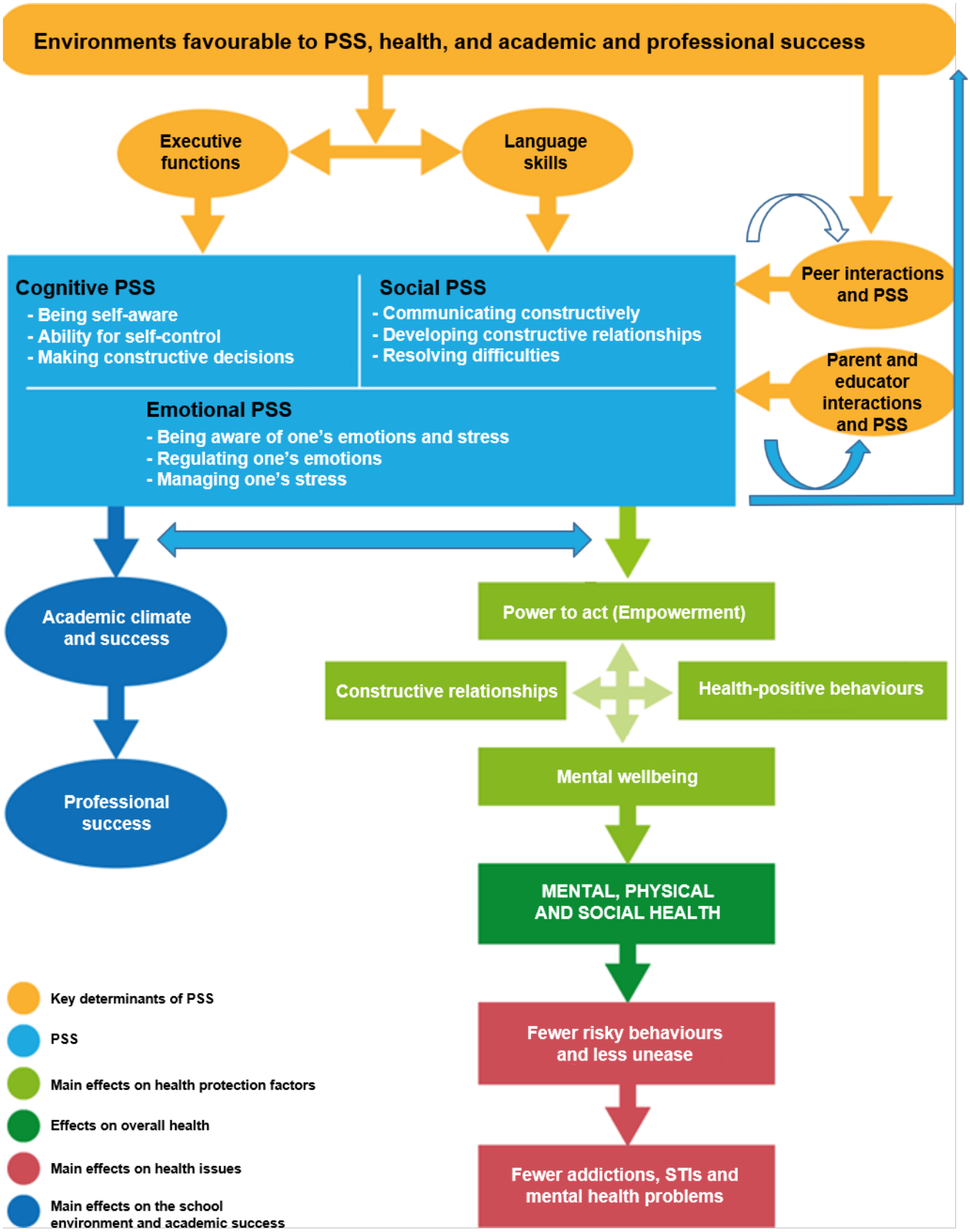
INTRODUCTION

Volume II of the operational framework on psychosocial skills for PSS experts and trainers is a continuation of volume I. Constructed in the same format as volume I, it deals with the secondary general (cognitive, emotional and social) PSS. Thus, it completes the detailed presentation of each of the 6 general PSS and 20 specific PSS of the Santé publique France updated PSS classification [1, 2].

Psychosocial skills (PSS) are a set of psychological skills (cognitive, emotional and social) that enable a person to maintain a state of psychological wellbeing [1, 3-5]. Developing them promotes positive mental health, which the WHO defined in 2004 as "a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" [6, 7], and contributes to increasing overall (mental, physical and social) positive health.

Psychosocial skills impact on the determinants of health and educational success by improving wellbeing and empowerment, an individual's psychological development and functioning, and the quality of their interactions [1]. More than forty years of interventional research have demonstrated that developing PSS makes it possible to improve mental health, reduce mental disorders, decrease the consumption of psychoactive substances, reduce risky behaviours (violence, harassment, risky sexual behaviours, etc.), improve the school climate and academic success, and promote integration and professional success [1, 8].

Figure 1: The main effects of PSS on health and educational success, as well as the main (bio-psycho-social) determinants of PSS [1]



Although the number of PSS is not fixed, an analysis of international classifications, proven programmes and psychological mechanisms has identified a number of PSS that are essential to the psychosocial development of children and young people. In keeping with the WHO classification proposed in the 2000s, these main PSS are grouped into the three major PSS categories: cognitive, emotional and social [1]. Furthermore, an understanding of how each of the PSS operate and the analytical work carried out in producing this operational framework have revealed the progressive nature of how PSS are learned.

Thus, in addition to being classified into three categories (cognitive, emotional and social) in line with the WHO typology, PSS can also be grouped into two major progressive phases. The primary PSS of each of the categories (cognitive PSS 1, emotional PSS 1 and social PSS 1, set out in volume I) represent the basic PSS which aim to strengthen the understanding and acceptance of cognitive, emotional and relational mechanisms. Thus, for each category of PSS, a preliminary phase of understanding and accepting psychological functioning is essential before one can seek to modify this functioning by strengthening the PSS related to regulation and fulfilment (cognitive PSS 2, emotional PSS 2 and social PSS 2, presented in this volume II). A self-understanding and self-acceptance phase (cognitive PSS 1) is important in order to achieve one's goals and resolve problems (cognitive PSS 2). An understanding and accepting emotions phase (emotional PSS 1) is essential in order to be able to regulate these emotions optimally (emotional PSS 2). An understanding constructive communication and accepting the other phase (social PSS 1) is necessary in order to resolve relational difficulties (social PSS 2). Similarly, given that one's relationship with oneself greatly impacts one's relationship with others, it is important to improve how one relates to oneself and one's self-awareness (by developing one's intrapsychic skills: cognitive and emotional PSS) in order to improve one's relationship with others (through the development of interpersonal skills: social PSS).

Understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying each PSS is a major factor in strengthening one's own PSS and developing those of others. It promotes the appropriation of each of the PSS and supports the implementation of formal and informal psychoeducational activities with children, young people and/or parents. To facilitate learning these core psychological mechanisms that underlie the PSS, these are presented in the form of a list of the knowledge items and practical skills associated with each specific PSS.

This operational classification of the PSS, which proposes a breakdown into four levels (PSS categories, general PSS, specific PSS, and knowledge items and practical skills) aims to make understanding the core knowledge and processes that enable the development of each of the PSS accessible to the greatest number of people. Thus, this operational framework proposes that work to strengthen the PSS be based on four levels of operationalisation which interlace successively (see table below):

- 3 PSS categories (cognitive PSS, emotional PSS and social PSS);
- 6 general PSS;
- 20 specific PSS;
- 55 knowledge items and practical skills.

Mastering these knowledge items and strengthening this entire set of practical skills fosters the optimal development of the main PSS identified in the literature.

Table 1: Classification of the PSS into 3 main categories: 6 general PSS, 20 specific PSS, and 55 knowledge items and practical skills

Categories	General PSS	Specific PSS	Knowledge items and practical skills
Cognitive PSS	**C1. Strengthening self-awareness**	**C1.1 Improving self-knowledge** **C1.2 Critical thinking**	1. Knowing the different dimensions of the psychological Self 2. Knowing the role and limitations of self-image 3. Questioning self-image in order to think critically 4. Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions 5. Observing and embracing the inner Self
		C1.3 Knowing one's values, needs and personal goals *and* **C1.4 Making constructive decisions**	1. Knowing one's self-concordant goals 2. Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals 3. Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals
		C1.5 Positive self-assessment	1. Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills 2. Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
		C1.6 Strengthening full attention in relation to oneself	1. Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience 2. Observing and fully embracing the present sensory experience without judging or modifying it 3. Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities on a daily basis
	C2. Strengthening self-control and self-fulfilment	**C2.1 Achieving one's personal goals**	1. Formulating one's concordant goals in a precise manner 2. Implementing committed actions effectively
		C2.2 Managing one's impulses	1. Knowing what the ability for self-control is 2. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the state of the inner Self 3. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the quality of the immediate environment 4. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by strengthening the cognitive capacities of the subject Self
		C2.3 Solving problems creatively and effectively *and* **C2.4 Knowing how to ask for help**	1. Observing and analysing a problematic situation 2. Using the problem-solving technique to resolve everyday problems independently (strategy 1) 3. Knowing how to ask for help to resolve problems that cannot be solved alone (strategy 2) 4. Knowing how to ask for help from emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations (strategy 3)

Categories	General PSS	Specific PSS	Knowledge items and practical skills
Emotional PSS	**E1. Strengthening emotional awareness**	**E1.1 Understanding emotions**	1. Knowing the nature of emotions (components, links with cognitions and behaviours, production through psychological needs and triggers, various types) 2. Knowing the function of emotions (as information and impulses for action)
		E1.2 Identifying one's emotions	1. Perceiving the emotional experience present within oneself 2. Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived
	E2. Regulating one's emotions and stress	**E2.1 Expressing one's emotions constructively**	1. Formulating a basic 'I' message to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions 2. Formulating a complex 'I' message to express one's unpleasant emotions
		E 2.2 Regulating one's emotions	1. Knowing the effective and ineffective emotional regulation strategies 2. Accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs (basic emotional strategy)
		E2.2(a) Regulating one's pleasant emotions	3. Strengthening one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective strategies (of an emotional, cognitive, mind-body, social, behavioural and environmental nature)
		E2.2(b) Regulating one's unpleasant emotions	4. On an everyday basis, reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies (of an emotional, cognitive, social, behavioural and environmental nature) 5. In a crisis situation, managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies (of an emotional and cognitive nature)
		E2.3 Managing one's stress	1. Knowing what stress is 2. Knowing effective stress management strategies (or coping strategies) 3. Reducing one's stress reactions using effective emotional experience-focused strategies 4. Addressing stressors using effective, problem-focused strategies

Categories	General PSS	Specific PSS	Knowledge items and practical skills
Social PSS	**S1 Developing constructive relationships**	**S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively**	1. Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship 2. Knowing how to use supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (=positive communication) 3. Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (=effective communication)
		S1.2 Communicating empathetically	1. Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication 2. Listening empathetically 3. Speaking empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening)
		S1.3 Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours	1. Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships 2. Knowing the different prosocial behaviours 3. Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends, and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)
	S2 Resolving relational difficulties	**S2.1 Standing up for oneself (and resisting social pressure) by being assertive and refusing**	1. Knowing what social influence and social pressure are 2. Communicating assertively 3. Refusing assertively 4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism
		S2.2 Resolving conflicts constructively	1. Calming down, observing and analysing a conflict situation 2. Using a support strategy to resolve a type-1 conflict (=1 person has unmet needs) 3. Using a negotiation strategy to resolve a type-2 conflict (=2 people have conflicting needs)

This PSS operational framework provides a concise and accessible presentation of the main current consensus knowledge, despite the diversity of theoretical models that exist across disciplines and schools of thought. Underpinned by scientific and experiential knowledge, **it is aimed at informed practitioners (PSS trainers, PSS experts, PSS programme managers, etc.).** It aims to support their work on the ground by contributing 'actionable knowledge' using a 'knowledge transfer' approach.

Focused on generic knowledge related to the psychological mechanisms underlying each of the PSS, this framework does not address issues of implementation and pedagogy as these are dependent on the practice environments (audience, professionals and setting). Only a few generic recommendations are formulated to support the deployment of high-quality PSS interventions nationwide (see detailed presentation in volume I, chapter 1).

First, two general guidelines are proposed for deploying PSS interventions. These are based on and are consistent with the principles of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion:

- *Guideline 1*: health and wellbeing promotion PSS interventions (in line with the Ottawa Charter), which entail strengthening PSS in conjunction with developing favourable environments and supportive living settings in order to promote individual and social development, and people's capacity for choice, autonomy and empowerment;

- *Guideline 2*: evidence-based PSS interventions (in line with the evidence-based medicine (EBM) paradigm), which require integrating three types of knowledge to construct the most effective PSS interventions possible in the setting: 1. the most relevant scientific knowledge (or evidence); 2. experiential knowledge that is recognised and validated by professionals in the field setting (or professional expertise); 3. Experiential knowledge derived from the experience of the beneficiaries (or the lived experience and needs of the people).

Second, quality criteria have been formulated based on the scientific literature dealing with the factors associated with the effectiveness and implementation of PSS interventions, and on the expertise of French professionals (see table below, detailed presentation [2] and Intervention quality self-assessment grid [9]).

Thus, executing effective and sustainable PSS interventions requires the implementation of a variety of operational and complementary actions to best meet the identified quality criteria:

- 3 general areas of action (3 general criteria): 1. PSS activities of different kinds, 2. a comprehensive implementation framework, 3. a supportive educational environment;
- 9 specific actions (9 operational criteria clarifying the 3 general objectives): 1. professionals with a good mastery of PSS, 2. formal PSS activities, 3. informal PSS activities, 4. experiential, active and positive teaching methods, 5. high-quality training, 6. mentoring for professionals, 7. shared and institutional ownership of the PSS project, 8. a favourable social environment, 9. a favourable physical environment.
-38 practical conditions enabling the 9 operational criteria to be implemented (set out below).

Table 2: PSS intervention quality criteria

General criteria	Operational criteria	Practical conditions
1. High-quality PSS practices (structured, evidence-based, intensive and of various kinds)	1.1 The PSS professionals/facilitators are experts in PSS and implement them	The PSS professionals/facilitators have **good knowledge** (scientific and experiential) of the PSS
		The PSS professionals/facilitators have worked on and **strengthened their own PSS**
	1.2 Structured and sequenced PSS activities are implemented	**A set of organised and coordinated PSS activities** is implemented
		All the main PSS (cognitive, emotional and social) are worked on through progressive learning (starting as young as possible)
		The target PSS are clearly **explained to the participants** and **presented in line with current scientific knowledge**
		The PSS activities are intensive and long-term (workshops of approximately one hour, several hours per year, multi-year, starting from early childhood)
		The PSS activities draw on **PSS materials** (facilitator intervention guide, participant booklet) that are based on scientific and experiential knowledge
	1.3 Informal PSS practices are implemented	**Ritualised PSS activities** are implemented
		Ordinary educational activities promote the development of PSS
	1.4 The PSS practices are based on active, positive and experiential teaching methods	The PSS professionals/facilitators use **active teaching methods** (learning through individuals' active participation)
		The PSS professionals/facilitators use **positive teaching methods** (positive and effective communication, validating individuals' behaviours and skills)
		The PSS professionals/facilitators use experiential **teaching methods** (learning through experience: role-plays, experience sharing, observing lived experiences, etc.)
2. Setting up a high-quality PSS intervention	2.1 High-quality training is offered to PSS professionals/facilitators	The PSS trainers have good knowledge (scientific and experiential) of the PSS
		The PSS trainers have worked on and strengthened their own PSS
		The training enables the PSS facilitators to have **good knowledge of the PSS** (scientific and experiential)
		The training enables the PSS facilitators to **strengthen their own PSS**
		The training enables the PSS facilitators to **deliver structured** and sequenced **PSS activities**
		The training provides **materials based** on scientific and experiential knowledge (intervention guide and participant booklet)
		The training enables the PSS facilitators to **carry out informal PSS practices**
		The training makes it possible to implement **active, positive and experiential teaching methods**
	2.2 Mentoring is offered to the PSS professionals/facilitators	**The PSS mentors have good knowledge (scientific and experiential) of the PSS**
		The mentors have worked on and strengthened their own PSS
		Group support is offered to PSS professionals/facilitators (supervision, practice analysis, etc.)
		Individual support is offered to PSS professionals/facilitators (in-person interview, remote interview, etc.)
	2.3 The PSS project is a collective undertaking	**A 'PSS project team'** is responsible for managing and implementing the PSS project
		The implementation of the PSS project is set out in **a PSS project set-up manual**
		A PSS advocacy team validates and raises awareness of the PSS project
		Advocacy and information materials are used to validate the PSS project
		All stakeholders (PSS professionals, other professionals, decision-makers, parents, children and young people, etc.) are involved in the PSS project
		The members of the PSS project team, the advocacy team, and all stakeholders have strengthened their own PSS

3. <u>Educational environment</u> favourable to the development of PSS	**3.1 <u>The social environment</u> is favourable to PSS**	**The PSS of the adults in educational positions (teachers, professionals, parents, etc.) have been strengthened** (through training, mentoring, exchanges of practices and experiential interventions, etc.)
		The relational patterns between the people in the structure (adults, young people, children) are in keeping with the PSS
		Interpersonal conflict management is consistent with the PSS
		The assessment methods (adults, young people, children) are consistent with the PSS
		Psychological security (satisfaction of basic psychological needs) is ensured
	3.2 <u>The physical environment</u> is favourable to PSS	**The physical safety** of individuals is ensured
		The layout of the spaces promotes the development of PSS
		Time management promotes the development of PSS

This second volume of the PSS operational framework aims to set out the PSS that promote the development of cognitive, emotional and social regulation and fulfilment capacities. It therefore complements volume I, which sets out the PSS related to developing the ability to understand and accept the cognitive, emotional and social experience. It follows the same format as volume I.

Each chapter presents, in a standardised format, the core psychological knowledge and practical skills that need to be strengthened to master the PSS.

Each PSS chapter has two parts:

- **a theoretical part** that describes the knowledge and practical skills underlying the PSS (in the form of text, diagrams and tables), the main direct effects of the PSS and the prerequisite factors, and a summary of the key takeaways;
- **a practical part** that aims to illustrate in a more concrete manner the knowledge and practical skills to be mobilised to strengthen the PSS. It takes the form of examples of (formal and informal) activities for adults, young people and children. In order to be used, these must be incorporated into a global PSS programme and/or complete teaching sequences.

This volume II describes the secondary general PSS of each category which form the basis of self-regulation and self-fulfilment:

- **Cognitive PSS 2 (strengthening self-control and self-fulfilment)** which encompasses 4 specific cognitive PSS and 10 knowledge items and practical skills to be acquired;
- **Emotional PSS 2 (regulating one's emotions and stress)** which encompasses 3 specific emotional PSS and 12 knowledge items and practical skills to be acquired;
- **Social PSS 2 (resolving relational difficulties)** which encompasses 2 specific social PSS and 7 knowledge items and practical skills to be acquired.

General cognitive skill 2

STRENGTHENING SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-FULFILMENT

STRENGTHENING SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-FULFILMENT (C2)

"**Strengthening one's capacity for self-control** requires being able to control, direct and adjust one's behaviour based on one's goals and the context. This cognitive skill includes the ability to manage one's impulses and the ability to achieve one's goals" [1]. **Strengthening self-control and self-fulfilment** also involves developing "the ability to solve problems creatively (which) requires knowing how to analyse a problematic situation, being able to imagine different possible solutions, allowing alternatives to emerge, knowing how to assess the different solutions and managing to choose a positive solution for oneself and for others. This cognitive skill enhances creative thinking and requires mastery of multi-step problem-solving techniques" [1].

It is worth recalling that, the psychological Self, which was defined in volume I (skill C1.1), has different dimensions. Four major, distinct, yet interrelated dimensions of the psychological Self were presented schematically:

- **The external Self** encompasses all aspects of oneself that are external and perceptible to others (body, behaviours, communication, activities, possessions, social roles, etc.).
  E.g.: "I am a 41-year-old woman, I am 1.68m tall, a primary school teacher, I own a house in the Paris region, I am married with two children, a member of a choir, and I do swimming, etc."

- **The Self-image (also called Self-concept)** refers to all the thoughts, ideas, judgements and representations that one has about oneself.
  E.g.: "I think I am a young woman, a primary school teacher, who loves children, sports and travel; I do not think I am thin enough and I worry too much, etc."

- **The subject Self (also called the agent Self, actor Self or observer Self)** refers to our cognitive abilities (observing, perceiving, reflecting, deciding, etc.) and our behavioural abilities (expressing ourselves, moving, etc.) which allow us to act consciously and voluntarily and to self-regulate. It is the part of ourselves that allows us to be an actor and to take intentional actions, whether these actions are of an intrapsychic (feeling, analysing, etc.) or behavioural (speaking, walking, dancing, etc.) nature.

- **The inner Self (also called content of the Self or psychic contents)** encompasses the five psychic (or mental) states within oneself that are perceptible and conscious, namely: **cognitions** (thoughts, beliefs, representations, knowledge, etc.), **emotions** (feelings, affects, etc.), **volitions** or **conations** (needs, desires, impulses, etc.), **bodily sensations**, and global and diffuse **impressions**.
  E.g.: "In my classroom, I feel anxious, I feel tension in my stomach, some behaviours raise questions for me; I would like relationships in the classroom to be better; today, during the workshop, I feel enthusiasm and joy."

This secondary general cognitive PSS (C2) encompasses 4 specific cognitive PSS (set out in three chapters).

The development of each specific PSS relies on several psychological knowledge items and practical skills:

- **Specific cognitive PSS 2.1: in order to achieve one's personal goals (C2.1), the core psychological knowledge items and practical skills are:**
  1. Formulating one's self-concordant goals in a precise manner;
  2. Implementing committed actions effectively.

- **Specific cognitive PSS 2.2: in order to manage one's impulses (C2.2), the core psychological knowledge items and practical skills are:**
  1. Knowing what the ability for self-control is;
  2. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the state of the inner Self;
  3. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the quality of the immediate environment;
  4. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by strengthening the cognitive capacities of the subject Self.

- **Specific cognitive PSS 2.3 and 2.4: in order to solve problems creatively and effectively (C2.3) and know how to ask for help (C2.4), the core psychological knowledge items and practical skills are:**
  1. Observing and analysing a problematic situation;
  2. Using the problem-solving technique to resolve everyday problems independently (strategy 1);
  3. Knowing how to ask for help to resolve problems that cannot be solved alone (strategy 2);
  4. Knowing how to ask for help from emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations (strategy 3).

Achieving one's personal goals (C2.1)

Personal goals are mental representations that align with the set of states and situations that a person wishes to achieve. Linked to our future self-image, they drive us to act intentionally and in pursuit of a defined purpose. They are distinct from simple **action tendencies** which can be defined as "automatic tendencies of the organism to be ready on a behavioural level when an emotional situation arises in our environment" ([10], pg. 356] and which, if activated, result in simple behaviours in response to the immediate environment.

There are two main types of personal goal: **self-concordant goals**, which are based on a person's psychological needs and values, and **non-self-concordant goals**, which are constructed using social representations from a person's environment (parents, family, friends, social and professional circles, culture, society, religion, etc.) which have been integrated into personal representations through the psychological process of **internalisation** (*see cognitive PSS C1.3 & 1.4*).

In order to succeed in achieving one's self-concordant goals, it is necessary to be able to formulate one's goals precisely on the one hand, and to implement committed actions that allow one to move towards those goals effectively on the other.

Thus, achieving one's personal goals involves executing two major phases comprising several successive steps [5].

Table C2.1: Summary of the phases and steps to achieve one's self-concordant goals

Phases	Steps
PHASE 1: Formulating one's concordant goals in a precise manner	Step 1: formulating one's psychological needs (and their level of satisfaction), one's personal values (and their level of implementation) and one's concordant goals
	Step 2: formulating operational strategies (brainstorming and AADA-type problem-solving techniques) and concordant operational goals
PHASE 2: Implementing committed actions effectively	Step 3: formulating and planning committed actions
	Step 4: executing the planned actions
	Step 5: monitoring the actions taken

1. Formulating one's concordant goals in a precise manner (PHASE 1)

Personal goals are often numerous and can lead to different everyday objectives in different areas. They can be grouped into **personal aspirations**. A single personal aspiration typically encompasses various personal goals and can lead to various different everyday objectives. A part of oneself (called the 'working self') is devoted to managing and maintaining coherence between the different personal goals [11].

While **self-concordant goals** are important in terms of individuals' (intrinsic) motivation, capacity for action, psychological balance and wellbeing, they are not usually the most frequent or the most mobilised in a person's daily functioning. As mentioned previously (*see cognitive PSS C1.3 & 1.4*), the goals pursued are often constructed (subconsciously) on the basis of desired situations and idealised self-images derived from internalised social representations. These goals, which are not concordant with the deep aspirations of the Self, are driven by extrinsic motivation and hypothetical future satisfaction; they require more effort and generate more tension. Conversely, pursuing self-concordant goals is a natural source of wellbeing and balance; they generate more (intrinsic)

motivation, capacity for action and performance as they are based on natural psychological needs and on the person's values [5]. Thus, in order to formulate one's self-concordant, it is necessary to ascertain the level of satisfaction of one's psychological needs, and to formulate one's own values and their level of implementation.

- **Formulating one's psychological needs, personal values and self-concordant goals (Step 1)**

Using the 12 psychological needs identified as a starting point, it is possible to distinguish the level of satisfaction of each of these fundamental needs. It may also be interesting to draw out those unmet psychological needs that are in a state of frustration (i.e. those which, beyond the absence of satisfaction, are subject to active threat) [12] (*see cognitive PSS C1.3 & 1.4*).

Thus, based on one's internal feelings, it is possible to distinguish met psychological needs, unmet psychological needs and frustrated psychological needs (using the list of 12 psychological needs set out in the operational framework, volume I, pg. 52, see below for a reminder).

Table 4. C1.3: The 12 main psychological needs grouped by the different components of the psychological Self (cognitive, affective/relational, behavioural, mind-body)

Cognitive needs	**Need for discovery (or curiosity)**: to explore, discover and learn new things about oneself and the world. **Need for coherence (or understanding)**: to understand and make (ordered, rational, just and stable) sense of the world and oneself. **Need for transcendence (or spirituality)**: to know that life has meaning and to feel connected and supported by something positive that is greater than oneself.
Affective and relational needs	**Need for love (or affection)**: to love, to be and to feel loved; to receive and give attention and affection. **Need for social affiliation (or belonging)**: to have harmonious relationships with others; to be and feel connected, accepted and integrated into one's social environment. **Need for recognition (or self-affirmation or self-esteem)**: to be and to feel valued, recognised, considered and respected by others.
Behavioural needs	**Need for freedom (or autonomy)**: to be able to move, and to express oneself and act freely. **Need for competence (or adaptation):** to be able to act with ease and efficiency in one's physical and social environment. **Need for achievement (or fulfilment or creativity)**: to be able to create and act in concrete terms in and on the world.
Body-mind needs	**Need for subsistence (or need for security)**: ensuring the survival, maintenance and protection of one's physical and psychological body (as well as that of one's loved ones). **Need for stimulation:** to be energised on a physical, sensory, mental and intellectual level by interaction with one's physical and social environment. **Need for rest (or calm)**: to allow one's body to recover physically, emotionally and mentally (after activities and exertions).

Unlike psychological needs, values are not directly associated with an internal emotional feeling or sensory experience. They are not a natural component of the organism, but rather originate in mental elaboration, and individual and collective choice [13, 14]. Personal values, chosen by the individual, help to guide the person in their decisions and actions; they give meaning and coherence to their life [13]. Thus, they support the needs for coherence, transcendence and fulfilment. "Values are not limited solely to moral values, rather they encompass everything that can be valued by the individual symbolically" [14]. Individual values are those that are adopted by the individual.

Without self-censorship, it is possible to allow oneself to become aware of representations related to one's personal values. These can then be formulated precisely. Finally, their level of fulfilment in daily life can be assessed.

Based on (unmet and/or frustrated) psychological needs and one's explicitly stated personal values, it is finally possible to formulate the states and/or situations that one wishes to achieve and to define one's self-concordant goals.

- **Formulating operational strategies and self-concordant operational goals (Step 2)**

After having defining one's personal values, psychological needs and concordant goals, a second, more operational, step can begin.

Operational strategies are concrete ways to satisfy one's psychological needs and embody one's personal values in daily life. It is important to bear in mind that "a need (...) can be met by a wide variety of strategies" [12]. The ways in which the desired situations or states can be achieved are therefore potentially very numerous.

A brainstorming activity can help to reveal, with less self-censorship, a plurality of possible operational strategies to satisfy one's psychological needs, personal values and self-concordant goals. Then, an analysis and decision-making process must be carried out in order to choose from the operational strategies that have emerged. Finally, self-concordant operational goals must be formulated based on the operational strategies selected. The **AADA**-type 4-step **problem-solving technique** can be a useful tool for carrying out these different mental activities (*see cognitive PSS C1.1, Operational Framework - Volume I, pg. 31 and cognitive PSS C2.3)*:

1. **A**ttention:
- I focus my attention on the self-concordant goals formulated during step 1;
- by focusing on my internal feelings, I choose **one of the self-concordant goals**.

2. **A**nalysis:
- I imagine and allow all the possible operational strategies to achieve the chosen self-concordant goal (the target situation or state) to come to mind;
- I analyse each of the operational strategies (advantages and disadvantages, positive and negative effects for me and for others, etc.).

3. **D**ecision: based on my analysis and internal feelings, I choose **one or more operational strategies.**

4. **A**ction:
- I formulate **my self-concordant operational goals** based on the operational strategy/ies chosen;
- I implement **committed actions** that enable me to move towards my self-concordant operational goals (*see phase 2 below*).

2. Implementing committed actions effectively (PHASE 2)

After having formulated one's personal values, psychological needs to be met, self-concordant goals, operational strategies and operational goals, the next step is to move on to the behavioural step of implementing committed actions. "Committed actions are actions that are based on values (and psychological needs), made at a particular moment and conceived with a view to embodying, within multiple other actions, the life paths chosen by the individual (personal aspirations and self-concordant goals). They can be subject to planning (...), must be feasible and must work towards a goal which itself

falls within the perspective of a value. Timing is a consideration, as some actions only bear fruit in a deferred manner. If, however, an action does not work or a goal is not achieved, the value- (and psychological needs) based orientation maintains the course and the appetitive control to carry out other actions and try to achieve other objectives" [13] (pg. 28). Thus, anchoring one's choices and behaviours in personal values and psychological needs allows one to formulate self-concordant goals and sub-goals, but also to stay on course when things do not go as planned [15].

Three stages can be distinguished that allow the optimal implementation of self-concordant operational goals and the execution of committed actions: a design and planning stage, an implementation stage and a follow-up (or monitoring) stage [5].

- **Formulating and planning committed actions (step 3)**

Intentions for **committed actions** are formulated based on the self-concordant operational goals defined in step 2. Next, it is necessary to plan all the concrete components to be implemented in order to achieve them: activities, resources (people, funding, material means, etc.), schedule.

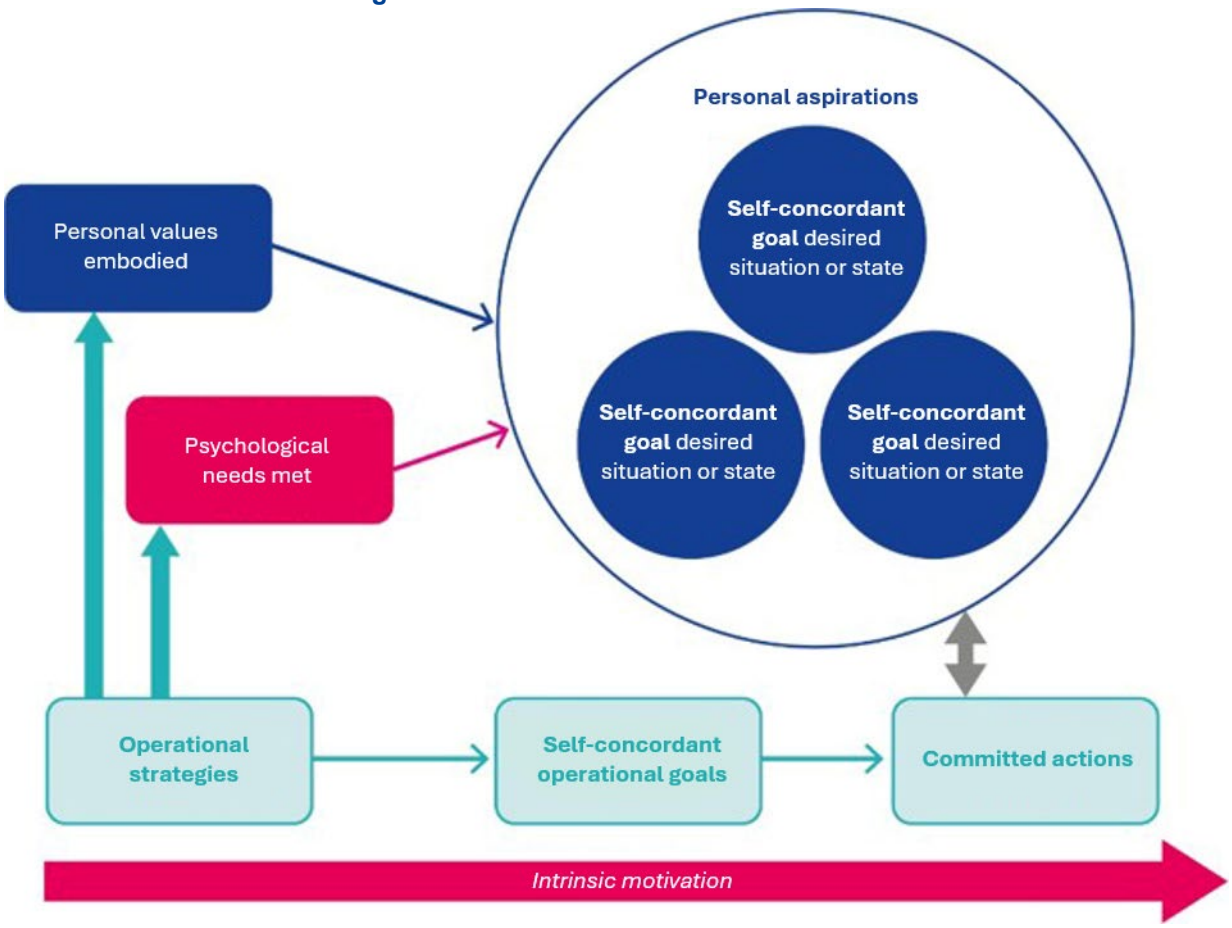
- **Executing the planned actions (step 4)**

This involves carrying out the committed actions that were planned during step 3. This step involves significant cognitive, emotional, motivational and behavioural efforts and jointly mobilises two processes: an activation process, which enables the execution of the planned actions, and an inhibition or **self-control** process, which allows impulses, distractions and temptations that are contrary to the chosen goals to be suppressed (*see following cognitive PSS C2.2*) [5].

- **Monitoring the actions taken (step 5)**

This entails tracking the implementation of the planned actions using a monitoring approach. Through self-assessment and a reflective process, this step allows one to observe the proper execution of the committed actions undertaken, to ensure that the discrepancy with the target situation or state is indeed being reduced as planned, and that personal values and psychological needs are being met. The planned and implemented actions, operational strategies, chosen goals, formulated needs and values can be questioned and readjusted if necessary.

Figure C2.1: Schematic representation of the different components and processes to be implemented to achieve a self-concordant goal



Achieving one's self-concordant goals generates two main beneficial effects:

- **Meeting one's psychological needs and expressing one's personal values:** achieving self-concordant goals through committed actions allows one to meet one's psychological needs and embody one's personal values. This personal achievement in alignment with oneself is a source of wellbeing and psychological balance.
- **Responsible choices for oneself and others:** as they are anchored in natural psychological needs, as well as in personal values that are most often prosocial, concordant goals can be both in harmony with the person but also have a collective and universal dimension; it is then possible to make responsible choices for oneself that are also favourable for others and for the environment.

Achieving one's goals relies on two conditions:

- **Good neuropsychological development and language skills**: Children are not born with innate abilities for analysis, planning and action. They can acquire these through learning (experience, observation, training, etc.) on the one hand and through natural neurological development, in particular brain growth (prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex) on the other. Developing language skills also promotes analytical and planning abilities.
- **Living environments and adults that meet psychological needs and that embody moral and civic values:** the way in which adults in educational positions meet children's psychological needs and their own needs, as well as the way in which they demonstrate moral and civic values have an impact on how children will be able to satisfy their own psychological needs and personal values. Therefore, it is essential to consider how educational environments (schools, after-school clubs, socio-educational centres, etc.) and work environments (where the adults work) take psychological needs, and moral and civic values into account. It is important that adults (in educational positions) can implement their concordant goals, based on their values and psychological needs, so that children and young people can do the same. Conversely, an adult who is constrained in their own needs or who is in dissonance with their values will have difficulty supporting the development of self-concordant goals in a child. Research findings highlight that it is possible to train adults (in educational positions) to better respond to their own psychological needs [12]. Contrary to some cultural preconceptions, it is important to meet one's own psychological needs in order to have the ability to satisfy the psychological needs of children and to best help them in achieving their own self-concordant goals.

  "From a very young age, when we learn language, we are told that it is not ethical to think about oneself (which includes having compassion for oneself). On the contrary, over time, we will be in a better position to help and participate, and to be kind and generous to others, if we also pay attention to our own needs" ([16], pg. 166).

Key takeaways (C2.1)

Conceptual definition: Self-fulfilment requires developing the ability to achieve one's personal goals. The latter entails "firstly, good knowledge of the objectives that one is pursuing (in the moment, and in the medium and long term)" [1] and being able to construct self-concordant goals based on psychological needs and personal values. "Secondly, it is a matter of being able to define the different stages. This cognitive skill mobilises self-awareness, self-discipline, personal motivation, perseverance and organisational skills" [1].

Operational definition: Achieving one's self concordant goals requires several knowledge items and practical skills (organised into different phases and stages):

1. Phase 1 - Formulating one's self-concordant goals in a precise manner

- Step 1: formulating one's psychological needs (and their level of satisfaction), one's personal values (and their level of implementation) and one's self-concordant goals;
- Step 2: formulating operational strategies (using brainstorming and AADA-type problem-solving techniques) and self-concordant operational goals.

2. Phase 2 - Implementing committed actions effectively

- Step 3: formulating and planning committed actions;
- Step 4: executing the planned actions;
- Step 5: monitoring the actions taken.

Main effects: Achieving one's self-concordant goals allows one to:

- satisfy one's psychological needs and embody one's personal values: this personal fulfilment in harmony with oneself is a source of wellbeing and psychological balance.

- make responsible choices for oneself and others: as they are anchored in values (which are often prosocial) and natural psychological needs, self-concordant goals can be both in harmony with the person but also have a collective and universal dimension; thus, they allow one to make responsible choices for oneself, which are also favourable to others and the environment.

Key takeaways (C2.1 *continued*)

Main conditions: Achieving one's self-concordant goals requires:

- **good neuropsychological development and language skills:** Children are not born with innate abilities for analysis, planning and action. They can acquire these through learning (experience, observation, training, etc.) on the one hand and through natural neurological development, in particular brain growth (prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex) on the other. Developing language skills also promotes analytical and planning abilities.

- **living environments and adults that meet psychological needs and that embody moral and civic values:** the way in which adults in educational positions meet children's psychological needs and their own needs, as well as the way in which they demonstrate moral and civic values have an impact on how children will be able to satisfy their own psychological needs and personal values.

Therefore, it is essential to consider how educational environments (schools, after-school clubs, socio-educational centres, etc.) and work environments (where the adults work) take psychological needs, and moral and civic values into account. It is important that adults (in educational positions) can implement committed actions based on their (prosocial) values and their psychological needs, so that children and young people can do the same.

Examples of activities to develop the PSS
Achieving one's personal goals (C2.1)

Clarifying my objectives

(Claeys Bouuaert M, 2022)

Audience: ☐ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Achieving one's personal goals (C2.1)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Formulating one's self-concordant goals in a precise manner (PHASE 1)
- Step 1: formulating one's psychological needs (and their level of satisfaction), one's personal values (and their level of implementation) and one's self-concordant goals;
- Step 2: formulating operational strategies and self-concordant operational goals.

☒ Implementing one's self-concordant goals in an effective manner (PHASE 2)
- Step 3: formulating and planning committed actions;
- Step 4: executing the planned actions;
- Step 5: monitoring the actions taken

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

The concepts of 'needs' and 'objectives' should be clarified beforehand.

Ask the following questions, in writing:

1. What are the things I am most satisfied with in my life?
2. What are the things I am least satisfied with in my life?
3. What needs are highlighted by this dissatisfaction? Explore and reflect at all levels, individual, family, etc.
4. What goals can I set for myself to satisfy these needs, whether in the short or long term (this week, this month, this year)?
5. What concrete steps could I put in place right now?

The participants do the exercise in small groups and then discuss as a whole group the benefits of the activity and the lessons learned.

Needs and objectives

(Claeys Bouuaert M. 2022)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Achieving one's personal goals (C2.1)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Formulating one's self-concordant goals in a precise manner (PHASE 1)
- ➢ Step 1: formulating one's psychological needs (and their level of satisfaction), one's personal values (and their level of implementation) and one's self-concordant goals;
- ➢ Step 2: formulating operational strategies and self-concordant operational goals.

☒ Implementing one's self-concordant goals in an effective manner (PHASE 2)
- ➢ Step 3: formulating and planning committed actions;
- ➢ Step 4: executing the planned actions;
- ➢ Step 5: monitoring the actions taken

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Printable list of the 12 psychological needs

- "Think about your current needs. In your life in general, at school, at home, elsewhere, etc. are there any needs that are not being met? (you can refer to the list of the 12 psychological needs in this chapter to help identify unmet needs);
- What would you need to feel more comfortable and to perform better in this class, in this specific group?
- Is there anything you would like to ask the others in this group (an 'open', positive, realistic request)?
- What do you think you can do yourself to meet your needs?
- If necessary, make clear and specific resolutions: what do you plan to do? What concrete steps?
- Feedback in sub-groups of 4 (or as a whole group)."

I did something I'm proud of

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Achieving one's personal goals (C2.1)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Formulating one's self-concordant goals in a precise manner (PHASE 1)
- ➢ Step 1: formulating one's psychological needs (and their level of satisfaction), one's personal values (and their level of implementation) and one's self-concordant goals;
- ➢ Step 2: formulating operational strategies and self-concordant operational goals.

☒ Implementing one's self-concordant goals in an effective manner (PHASE 2)
- ➢ Step 3: formulating and planning committed actions;
- ➢ Step 4: executing the planned actions;
- ➢ Step 5: monitoring the actions taken

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

To be adapted based on the age of the participants, and ensure respect for the fundamentals of facilitating a talking circle. Depending on the context, it may be necessary to 'demarcate' the type of situations that could be recounted.

Talking circle: The facilitator explains that the members of the group and they themselves are going to take some time for reflection and personal expression. This will allow them to get to know themselves and others better. Today, they will do this by trying to recall a personal experience on the following theme: I did something I am proud of. Once they have thought of an experience, the participants are asked to identify the feelings they experienced, the thoughts that went through their minds, and the behaviours they adopted during that experience. When a participant speaks, the facilitator helps them formulate their story if they have difficulty doing so, then rephrases their statement so that they feel heard, understood and accepted. Once they have finished, if they have not expressed their feelings, thoughts and behaviours, the facilitator helps them to identify these:

- If I understood your story/experience correctly, you told us that… Is that right? The facilitator allows the person to complete, correct or validate their reformulation.
- How did you feel when…?
- At the end of the story, did you feel different? Did you say anything in particular to yourself at that moment?
- How did you act?
- Thank you very much for sharing this story!

Thanking each person for sharing their experience, which benefits the entire group, is essential. Then, the facilitator gives the floor to another person who wishes to share an experience. The facilitator is also invited to share an experience on the same theme, which helps to promote mutual acquaintance and a bond of trust between the adult in the position of educator and the young people. If the participants are having trouble getting started, the facilitator can also begin by sharing their own experience on the theme.

Managing one's impulses (C2.2)

"**Managing one's impulses** is the ability to voluntarily decide whether or not to transform an impulse to act into effective behaviour. This requires being able to stop, suspend, avoid, interrupt or postpone a behaviour depending on the situation and the goal pursued" (Santé publique France, 2022). Therefore, any intentional behaviour implies impulse management. Similarly, achieving self-concordant goals is also largely dependent on **one's ability to manage one's impulses voluntarily through the capacity for self-control**. Indeed, implementing committed actions requires the ability to voluntarily execute two complementary processes

- an activation process that enables the execution of the planned actions by mobilising natural action tendencies and intrinsic motivation;
- an inhibitory process that makes it possible to reduces impulsive behaviour, control 'opposing' desires and cope with distractions (which conflict with the goals being pursued) (*see cognitive PSS C2.1*) [5].

In order to manage one's impulses, it is necessary to have better knowledge of the importance of self-control and of how it functions, and to be able to strengthen it by improving the state of the Inner Self[1], the quality of the immediate environment and the cognitive capacities of the subject Self.[2]

1. Knowing what the ability for self-control is

The human body has a natural and automatic tendency "to be in a state of behavioural readiness when an emotional situation arises. These **action tendencies** do not necessarily turn into executed behaviours, but the individual nevertheless feels an intense activation as if they were actually going to carry out the act" [10]. Thus, from a very young age, a person is naturally confronted by impulses that are dependent on their physical and psychological state and their immediate environment.

The **ability for self-control** allows one to intentionally choose to inhibit or activate this natural tendency to act. It enables one to voluntarily decide whether or not to transform this impulse to act into actual behaviour. In particular, it allows one to "restrict and inhibit a desire, a craving or an impulsive behaviour in order to pursue a long-term objective. (...) In everyday language, one could say that self-control corresponds to willpower" ([5], pg. 347) This **ability for self-control** (also called '**behavioural regulation**') mobilises several cognitive processes: maintaining attention and staying concentrated on the task, working memory, inhibitory control to avoid inappropriate behaviours, and acting in line with one's choices and the goals pursued [17]. Thus, the ability for self-control plays a crucial role in achieving one's goals. It allows one to renounce impulsive behaviour that may lead to immediate pleasure (but that is potentially harmful in the long term), to maintain one's attention and to continue performing the actions chosen to achieve the satisfaction of one's psychological needs, values and personal goals. If this capacity for self-control is underdeveloped, "the pursuit of long-term goals is difficult because people (may be) more attracted to receiving immediate gratification from short-term rewards than to delaying gratification for the benefit of (greater) long-term rewards.

[1] "**The inner Self** (also called content of the Self or psychic contents) encompasses the five psychic (or mental) states within oneself that are perceptible and conscious, namely: cognitions (thoughts, beliefs, representations, knowledge, etc.), emotions (feelings, affects, etc.), volitions or conations (needs, desires, impulses, etc.), bodily sensations, and global and diffuse impressions."

[2] "**The subject Self** (also called the agent Self, actor Self or observer Self) refers to our cognitive abilities (observing, perceiving, reflecting, deciding, etc.) and our behavioural abilities (expressing ourselves, moving, etc.) which allow us to act consciously and voluntarily, and to self-regulate. It is the part of ourselves that allows us to be an actor and to take intentional actions, whether these actions are of an intrapsychic (feeling, analysing, etc.) or behavioural (speaking, walking, dancing, etc.) nature." ([2] Santé publique France.) Psychosocial skills: an operational framework for PSS experts and trainers. Volume I. Saint-Maurice: Santé publique France, 2025. 231 pgs. Available: https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr/ pg. 27).

Impulsive behaviours are quick and easy: it is easy to give in and eat biscuits, drink alcohol or play video games instead of working. The problem with these short-term attractions is that they are very often incompatible with the pursuit of long-term goals, or even contrary to them (…) eating healthily is not just about eating fruits and vegetables, but also requires simultaneously resisting the temptations to eat biscuits." ([5], pg. 347)

This capacity for self-control is influenced by three factors that can be acted upon:

- **Factor 1 - The state of the Inner Self**: the strength of the 'opposing desires', the strength of the intrinsic motivation and internal homeostasis;
- **Factor 2 - The quality of the immediate environment:** the nature of environmental stimuli (those promoting the 'opposing desires' versus those supporting intrinsic motivation and basic needs);
- **Factor 3 - Cognitive abilities related to the subject Self:** the development of the cognitive abilities of attention and choice.

2. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the state of the Inner Self

Firstly, the capacity for self-control varies according to the strength of the 'opposing' desire driving the person.

> *For example, evidently it is more difficult to regulate an intense craving for crisps than a vague and faint desire to eat.*

This strength of the 'opposing' desire is itself influenced by two major factors: the state of the **Inner Self** and stimuli related to the environment. In terms of the state of the Inner Self, if all physical and psychological needs are met, the person maintains a physiological and psychological balance which gives them a state of (physical and emotional) wellbeing that increases their capacity for self-control [5].

Conversely, a person whose physical and/or psychological needs are unmet or even frustrated, and who is in a state of (physical and/or mental) unease becomes more vulnerable to the 'opposing' desires with which they are confronted.

> *For example, it is harder to control a craving for alcohol if I am feeling sad and lonely.*

Secondly and in parallel, the capacity for self-control is influenced by the strength of the motivation to carry out the action and achieve the goal pursued.

> *For example, the desire to look at a screen is greater if I am bored than if I am motivated by the artistic activity I am in the middle of.*

The capacity for self-control increases when the person is driven by **intrinsic motivation**, carries out committed actions and pursues self-concordant goals (*see cognitive PSS C1.4 and C2.1*).

> *For example, I will not be bothered by a desire to watch television if I am passionate about the book I am reading, which will allow me to finalise the paper I have to write for my exam, which I am studying for in order to be accepted onto the academic course I have chosen.*

3. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the quality of the immediate environment

An 'opposing' desire intensifies depending on the presence or absence of certain external stimuli. Desires and wants increase when one comes into contact with certain stimuli that foster them.

> *For example, I am more inclined to play video games if I see screens around me.*

The 'opposing' desire may even only appear in the presence of a given stimulus.

> *For example, I may only want to drink alcohol when I am in the presence of people who are drinking it.*

Conversely, 'opposing' desires decrease and intrinsic motivation increases when the environment offers actions and stimuli that meet the person's psychological needs.

> *For example, during a physical activity that they enjoy and that meets their needs for freedom and affiliation, a child is less inclined to be a nuisance to their classmates.*

4. Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by strengthening the cognitive capacities of the subject Self

The capacity for self-control is dependent on mental or cognitive abilities that underlie self-regulation functions, including the capacity for attention and for making decisions (or for choice) [5]. In order to be able to stop, manage or postpone an impulse, one must be able to perceive it and therefore be capable of directing **one's attention to one's activated internal state** in order to process this information and not allow oneself to be controlled automatically.

> *For example, if I do not pay attention to my sugar craving and am therefore unaware of it, I can find myself eating sweets without having decided to do this and without even realising it.*

At the same time, it is also important to be able to maintain **one's attention on the task and the committed actions** that have been planned to achieve one's self-concordant goals.

> *For example, if I manage to keep all my attention on the paper I am writing, I will be less sensitive to distraction stimuli (a noise in the kitchen, music in the next room, a child shouting outside, etc.), and my desires (to snack, to listen to music, to play) will be less stimulated.*

Therefore, the ability to **direct one's attention voluntarily** is an essential skill in self-control, whether to inhibit an 'opposing' desire or to maintain one's capacity to carry out the committed action undertaken (*see cognitive PSS C1.6*).

Self-control is also influenced by the ability **to make choices that are conscious and concordant** with oneself (*see cognitive PSS C1.3 & 1.4, and C2.1*).

In the moment, the capacity to make conscious and concordant choices (in connection with self-knowledge, personal values and psychological needs) promotes self-control and better management of internal impulses and external temptations.

> *For example, if I want to be able to use all my abilities to work well tomorrow, pass my exam and achieve my personal goal of becoming a journalist, I am capable of refusing the psychoactive substances offered to me at a party.*

In the long term, a person who pursues a self-concordant goal and performs committed actions finds it easier not to be disturbed by various 'opposing' desires and temptations.

> *For example, if I am preparing for a trip abroad, I am less tempted to go and drink fizzy drinks, watch television or go shopping.*

Through voluntary control of attention, granular perception of impulses and a better understanding of oneself (of one's goals, psychological needs and personal values), the capacity for self-control increases. We are then better able to perceive the nature of the impulses within ourselves and to voluntarily choose to act on those that are favourable to achieving our personal goals.

Therefore, in a given situation, I can ask myself:

- How am I feeling now?: What are my current impulses and desires? What are my physical needs? What are my psychological needs?
➔ "Then, I can think about my feelings."

- What do I really want, deep down?: What psychological needs do I want to satisfy? What are the personal values I want to put into practice? What is the personal goal I want to achieve? What is the committed action I want to take?
➔ "Then, I can feel my thoughts (goals, values, representations of actions to be carried out, etc.)."

Managing one's impulses generates two main beneficial effects:

- **The possibility of achieving one's personal goals:** The capacity for self-control is crucial in regulating one's impulses and behaviour [5]. It allows one to manage one's action tendencies consciously, in order to make voluntary and intentional decisions as to the behaviours and actions carried out. Therefore, it is necessary for the effective implementation of the goal pursued and for not becoming distracted or absorbed by passing desires and external attractions. "When they lose their ability for self-control, people become more likely to fall prey to impulsive desires, cravings and temptations" ([5], pg. 350). Then, it becomes particularly difficult to achieve one's goals. As J. Reeve underscores [5], "the lasting ability to resist the immediate gratification of a short-term desire in favour of the delayed gratification of a long-term goal is a personality variable that is one of the best predictors of a successful life."

- **Mastery of other psychosocial skills:** The capacity for self-control is largely at play in all emotional and social skills [18]. The abilities to identify, express and manage one's emotions appropriately entail a joint process of regulating natural action tendencies. Similarly, communicating effectively, developing constructive relationships and resolving relational difficulties require a certain ability to manage one's impulses. For example, "children who are able to pay attention to emotional cues by inhibiting an initial socially undesirable reaction or impulsive aggression are relatively more able to behave appropriately in the social context of the classroom" [17]. Thus, all prosocial behaviours require, first and foremost, the ability to regulate one's emotions and impulses optimally.

Managing one's impulses involves two conditions:

- **Neuropsychological development and language skills**: Children are not born with innate capacities for self-control and regulation. They can acquire these through learning (experience, observation, training, etc.) on the one hand and through natural neurological development, in particular brain growth (prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex) on the other [18]. "Between the ages of 4 and 7, children acquire fundamental skills related to regulation, or what could be described as the 'fundamental regulatory processes' of inhibitory control, attentional control, flexibility and working memory (...), but individuals continue to develop these skills into adulthood. Indeed, adolescence is an important period of additional brain growth, and reorganisation of the prefrontal cortex and associated executive functions, self-regulation and social skills" [18].
- Language skills also play a role in the development of self-regulation skills. Language learning promotes the process of behavioural regulation. The findings of recent research seem to show that this influence works both ways. Better language skills improve self-control abilities and conversely, self-regulation abilities strengthen mastery of language [17].
- Whether in children, adolescents or adults, self-regulation skills can also vary depending on the environment or situation. New contexts require a period of adaptation before one can transfer and mobilise self-regulation skills in an optimal fashion. Therefore, it is essential to take individuals' age, the task, the context and life histories into account in order to ascertain the self-control capacities that can be expected and required in a given situation.

- **Supportive relationships and social environments**: Environmental stressors exert a considerable negative impact on capacities for self-control. Acute and chronic stress impacts neurological functioning and the cognitive processes involved in self-regulation capacities (impulse control, planning, goal setting and decision-making, memory, fundamental learning) [18]. "This is partly due to high baseline levels of the hormone cortisol, associated with exposure to poverty,

stress and trauma, which impair the functioning of the prefrontal cortex. Children with developmental delays due to factors such as premature birth or postnatal malnutrition, which may go unnoticed, may also exhibit self-regulation difficulties and attention deficit disorders" [18]. Certain educational methods (punishments, humiliation, excessive control, etc.) can also strengthen the impact of negative life events and generate additional stress for the child [18].

- Thus, self-regulation skills develop in line with the quality of the environment and interactions. Factors such as parental skills, teaching methods and adults' self-regulation skills have a crucial impact on the progress of this process. These daily relationships and interactions are considered a key ‘active ingredient’ in optimal human development [19]. More specifically, adults’ psychosocial skills play a crucial role: their ability to offer supportive, affectionate and reassuring relationships, as well as their ability to express demands that are suited to the child's capabilities, are decisive factors in supporting a child's development and promoting the gradual learning of self-regulation skills [18].

Key takeaways (C2.2)

Conceptual definition: "**Managing one's impulses** is the ability to voluntarily decide whether or not to transform an impulse to act into effective behaviour. This requires being able to stop, suspend, avoid, interrupt or postpone a behaviour depending on the situation and the goal pursued" (Santé publique France, 2022). Therefore, any behaviour implies impulse management.

Operational definition: Managing one's impulses involves 4 knowledge items and practical skills:

1. **A better understanding of the capacity for self-control,** which forms the foundation of all voluntary behaviour and which allows us to inhibit or activate our spontaneous impulses and reactions, and to voluntarily decide whether or not to transform this impulse to act into effective behaviour;

2. **Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the state of the Inner Self:** the satisfaction of psychological and physical needs promotes homeostasis and wellbeing, and improves the internal state, which in turn contributes to strengthening capacities for self-control;

3. **Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by improving the quality of the immediate environment:** the fewer the stimuli promoting 'opposing' desires that are present and the more stimuli favourable to psychological needs that are present in the immediate environment, the more the capacity for self-control is supported;

4. **Strengthening one's capacity for self-control by strengthening the cognitive capacities of the subject Self,** in particular the capacities for attention and decision-making, which form the basis of the capacity for self-control and behavioural self-regulation.

Main effects: Managing one's impulses generates two main effects:

- The possibility of achieving one's personal goals: The capacity for self-control is crucial in regulating one's impulses and behaviour. It allows one to manage one's action tendencies consciously, in order to make voluntary and intentional decisions as to the behaviours and actions carried out. Therefore, it is necessary for the effective implementation of the goal pursued and for not becoming distracted or absorbed by passing desires and external attractions.

- Mastery of other psychosocial skills: The capacity for self-control is largely at play in all emotional and social skills [2]. The abilities to identify, express and manage one's emotions appropriately entail a joint process of regulating natural action tendencies. Similarly, in order to be able to communicate effectively, develop constructive relationships and resolve relational difficulties, a certain capacity to manage one's impulses is needed. Thus, all prosocial behaviours require, first and foremost, the ability to regulate one's emotions and impulses optimally.

Key takeaways (C2.2 *continued*)

<u>Main conditions</u>: Managing one's impulses involves two main conditions:

- Neuropsychological development and language skills: Children are not born with innate capacities for self-control and regulation. They can acquire these through learning (experience, observation, training, etc.) on the one hand and through natural neurological development, in particular brain growth (prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex) on the other. Developing language skills also improves self-control abilities (and vice versa).

- Supportive relationships and social environments: Environmental stressors exert a considerable negative impact on capacities for self-control. Thus, self-regulation skills in adults in educational positions, supportive and affectionate relationships, and demands that are suited to the child's abilities constitute key factors in supporting a child's development and promoting the acquisition of self-regulation skills [2].

Examples of activities to develop the PSS
Managing one's impulses (C2.2)

A time I was in control of myself and avoided doing something that I could have done, but would have later regretted

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Managing one's impulses (C2.2)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Understanding the importance of the capacity for self-control and how it functions
☐ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by improving the state of the inner self
☐ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by improving the quality of the environment
☒ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by strengthening the cognitive capacities of the subject Self

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

To be adapted based on the age of the participants, and ensure respect for the fundamentals of facilitating a talking circle. Depending on the context, it may be necessary to 'demarcate' the type of situations that could be recounted.

Talking circle: The facilitator explains that the members of the group and they themselves are going to take some time for reflection and personal expression. This will allow them to get to know themselves and others better. Today, they will do this by trying to remember a personal experience on the following theme: *A time I was in control of myself and avoided doing something that I could have done, but would have later regretted.* Once they have thought of an experience, the participants are asked to identify the feelings they experienced, the thoughts that went through their minds, and the behaviours they adopted during that experience. When a participant speaks, the facilitator helps them formulate their story if they have difficulty doing so, then rephrases their statement so that they feel heard, understood and accepted. Once they have finished, if they have not expressed their feelings, thoughts and behaviours, the facilitator helps them to identify these:

- If I understood your story/experience correctly, you told us that… Is that right? The facilitator allows the person to complete, correct or validate their reformulation.
- How did you feel when…?
- At the end of the story, did you feel different? Did you say anything in particular to yourself at that moment?
- How did you act?
- Thank you very much for sharing this story!

Thanking each person for sharing their experience, which benefits the entire group, is essential. Then, the facilitator gives the floor to another person who wishes to share an experience. The facilitator is also invited to share an experience on the same theme, which helps to promote mutual acquaintance and a bond of trust between the adult in the position of educator and the young people. If the participants are having trouble getting started, the facilitator can also begin by sharing their own experience on the theme.

I tell myself STOP

(Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions at school] Volume 3, Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs & Santé publique France [20])

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Managing one's impulses (C2.2)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Understanding the importance of the capacity for self-control and how it functions
☐ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by improving the state of the inner self
☐ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by improving the quality of the environment
☒ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by strengthening the cognitive capacities of the subject Self

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Have a device ready to watch the marshmallow test video with the whole class. A deck of cards with the names of the colours written in a colour that is not that colour (example: the word 'black' is written in pink).

I tell myself STOP!

Levels: ages 6 to 11

Support subject: French - Oral comprehension and production

Specific objectives: to learn to analyse a situation, to identify the capacity for self-control and the objective to be achieved, to identify the benefits of improving one's capacity for self-control

Duration: 30 minutes

Format: whole-class exercise

Prerequisite: understanding of the associated vocabulary

Equipment: Have a device ready to watch the marshmallow test video with the whole class.

A deck of cards with the names of the colours written in a colour that is not that colour (example: the word 'black' is written in pink).

Suggested activity plan

1 - Set-up phase

- Recall or have the pupils recall what has been done previously, particularly in relation to the 'Knowing one's goals' skill.
- Explain the objectives of the activity to the pupils.

2 - Implementation

Introduce the game 'What colour is this word?'

The pupils make groups of four, in a circle. Each round, one pupil plays, one pupil times and two pupils play the role of referee.

Each group has a set of cards. Each card has a word written on it that designates a colour, but it is written in a colour that is not that colour (for example: the word black is written in pink).

The aim of the game is to state the colour in which the word is written.

The pack is placed in the middle of the circle.

The first pupil has 20 seconds. They take a card and say the colour of the word as quickly as possible. They repeat this action until their time runs out or until the other pupils notice a mistake.

Then, the pupil to their left tries to win the most cards within the allotted time.

And so on. The game is over when each pupil has played twice. The winner is the one with the most cards.

Ask the pupils:

- "What happened during this game? Why?
- What did you feel? Why?"

Explain to the pupils that the game is about resisting thought automation.
Automation consists of performing an action very quickly, without reflecting on it.
However, in certain situations, this automation causes us to make mistakes. Therefore, we must make an effort to fight against this way of thinking. We need to teach our brain, more specifically the part of the brain located in our forehead (called the prefrontal cortex), to say STOP to automation.

Optional extension: the marshmallow test

"A psychology teacher devised an experiment. The experiment consisted in having a child sit at a table. On this table, there is a very delicious marshmallow. The adult tells the child that they are going to leave them alone and come back 15 minutes later. If the child has not eaten the marshmallow when they get back, the child will get a second one."

- "What would you do in the child's place? Why?
- What would be the best choice in your opinion? Why?"

"*The test was conducted on 500 children. Only about 150 received a second marshmallow."*

- "What choices do most children make? Why? What do you think they felt?
- What skills does it require to not eat the marshmallow straightaway and therefore to get a second one?
- Are there situations in everyday life where you need to ask your brain to say STOP? Or what are the benefits of saying STOP?"

3 - Review of the activity

- Ask the pupils what they have learned from the activity.
- Establish the importance of the process of inhibition or self-control, which allows impulses to be managed in line with the goals pursued.
- Ask the pupils to list situations in which being able to control their impulses can be useful to them (in class, to get an exercise right that contains 'traps', such as maths problems that contain the word 'plus' but for which a subtraction must be done, during a conflict or disagreement with other pupils, etc.).
- Conclude with "What have you learned today from this activity?"

Other formats

Examples can be taken from everyday life or from the pupils' classroom life, using something other than marshmallows.

It is possible to carry out the activity using addition or subtraction problem situations including the word ‘more’ and the word ‘less’ in a misleading way (e.g. Matthew states: "If I had €18 more in my piggy bank, I would have exactly €100. What amount does Matthew have in his piggy bank?).

Vocabulary lists can be provided to help the pupils express themselves clearly in relation to the situation.

For pupils who have difficulty reading, cards from the Jungle Speed game can be used.







ORANGE	YELLOW	GREY
RED	BLACK	BLUE
PURPLE	PINK	GREEN
ORANGE	YELLOW	BROWN
RED	BLACK	BLUE
PURPLE	PINK	GREEN

Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions in schools] - September 2024-24



ORANGE	BROWN	GREY
RED	YELLOW	BLUE
PURPLE	PINK	GREEN
ORANGE	BROWN	GREY
RED	BLACK	BLUE
PURPLE	PINK	GREEN

Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions in schools] - September 2024-23



ORANGE	YELLOW	BROWN
RED	BLACK	BLUE
PURPLE	GREY	GREEN
PINK	YELLOW	BROWN
RED	BLACK	BLUE
PURPLE	GREY	GREEN

Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions in schools] - September 2024-25

The fashion show

(Pilou and Filou□, approach to supporting the development of psychosocial skills in children aged 18 months to 5 years, Centre de psycho-éducation du Québec & Ensemble pour la petite enfance, 2023 edition)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Managing one's impulses (C2.2)

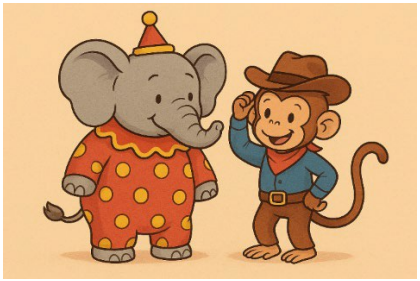
Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Understanding the importance of the capacity for self-control and how it functions
☐ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by improving the state of the inner self
☐ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by improving the quality of the environment
☒ Strengthen the capacity for self-control capacity by strengthening the cognitive capacities of the subject Self

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Various costumes

- **Aims**: To wait one's turn. To recognise one's turn.
- **Approximate duration**: 5 to 10 minutes
- **Equipment needed:** Various costumes
- **Suitable times:** Free-form activities
- **Instructions:** The children who want to can dress up. Then, they are invited to put on a fashion show and to parade in turn when their first name is called out. The professional describes the character and praises the child for their ability to wait their turn. The children applaud as the character passes by.





The statue

(Pilou and Filou®, Approach to supporting the development of psychosocial skills in children aged 18 months to 5 years, Centre de psycho-éducation du Québec & Ensemble pour la petite enfance, 2023 edition)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Managing one's impulses (C2.2)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

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☐ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by improving the state of the inner self
☐ Strengthening the capacity for self-control by improving the quality of the environment
☒ Strengthen the capacity for self-control capacity by strengthening the cognitive capacities of the subject Self

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: (optional) music or musical instrument

- **Instructions:** The children are invited to dance and move to the sound of musical instruments or music. After a minute or two, the professional shouts: 'Statue' and the children must freeze immediately.
- **Feedback**: The professional praises the children and points out to them that they could stop their 'engine' when they wanted to.





Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3) & Knowing how to ask for help (C2.4)

Meeting one's psychological needs, acting in harmony with one's personal values and achieving one's self-concordant goals entail knowing how to cope with the various difficulties of daily life. Consequently, self-fulfilment and psychological balance require significant problem-solving capacities.

Solving problems creatively and effectively implies knowing how to use deliberate and structured strategies to find appropriate and effective solutions to the difficulties of everyday life. This entails mobilising one's capacities for attention, analysis and decision-making in order to be less helplessly subjected to one's environment, to be less reactive and more reflective, and to make informed decisions.

This cognitive skill is based on the **subject Self**, that "part of ourselves over which we can exercise direct and deliberate action" (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*). The four main forms of mental and behavioural actions (**AADA** acronym) of the subject Self are used:

1. **A**ttention to and observation of the information presented;
2. **A**nalysis of the information presented using lessons learned;
3. **D**ecision using the information present and lessons learned;
4. Verbal and/or behavioural **A**ction.

In order to solve problems creatively and effectively, it is necessary, on the one hand, to observe and analyse a problematic situation and, on the other hand, to choose and implement an appropriate and effective problem-solving strategy.

1. Observing and analysing a problematic situation

In order to deal with a problematic situation effectively, it is necessary to take the time to describe the problem encountered and then categorise it based on the approach to be used to resolve it.

- **Observing the problematic situation**

This initial phase of observing and describing the problem primarily mobilises the **receptive cognitive functions** of the **subject Self** (the first A of **AADA**) (*see C1.1*).

The aim is therefore to focus one's attention on the problem encountered and to be able to observe it factually in order to describe it precisely:

- What is the problem (where, when, how)?
- Who is experiencing this problem?
- What am I feeling and what are the other people involved feeling?

- **Analysing the problematic situation**

Secondly, it is necessary to call on one's **analytical cognitive functions** (the second A of **AADA**). The problem can be categorised into one of three main, distinct types depending on the approach to be used to resolve it (and in particular the people to be involved). Thus, three problem-solving strategies can be distinguished:

The three problem-solving strategies by approach used:

- **Strategy 1 - The problem-solving technique** to deal with everyday problems that can be solved alone;
- **Strategy 2 – Knowing how to ask for help** to deal with problems that cannot be solved alone and that need to be solved by someone else more competent than oneself;
- **Strategy 3 – Knowing how to call emergency professionals** to deal with dangerous situations.

This problem classification facilitates analysis of the problematic situation and decision-making (D of **AADA**: **D**ecision based on the information available and lessons learned. It allows an effective problem-solving strategy to be selected and leads to the implementation of considered actions that are suited to the problematic situation (last A of AAD**A**: Verbal and/or behavioural **A**ction).

2. Using the problem-solving technique to resolve everyday problems independently (strategy 1)

This strategy can be used to effectively resolve everyday problems, alone and creatively. It is also possible, initially, to be supported by a person trained in this problem-solving technique in order to fully integrate this approach.

This strategy can also be applied and adapted as a technique for resolving interpersonal conflicts (*see social skill S2.2*). It is based on the four main forms of mental and behavioural actions of the **subject Self** (**AADA** acronym).

Table C2.3: The 4-step problem-solving technique

Mental and behavioural actions (AADA)	The 4 steps	What I do
Attention to and observation of the information presented	**1. I stop and observe the situation**	**I observe:** What is the problem? What am I feeling? What are my needs?
Analysis of the information presented using lessons learned	**2. I imagine, I reflect and I feel**	**I imagine and let** all the possible solutions **come to me** without censoring myself (brainstorming) **I analyse** the consequences of each solution (for myself, others and the environment); **I feel** the effect of each solution within myself.
Decision based on the information available and lessons learned	**3. I choose**	**I choose** the best solution (positive effects for me, others and the environment) based on my analysis and my internal feelings.
Verbal and/or behavioural **A**ction	**4. I implement**	**I implement** the chosen solution and observe whether it works. **I make adjustments** based on what I observe.

The use of this problem-solving technique implies two conditions:

- **being available and sufficiently calm emotionally**: it is important to have sufficient capacity for attention and analysis;
- **being open**: it is necessary to want to find a constructive solution and to be able to open oneself up to new ideas by extracting oneself from judgements and 'ready-made answers' in particular.

3. Knowing how to ask for help to resolve problems that cannot be solved alone (strategy 2)

"Many problems cannot be solved by the person themselves; therefore, it is important to learn how to ask for help. This ability requires knowing what the problematic situations that require calling on someone's help are and recognising them, knowing how to identify 'resource people' who are likely to provide help without negative consequences, and being able to formulate one's request for help clearly (through effective communication)" [1].

Thus, in a number of situations, the child, young person or adult needs the help of a third party to resolve their difficulties. To deal with serious problems (affecting oneself or a loved one) and/or problems that cannot be solved alone, it is important that a person be capable of: 1/ recognising their

need for help, 2/ finding a 'resource person', and 3/ asking the 'resource person' by formulating their request in an optimal way [21].

- **Recognising one's need for help** (first A of AADA): Attention and observation)

Recognising one's need for help requires observing one's internal state of unease. This ability to feel what is happening inside oneself and to take one's subjective state into consideration calls on emotional skills, including the skill of identifying emotions and openness to experience (*see emotional PSS E1*). It also involves observing one's limiting beliefs that prevent one from recognising unease and seeking help, such as:

'I'm strong enough to get out of this on my own,' 'It's not that bad, it'll blow over by itself',
'I should be able to manage alone', 'I'll be bothering him if I ask for help', etc.

After having accepted, felt and observed one's internal state of unease, it is then necessary to have sufficient confidence in one's own ability and in the ability of others to resolve or improve one's condition and difficulties. Indeed, if one has internalised a representation of oneself as being unable to get out of a difficult situation or that there is no way out (see Seligman's research on 'learned helplessness'), this leads to withdrawal rather than active engagement to solve the problem. Conversely, if one has developed a general sense of self-efficacy [22] which consists of being confident in one's ability to overcome any obstacles encountered, this increases engagement in actions aimed at improving the situation, in particular by seeking help.

- **Finding a 'resource person'** (AADA: Analysis and Decision)

Finding a 'resource person' implies that we know people (close friends and family, and professionals) who are qualified to help us and that we can choose the 'resource person' who is best suited to our situation. Firstly, it is necessary that we have people around us who are capable of helping us and that we become aware of these people. Secondly, it is important that we have sufficient confidence in these people and in their ability to respond positively to our request for help. In this context, it can be useful to carry out work on 'resource persons' and on our confidence in their ability (*see the example activity below*).

- **Asking the 'resource person' by formulating the request in an optimal manner (AADA: verbal and/or behavioural Action)**

In order to ask the resource person, it is necessary to be able to approach someone else, to know how to initiate contact and to manage to establish a relationship; this mobilises our basic social skills (*see social PSS S1*). Formulating a request in an optimal manner entail being able to articulate one's unease. This requires knowing how to express one's emotions and needs *(see emotional PSS E2.2)*. It is also necessary to be able to explain one's problem adequately and to succeed in establishing a constructive conversation through effective communication (*see social PSS S1.2*).

4. Knowing how to ask for help from emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations (strategy 3)

In certain particularly dangerous or risky situations, it is necessary to call on professionals who specialise in assistance, rescue or healthcare: 17 (police emergency), 18 (fire brigade), 15 (ambulance), 119 (child in danger hotline), 112 (European emergency number). It is important that children and young people know what these risky situations and emergency numbers are, and that they are able to raise the alarm (in connection with first aid training).

In addition, **mental health first aid** (MHFA) is an essential complement to this. It enables everyone to learn to identify the signs of psychological distress in themselves or in others, and to react appropriately, for example by daring to take the step of calling for help or by directing people to suitable resources.

Resolving problems creatively and effectively generates two main beneficial effects:

- **The ability to cope with life's difficulties and greater empowerment:**
Contrary to popular belief, knowing how to resolve a problem and knowing how to ask for help are not simple and innate things. Whether in children, young people or adults, this skill requires mastering several complex cognitive functions (observation, analysis and decision-making) as well as emotional skills (identification and expression of emotions) and social skills (making contact and effective communication). Therefore, this cognitive (and behavioural) skill uses the four main forms of voluntary action of the subject Self (**AADA**: **A**ttention/observation, **A**nalysis, **D**ecision, **A**ction).

By using this structured approach to problem-solving, it is possible to strengthen one's ability to find favourable and beneficial solutions, and to better cope with difficulties. In this way, one's empowerment and sense of self-efficacy are strengthened, which promotes psychological balance and increases psychological wellbeing. "Thus, the child (the young person or the adult) who has these tools is no longer left alone and helpless in the face of the (little and big) problems they encounter. This skill (…) allows the child (young person or adult) to increase their ability to cope and their resilience meaning that they can deal with difficult life events. By learning to resolve problems in a positive way, the child (young person or adult) is more effective; they feel more competent and thus increase their confidence in themselves and in life. They are calmer and can tackle situations more calmly. Their quality of life and everyday wellbeing are then considerably increased" [23][21].

- **Strengthening cognitive abilities (observation, analysis, creativity, critical thinking and cognitive flexibility):** By seeking to resolve a problem effectively, their (self-)observation and analytical skills are strengthened. The person learns to become more aware of their feelings and needs, and to observe the problematic situation in which they find themselves objectively (without judging or interpreting). In order to find the most relevant answer possible, they mobilise their creativity and allow new ideas to emerge without preconceptions or blocks. Finally, they use their critical thinking to analyse the different alternatives and select the best one:
"Cognitive flexibility (which) is represented by the mental functions that allow one to change strategy or to move from one mental disposition to another" is thus reinforced ([13], pg. 30).

Resolving problems involves three conditions:

- **good neurocognitive development (in relation to the subject Self)**: This skill requires mastery of several complex cognitive functions (observation, analysis and decision-making). Therefore, it uses the four main forms of voluntary action of the subject Self (**AADA**: **A**ttention/observation, **A**nalysis, **D**ecision, **A**ction).

- **the ability to be open to one's internal experience (to one's inner Self)**: the first step in the problem-solving process involves a period of observing the problem encountered and oneself (one's feelings in the problematic situation, and one's physical and psychological needs). This requires being able to take note of one's internal states, particularly one's emotions and volitions. This anchoring of problem-solving in the 'inner Self' is essential to the success of the entire problem-solving process, and not taking the 'wrong path'. Indeed, if the 'diagnosis' of the problem is incorrect, the solution implemented will also be inadequate.

- **the ability to recognise the problem and having confidence in its possible resolution**: in order to resolve a problem, it is essential to be able to first recognise and accept it. It is also necessary to have sufficient confidence in oneself and in the other person, and in one's ability to resolve it effectively [3].

Key takeaways (C2.3)

Conceptual definition: **"The ability to solve problems creatively (and effectively)** requires knowing how to analyse a problematic situation, being able to imagine different possible solutions, allowing alternatives to emerge, knowing how to assess the different solutions and managing to choose a positive solution for oneself and for others. This cognitive skill enhances creative thinking and requires mastery of multi-step problem-solving techniques" [1].

Operational definition: Resolving problems creatively and effectively requires several knowledge items and practical skills:

1. **Observing and analysing the problematic situation** in order to choose the most appropriate problem-solving strategy;

2. **Using the problem-solving technique to resolve everyday problems independently (strategy 1):** 1. Stopping and observing the problematic situation; 2. Imagining all the possible solutions and analysing them; 3. Choosing the best solution; 4. Implementing the chosen solution and adjusting it as needed;

3. **Knowing how to ask for help to deal with problems that cannot be solved alone (strategy 2):** recognising one's need for help, finding a 'resource person' and formulating one's need for help through a clear and effective request;

4. **Knowing how to ask for help from emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations (strategy 3):** recognising risky situations, dealing with them and knowing how to raise the alarm.

Key takeaways (C2.3 *continued*)

<u>Main effects:</u> Solving problems creatively and effectively enables one to:

- strengthen one's power to act (empowerment) and feeling of self-efficacy by increasing one's ability to find favourable solutions and better cope with the difficulties of everyday life. This skill directly impacts the person's psychological balance and wellbeing.

- strengthen one's cognitive abilities (observation, analysis, creativity, critical thinking and cognitive flexibility): by seeking to solve a problem effectively, one's capacities for (self) observation and analysis are mobilised. The person learns to become more aware of their feelings and needs, and to observe the problematic situation in which they find themselves objectively (without judging or interpreting). In order to find the most relevant answer possible, they mobilise their creativity and allow new ideas to emerge without preconceptions or blocks. Finally, they use their critical thinking to analyse the different alternatives and select the best one.

<u>Main conditions</u>: Solving problems creatively and effectively requires:

- good neurocognitive development: This skill requires mastery of several complex cognitive functions (observation, analysis and decision-making). Therefore, it uses the four main forms of voluntary action of the subject Self (**AADA**: **A**ttention/observation, **A**nalysis, **D**ecision, **A**ction).

- the ability to be open to one's internal experience (to one's inner Self): the first step in the problem-solving process involves a period of observing the problem encountered and oneself (one's feelings in the problematic situation). This requires being able to take note of one's internal states, particularly one's emotions and volitions (one's needs). This anchoring of problem-solving in the 'inner Self' is essential to the success of the entire problem-solving process, and not taking the 'wrong path'. Indeed, if the 'diagnosis' of the problem is incorrect, the solution implemented will also be inadequate.

- the ability to recognise the problem and have confidence in its resolution: in order to resolve a problem, it is essential to be able to first recognise and accept it. It is also necessary to have sufficient confidence in oneself and in the other person, and in one's ability to resolve it effectively.

Examples of activities to develop the PSS: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3) & Knowing how to ask for help (C2.4)

My resource people

(Lamboy B, Shankland, R. & Williamson, M. 2021)

Audience: ☐ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Observing and analysing a problematic situation
☐ Strategy 1 - the problem-solving technique: dealing with everyday problems alone and creatively
☒ Strategy 2 - asking for help: dealing with problems that cannot be solved alone
☐ Strategy 3 - calling on emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

To be adapted based on the age of the participants. Select the type of situations proposed to suit the context.

Equipment: Print out or copy the table below

"For each situation proposed, write the names of 2 or 3 people (friends, relatives, colleagues, professionals, etc.) who you could ask for help in this situation. Try to come up with new resources (by identifying people you do not usually ask for help, but who might be able to help)."

Situations ***Who could you ask for help if?***	**My resource people** **(Personal and/or professional)**
You feel stressed every day:	- - -
You lose confidence in yourself and feel incompetent:	- - -
You are experiencing problems in your relationship:	- - -
You can no longer calm yourself down and you are overwhelmed by your emotions:	- - -
You are experiencing professional difficulties:	- - -
You feel lonely:	- - -
You are in a conflict with a colleague:	- - -

You have financial problems:	- - -
You are feeling down:	- - -
You have family problems:	- - -
You feel tired all the time:	- - -
You are in a conflict with a child:	- - -
You have health problems:	- - -

"Finding solutions to everyday problems"

(Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions at school] Volume 3, Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs & Santé publique France [20])

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Observing and analysing a problematic situation
☐ Strategy 1 - the problem-solving technique: dealing with everyday problems alone and creatively
☒ Strategy 2 - asking for help: dealing with problems that cannot be solved alone
☐ Strategy 3 - calling on emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

To be adapted based on the age of the participants. Select the type of situations proposed to suit the context.

Equipment: Puppet on a stick (called Felix), equipment depending on the situation

An activity to learn how to solve problems creatively and effectively -1

Finding solutions to everyday problems

Level: Age 3-5 years

Learning area: mobilising all dimensions of language - Speaking - Exchanging views and reflecting with others

Specific objective: to learn to resolve a problem as a group

Duration: 20 mins per session

Format: group activity in the presence of the teacher

Prerequisite: reminder of the activities on emotions and stress regulation

Equipment: puppet (called Felix), equipment depending on the situation.

Suggested activity plan

1 - Set-up phase

For older pupils: ask them what 'a problem' means to them. Arrive at the following definition: a problem is a difficult thing that we must succeed in resolving/doing.

Explain the situation: Felix has a problem. He is going to tell us what it is. We will help him find a solution.

2 - Implementation

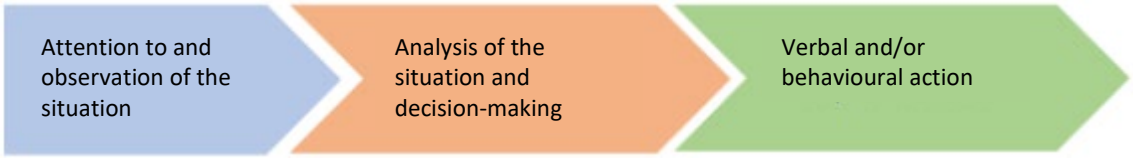
Step 1: the pupils are in a group to facilitate speaking in turns

The adult makes the puppet speak. The puppet explains a situation.

Example situation:

Felix is in the motor skills room. He wanted to climb to the very top of the frame, but now he is stuck.

Use the different steps of the problem-solving process to ask the pupils questions (but do not use the titles of the steps with the pupils):



- **Attention and observation:** what is the problem? What is the risk for Felix? What is he feeling? What does he need?

Expected answers: Felix is stuck, he cannot get down alone anymore, he might fall and hurt himself, he is scared, he needs help, he needs reassurance.

- **Information analysis and decision-making:** what are all the possible solutions you can imagine?

Let the pupils propose all the solutions that they think are possible, even the most improbable ones.

Discuss all the solutions and choose the one that seems most appropriate for the situation (feasible, helpful, respectful and effective).

Examples of solutions: we use a chair to help him, we call an adult

The different solutions chosen can be compared and discussed during a whole-class session at the end of the workshop.

- **Verbal and/or behavioural action:** what will you implement in concrete terms to achieve the chosen solution?

Implement the chosen solution and observe whether it works. Make adjustments based on what is observed.

This first situation allows us to embrace our emotions, to reflect together to find a solution, to understand that sometimes we need to ask an adult for help (see the following activity: knowing how to ask for help). Emphasise that when you are in danger and risk getting hurt, you must immediately tell an adult.

Step 2 (during the same session or during one or more subsequent sessions to create habits): the pupils can be given other situations to practice what they have just learned.

The puppet helps to de-centre the situation. It is perfectly possible to let a pupil present a situation or to have a group of pupils invent a situation (older pupils).

Examples of situations:

- *Felix is sad. It is his birthday party and his best friend is ill. He will not be able to come. What can he do?*

Examples of appropriate responses to the situation: he can call him. He can invite him to come when he is better. He can ask his mum to take him a slice of cake, etc.

- *Felix is angry. His dog came into his room and tore up his favourite book. What can he do?*

Examples of appropriate responses to the situation: he can repair the book. He must always close his bedroom door so that the dog cannot get in.

- Extension into the field of mathematics: *For his birthday party, Felix prepares party bags for himself and his guests with 3 sweets in each. In total there will be 6 children. But Felix made a mistake and only made 5 bags and there are no more sweets left. What can he do?*

Examples of appropriate responses to the situation: it is not a big deal, someone is certain not to make it. The bags need to be reopened to put two sweets in each bag. Felix should give up his sweets and leave them for his guests, etc.

3 - Review of the activity

- Ask the pupils what they learned during this session.
- When questioning the pupils, establish the importance of reflecting carefully when faced with a problem in order to find solutions. Recall that there are often several solutions to the same problem and that you can ask for help if the situation is dangerous.

Other formats

Vary the configuration of the groups (heterogeneous groups, homogeneous groups).

Vary the complexity of the problem and the solutions (solution possible without outside help or need to ask for help).

When presenting the situation with the puppet, it is possible either to tell the story, or to place the puppet in a situation (for example at the top of the climbing frame).

Use examples from everyday life by listening to podcasts from the '*les aventures de Toudou*' series on France Inter.

Example episode: 'Toudou and anger'.

‘Knowing how to ask for help’

(Kit pédagogique pour les séances d’empathie à l’école [Educational kit for empathy sessions at school] Volume 3, Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs & Santé publique France [20])

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Observing and analysing a problematic situation
☐ Strategy 1 - the problem-solving technique: dealing with everyday problems alone and creatively
☒ Strategy 2 - asking for help: dealing with problems that cannot be solved alone
☐ Strategy 3 - calling on emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

To be adapted based on the age of the participants. Select the type of situations proposed to suit the context.

Equipment: Whiteboard or flip chart

An activity to learn how to solve problems creatively and effectively - 2

Knowing how to ask for help

Level: Age 3-5 years

Learning area: mobilising all dimensions of language

Specific objectives: to know the different types of situations in which it is necessary to ask for help, to identify resource people, to know the different steps involved and to know how to use the problem-solving approach

Duration: 20 minutes per session

Format: as a whole class, then in groups

Prerequisites: managing one's emotions, regulating one's stress, communicating effectively

Materials: a board or a large sheet of paper

Suggested activity plan

1 - Set-up phase

- Give a reminder of, or have the pupils recall, what was done previously.
- Explain the objectives of the activity to the pupils: we are going to learn how to resolve problems and to find solutions when things are difficult.

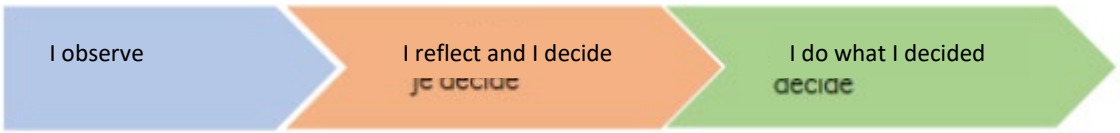
2 - Implementation

Step 1: as a whole class.

Explain a problem situation to the children (ideally, this situation will be taken from a real-life class situation).

Example: at school, a pupil threw a ball too hard during the break and the ball landed in the street.

Remind the pupils that solving a problem requires going through three steps (which can be displayed for regular reference):



Then, ask the pupils questions in line with the three steps:

- **I observe:** what is the problem? What is the risk? What do I feel? What are my needs?

Possible answers: the ball is in the street. It's dangerous, there might be cars, and we are not allowed to leave school alone, but we really want to get our ball back. We must be careful not to hurt ourselves and to stick to the rules.

- **Analysis of the information and decision-making:** can I resolve the problem alone? Do I need help? Is the situation dangerous? Which 'resource person' could help me or take over to resolve the problem?

Possible answers: we can ask someone in the street to throw it back to us, we can ask an adult from school to go and get it, etc.

How and who can one ask for help? Name the adults at the school.

- **Verbal and/or behavioural action:** what means can I use to ask for help, in an optimal manner, from a 'resource person'?

Put the request for help into words: choose the words (possibly write it in the form of bullet points for the adult, so as to be able to remember it), go and ask the teaching assistant, or the head teacher if they are free, etc. Sometimes you have to wait if no one is available to go right away.

Step 2: as a whole class or in groups (this questioning can become a ritual)

Present other problem situations and invite the children to follow the same line of inquiry.

Examples:

- I am scared of the neighbours' dog when it goes for a walk in the park;
- On your way to school this morning, a wheel fell off your scooter;
- Another pupil took your toy;
- After school, a stranger offers to walk you home;
- The person who is looking after you becomes unwell (related to learning how to provide first aid).

Step 3: whole-class summary

Conduct a review with the pupils of the different resource people who might be available to them.

Examples: family (parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, etc.), friends (classmates, etc.), the school environment (teachers, technical staff, the nurse, etc.), the medical environment (doctors, firefighters, etc.); the police.

Ask the pupils: who should they contact depending on the problems they encounter?

Focus: awareness-raising can be carried out in connection with the 'Learn to Provide First Aid' approach. This is a continuum of first aid education running from pre-school to age 12, to develop pupils' skills in adopting a preventative attitude, protecting themselves and others, raising the alarm and providing help. Thus, the ambulance number (15) may be mentioned depending on the situations presented.

3 - Review of the activity

- Ask the pupils what they have learned from this activity.
- When questioning the pupils, establish the importance of properly analysing a situation in order to determine if help is needed in providing a solution and to identify the people, they can rely on to help solve a problem if needed.

Other formats

Invite the pupils to act out the problematic situation in groups (role play).

Depending on the time available, the pupils can assume the roles of different characters and the scene can thus be acted out several times. Time can then be taken to reflect on the emotions and difficulties experienced.

The groups can also show their scene to the other groups. A review can be carried out of the choice of different resource people and the ways to request help.

A poster summarising the problem-solving steps and reminding pupils of the resource people can be made with the pupils in step 3 and displayed on one of the classroom walls.

Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions in schools] - September 2024-36

Knowing how to ask for help - My resource people

(Lamboy B, Shankland, R. & Williamson, M., 2021)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Observing and analysing a problematic situation
☐ Strategy 1 - the problem-solving technique: dealing with everyday problems alone and creatively
☒ Strategy 2 - asking for help: dealing with problems that cannot be solved alone
☐ Strategy 3 - calling on emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

To be adapted based on the age of the participants. Select the type of situations proposed to suit the context.

Equipment: Whiteboard or flip chart

- **Whole-class:** ask the children to recall situations in which they needed support and/or help from someone. Invite the children who wish to do so to recount the problematic situations in which they asked for help.
    - Write down these problematic situations on the board or on a large sheet of paper like a flip chart.

- **In pairs or groups of three:** Ask each small group to think of all the resource people who can help them resolve their difficulties. Do not provide any assistance initially.
    - Next, you can invite them to think about the different relational circles around them: family (parents, grandparents, older brother, older sister, uncle/aunt, godparent, etc.), friends (boyfriend, girlfriend, neighbours, etc.), school (teacher, etc.), medical (nurse, doctor, etc.), legal (warden, police, etc.)

- **Individually:** Invite each child to take some alone to write down the people who can help them if they have a problem (you can have them write them down in their exercise book).

- **Whole class:** Ask the children if they know any professionals who specialise in help, rescue and emergencies. If so, which ones? Then ask if they know the relevant emergency numbers."

Using the problem-solving technique

(Lamboy B, Shankland, R. & Williamson, 2021)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Observing and analysing a problematic situation
☒ Strategy 1 - the problem-solving technique: dealing with everyday problems alone and creatively
☒ Strategy 2 - asking for help: dealing with problems that cannot be solved alone
☐ Strategy 3 - calling on emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: a large sheet of paper or a flip chart; examples of problematic situations below

"Make **small groups** of three or four children. Give each group a problem situation (see the activity materials below).

- Invite the children to reflect in their group on this situation and to come up with a solution using the problem-solving technique. Next, ask the children to prepare a sketch to present the problem and the proposed solution.
- During this activity, make sure that the steps are visible, for example on the board or on a large sheet of flipchart paper.
- It may be necessary to go round the small groups while the sketches are being devised.
- Then, ask each group to perform their sketch showing the solution chosen to solve the problem.

Extension (homework):
- Invite the children to identify problematic situations they encounter in their everyday lives and to observe how they solve their problems.
- Then, suggest they use the 3-step problem-solving technique

Equipment for the activity (examples of problematic situations):
- *Manuela is worried because her friend Lina is moving and she won't be able to see her as often anymore. She is sad when she goes home. Her mother asks her what is wrong.*
- *A 'big kid' at school hit Matthew because he was angry with him. If he talks about it, the 'big kid' has threatened to do it again. Because he is taller and older than him, Matthew is afraid.*
- *The boy who sits next to Ines in class always takes her pens and breaks them in half. He thinks it is really funny, but it annoys Ines. When she asks him to stop, he calls her a 'baby'.*

The superpower of mutual assistance

(TEAL, Tous Épanouis à l'École [Everyone Thriving at School] Programme by Floriane Boyer and Rebecca Shankland)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Observing and analysing a problematic situation
☐ Strategy 1 - the problem-solving technique: dealing with everyday problems alone and creatively
☒ Strategy 2 - asking for help: dealing with problems that cannot be solved alone
☒ Strategy 3 - calling on emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Activity 3: The superpower of mutual assistance

SOCIAL SKILL → Knowing how to ask for help

Instructions

Step 1: Whole class

The facilitator explains to the pupils that in certain situations, it may be necessary to ask for help. The facilitator encourages the pupils to identify different situations and to list them.

For example:

- 'I can't do an exercise by myself'
- 'I have a problem with a classmate that I can't seem to resolve.'
- 'Something hurts...'
- 'I feel sad'
- 'I am in danger' or 'I know that someone is in danger.'

Step 2: Individual

The facilitator explains to the pupils that it is important to know who to ask for help, and invites the pupils to fill in the 'My resource people' worksheet (See: Activity resources).

Equipment

- Pencils
- Worksheet: 'My resource people'

Debriefing

- At what point will you know it is important to ask for help?
- What are the first words you would say?

Brainstorming

(TEAL, Tous Épanouis à l'École [Everyone Thriving at School] Programme by Floriane Boyer and Rebecca Shankland)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Observing and analysing a problematic situation
☒ Strategy 1 - the problem-solving technique: dealing with everyday problems alone and creatively
☐ Strategy 2 - asking for help: dealing with problems that cannot be solved alone
☐ Strategy 3 - calling on emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Large sheet of paper

Activity 2: Brainstorming

COGNITIVE SKILL → Ability to resolve problems creatively

Instructions

Step 1: In small groups

The facilitator asks the pupils to think about the solutions they could put in place to solve the problems mentioned during the previous activity. The pupils get back into the same groups and think together about the following question:

'If you witnessed this situation, what could you do to help resolve the problem?'

Equipment

- Cards: Event
- Pieces of paper
- Pencils

The facilitator asks the pupils to make a poster listing the solutions that might be possible.

Step 2: Whole-class feedback

The facilitator invites the pupils to share their solutions; they classify the suggestions based on the person affected by the behaviour adopted (the victim, the aggressor, an adult, the witnesses, etc.).

If a proposed solutions seem unsuitable, they welcome it without judgement and invite the pupil to identify the intention hidden behind the proposed solution.

For example:
- 'If he hits me, I'll hit him back' => Make him understand that he should respect you
- 'Tell him not to make a big deal out of it' => Soothe their sorrow
- 'The same thing has happened to me' => So they feel less alone

Then, they ask the pupil whether the proposed solution will help with this intention (e.g., telling him it's nothing, not to make a big deal out of it, will that reassure him, soothe his sadness?) If the answer is no, the facilitator encourages the pupil to look for another solution that would better meet the pupil's needs: 'What else could you do instead that would comfort them, reassure them, show them that you support them, etc.'

Debriefing

- Of all the solutions you have come up with, which ones would you be willing to use?

The facilitator gives out the 'Scale' worksheet and then asks the pupils to answer the following questions:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how willing do you feel to use this solution?
- What determines this figure? Or, what means you are at this figure today?

Depending on the time available, the pupils can share their answers with a classmate, or just answer the questions individually. If there is not enough time left, the facilitator suggests that the pupils continue this activity in class with the teacher, if they agree, or that they fill in the scale at home and bring it back the next time.

Tom's story

('Le Voyage des TOIMOINOUS, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Ireps Pays de la Loire Psychosocial Skills Schoolbag)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Solving problems creatively and effectively (C2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Observing and analysing a problematic situation
☒ Strategy 1 – the problem-solving technique: dealing with everyday problems alone and creatively
☐ Strategy 2 - asking for help: dealing with problems that cannot be solved alone
☐ Strategy 3 - calling on emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Flip chart, print out the PICA acronym below

Tom's story



Duration

✓ 15 to 20 minutes

Equipment

✓ Flip chart

Reminder of the objectives

→ To find out the steps involved in problem-solving.

Outline and instructions

Explain Tom's situation to the children, then ask the following five questions.

Read out the following situation:
"Tom walks to school each morning. A new family has just moved into a house he passes on his way to school. They have a big dog that they let roam free, and every day it chases Tom, barking at him."

Ask the following questions:

- *"Is there a problem? What is the problem?"*

  Example answer: the dog chases Tom, barking at him.

- *"What does Tom want?"*

  Example answer: to be able to walk to school without the dog chasing him or barking at him.

- *"What could Tom do to solve the problem? Come up with as many ideas and solutions as you can."*

  Example answers:

→ Talk to his parents about it
→ Talk to the neighbour
→ Take a different route to get to school.

- *"For each proposed solution, what might happen?"*

  Example answers:

→ What might happen if Tom told his parents about it?
→ What might happen if Tom told the neighbour about it?
→ What might happen if Tom took a different route?
→ ...

Ask the children to choose what they think is the best idea.

Use the PICA acronym below.

THE PICA ACRONYM

A 4-step problem-solving tool.

Pause

I ask myself what the problem is.

.....

What do I feel? What do others feel?

.....

Who do I need? Who do others need?

.....

Identify solutions

I ask myself what solutions there are to solve the problem.

.....

What are the consequences of each solution for me? And for others?

.....

What do I feel inside when faced with these proposals?

.....

Choose a suitable solution

I ask myself which solution is right for me and for others.

.....

Is it feasible for me? And for others?

.....

Does the solution meet my needs? Other people's needs?

.....

Verbal/behavioural Action

I ask myself how to implement the chosen solution.

.....

I define: who? does what? when? how? where?

.....

I evaluate: how did it go? what were the difficulties? the successes? the adjustments needed?

.....

Source: inspired by Lomboy, B. Williamson, M. O., Shankland, R. & Guéguen, C. (2021). *Les compétences psychosociales [Psychosocial skills].* De Boeck Supérieur.

General emotional skill 2

REGULATING ONE'S EMOTIONS AND STRESS

REGULATING ONE'S EMOTIONS AND STRESS (E2)

"**Regulating one's emotions (and stress)** is the ability to manage one's own emotions (and stress) and to maintain emotional balance" [1].

This second general emotional PSS (E2) encompasses 3 specific emotional PSS (presented in four chapters).

The development of each specific PSS relies on several psychological knowledge items and practical skills:

- Specific emotional PSS 2.1: in order to express one's emotions constructively (E2.1), **the core psychological knowledge items and practical skills are:**

1. Formulating a basic 'I' message to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions;
2. Formulating a complex 'I' message to express one's unpleasant emotions.

- Specific emotional PSS 2.2(a) and (b): in order to regulate one's pleasant emotions (E2.2a) and unpleasant emotions (E2.2b), **the core psychological knowledge items and practical skills are:**

1. Knowing the effective and ineffective emotional regulation strategies;
2. Accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs (basic emotional strategy);
3. Strengthening one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective strategies (of an emotional, cognitive, mind-body, social, behavioural and environmental nature);
4. Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions;
5. On an everyday basis, reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies (of an emotional, cognitive, social, behavioural and environmental nature);
6. In a crisis situation, managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies (of an emotional and cognitive nature).

- Specific emotional PSS 2.3: in order to manage one's stress (E2.3), **the core psychological knowledge items and practical skills are:**

1. Knowing what stress is (in everyday life and in adverse situations);
2. Knowing effective stress management strategies (or coping strategies);
3. Reducing one's stress reactions using effective emotional experience-focused strategies;
4. Addressing stressors using effective, problem-focused strategies.

Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1)

"Expressing one's emotions constructively involves knowing how to name one's own emotions appropriately" [1]. This skill forms an integral part of the emotional regulation process [24]; when properly mastered, it constitutes one of the effective strategies for regulating one's emotions. It allows us to increase the subjective feelings of pleasant emotions and to decrease the subjective feelings and behavioural reactions related to unpleasant emotions (*see emotional PSS E2.2a and b*).

This emotional skill is interrelated with social communication skills (Richard, Gay and Gentaz, 2021). It involves the mobilisation of the social PSS 'communicating effectively and positively' (see PSS *S1.1*); it is widely used in the social PSS 'standing up for oneself by being assertive and refusing' (see PSS *S2.1*).

In connection with the dual challenge of communication (informational and psychological), expressing one's emotions constructively requires two dimensions to be put in place [25][26] (*see social PSS S1.1*):

- on an informational level: a message that clearly and explicitly expresses one's emotions and associated needs;
- on a psychological level: the acceptance of one's own emotions as well as those of the other within the framework of a relationship based on mutual respect and on the recognition of each person's specific nature and subjectivity.

Although this skill is relatively simple to understand, it is not easy to implement. Expressing one's emotions constructively requires knowing how to express both pleasant emotions (joy, love, etc.) and unpleasant emotions (fear, sadness, anger, etc.) to others. This can be done either orally or in writing; at the time (when the emotion is present) or later. The wording must be appropriate for the recipients, the situation and the (cultural) context, both in terms of its form and its content.

For this, it is useful to know how to use certain communication techniques, such as the 'I-message' [27]. "Adequately expressing one's own emotions (for example: expressing an emotion in the right way, with the right intensity, at the right time, to the right person) and listening properly to those of others (...) can prove particularly delicate and the use of certain communication methods can provide valuable help" [24].

In order to express one's emotions constructively, it is necessary to know how to formulate a basic I-message to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions and a complex I-message to express one's unpleasant emotions.

1. Formulating a basic 'I-message' to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions

The 'I-message' is a construction that begins with the subject personal pronoun 'I', uses a stative verb and that puts the emotion into words in a factual way [27]. Basic I-messages allow both pleasant and unpleasant emotions to be expressed constructively.

Operationally, the first-person sentence allows one to recognise that it is one's own emotional experience. The use of a stative verb expresses the fact that it is one's internal feeling. Naming the emotion in the form of a noun allows one to explain one's emotional experience precisely.

It should be emphasised that it is preferable not to use the verb 'to be' as this encourages identification with the emotion felt: 'I am (the emotion: sad, etc.)' and the mechanism of **experiential fusion**, which consists of getting totally lost in the experience without any possibility of stepping back, *see cognitive PSS C1.1*). "Through observation, we learn to differentiate between ourselves and what we feel, in order to evolve from 'I am the emotion' to 'I feel an emotion'. Most of the time, we fuse what we feel with who we are – as shown by the expressions 'I am sad' or 'I am jealous' – but this prevents us from giving these emotions free rein. By transforming an 'I am sad' into an 'I feel sadness', an 'I am jealous' into an 'I feel jealousy', it becomes easier to let go of these feelings because we cease to be one with them; this does not, however, imply that we abandon who we are" ([16], pg. 202).

A basic I-message is therefore comprised of three parts:

1. The first-person subject personal pronoun	2. A stative verb	3. An emotion in the form of a noun
I	feel …	joy anger fear anxiety sadness love, etc.
I	experience …	

2. Formulating complex 'I-messages' to express one's unpleasant emotions

In order to express one's unpleasant emotions and resolve problems (C2.3) and relational difficulties (S2), it is necessary to formulate **more complex I-messages**. These constructions form part of effective (see social PSS S1.1) and assertive (see social PSS S2.1) communication.

Thus, it is possible to differentiate several forms of I-message depending on the complexity of the verbal behaviours and relational intentions. These are all based on a basic I-message and add additional elements depending on the communication objective pursued.

- **The need I-message**

The need I-message consists of a basic I-message to which a sentence is added to express one's need:

Basic I-message	Sentence formulating one's need
E.g.: I feel sadness, *E.g.: I am experiencing great worry,*	*I need support and comfort* *I would like to be reassured*

- **The angry I-message**

The angry I-message allows one to express emotions of anger and disagreement in an appropriate and constructive way. It seeks to make our interlocutor understand what is causing us problems and what we are feeling. It consists of 3 parts: a sentence setting out the problematic facts, a basic I-message expressing the emotion of anger, and a sentence expressing the need that has not been respected:

Sentence setting out the facts in a factual manner	Basic I-message	Sentence formulating one's need
E.g.: Looking at all this mess,	*I feel anger,*	*I want things to be well maintained.*
E.g.: Hearing these disputes,	*I experience a lot of annoyance,*	*I need peace and quiet to concentrate*

- **The problem-solving I-message**

The problem-solving I-message enables one to express disagreement and feelings of anger; it aims to find a solution to resolve the problematic situation. It is constructed from an angry I-message and adds a sentence to find a constructive outcome:

Sentence setting out the facts in a factual manner	Basic I-message	Sentence formulating one's need	Sentence to solve the problem
E.g.: Looking at all this mess,	*I feel anger,*	*I want things to be well maintained.*	*Go and get a sponge and clean the table.*
E.g.: Hearing these disputes,	*I experience a lot of annoyance,*	*I need peace and quiet to concentrate.*	*Can you find a way to talk quietly?*

Expressing one's emotions generates two main effects:

- **Effective emotional regulation and emotional balance:** putting unpleasant emotions into words constructively leads to paying attention to, observing and naming one's emotional feelings and psychological needs, which reduces the state of unease and stress [28]. Expressing pleasant emotions enhances the internal experience felt and promotes a state of wellbeing.

- **A reduction in relational problems and an improvement in relationship quality:** putting unpleasant emotions into words constructively requires being aware of the emotions experienced and avoids emotional acting out (shouting, arguments, hitting, etc.). We start thinking and talking about the emotion instead of acting while being carried away by the emotional state that is overwhelming us. The constructive expression of unpleasant emotions also allows the other person to better understand our experience. Our interlocutor can better understand our point of view and feelings, which facilitates communication. Constructive emotional expression informs the other person, regulates interaction, sustains attention, promotes empathy and allows a cooperative dynamic to develop.
This means that the other person can hear us better and adjust their behaviour accordingly. Expressing one's unpleasant emotions, especially anger, constructively using a 'complex I-message' is one of the essential components in resolving relational difficulties (see social PSS S2). Conversely, the inappropriate expression of emotions (an emotional outburst, non-constructive turns of phrase, etc.) leads to relational difficulties, promotes interpersonal conflicts, and has a negative impact on quality of life and educational success. The verbal expression of pleasant emotions improves the relational climate and promotes the phenomenon of pleasant **emotional contagion**. Thus, this skill fosters harmonious interpersonal exchanges and generates positive social bonds.

Expressing one's emotions involves two conditions:

- **an ability to identify one's emotions** *(see emotional PSS E1.2)***:** in order to be able to express one's emotional experience constructively, it is necessary to be able to observe it, perceive it fully, accept it and know how to name it.

- **language skills and a sufficiently rich emotional vocabulary**: the appropriate verbalisation of emotions requires a certain mastery of the language and the acquisition of a diverse lexicon in terms of emotions (*see PSS emotional E1.2*).

Key takeaways (E2.1)

Conceptual definition: **"Expressing one's emotions constructively** involves knowing how to name one's own emotions appropriately" [1]. This skill forms an integral part of the process of emotional regulation; it allows us to increase the subjective feelings of pleasant emotions and to decrease the subjective feelings and behavioural reactions related to unpleasant emotions. This emotional skill relies on the social skills of effective, positive and assertive communication (PSS S1.1 and S2.1).

Operational definition: In connection with the dual challenge of communication (informational and psychological), this skill requires two dimensions to be put in place:
- on an informational level: a message that explicitly expresses one's emotions and associated needs;
- on a psychological level: the acceptance of one's own emotions as well as those of the other within the framework of a relationship based on mutual respect and the recognition of each person's specific nature and subjectivity.

Although this skill is simple to understand, it is not easy to implement. It requires knowing how to express both pleasant emotions (joy, love, etc.) and unpleasant emotions (fear, sadness, anger, etc.) to others. This can be done either orally or in writing; at the time (when the emotion is present) or later. The wording must be appropriate for the recipients, the situation and the (cultural) context, both in terms of its form and its content. For this, it is necessary to use communication techniques, including basic I-messages, to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions, and more complex I-messages to express one's unpleasant emotions.

Thus, expressing one's emotions constructively involves several knowledge items and practical skills:
1. Formulating a basic I-message to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions, i.e. a construction that begins with the subject personal pronoun 'I', uses a stative verb and that puts the emotion into words in a factual way.
2. Formulating a complex I-message to express one's unpleasant emotions: an angry I-message, a need I-message and a problem-solving I-message.

Main effects: Expressing one's emotions constructively promotes:

Effective emotional regulation and emotional balance: putting unpleasant emotions into words constructively leads to paying attention to, observing and naming one's emotional feelings and psychological needs, which reduces the state of unease and stress. Expressing pleasant emotions enhances the internal experience felt and promotes a state of wellbeing.

Key takeaways (E2.1 continued)

Main effects (continued):

A reduction in relational problems and an improvement in relationship quality: putting unpleasant emotions into words constructively requires being aware of the emotions experienced and avoids emotional outbursts (shouting, arguments, hitting, etc.). We start thinking and talking about the emotion instead of acting while being carried away by the emotional state that is overwhelming us. The constructive expression of unpleasant emotions also allows the other person to better understand our experience. Our interlocutor can better understand our point of view and feelings, which facilitates the mobilisation of their empathetic capacities. This means that the other person can hear us better and adjust their behaviour. Expressing one's unpleasant emotions, especially anger, constructively using a 'complex I-message' is one of the essential components in resolving relational difficulties (see social skill S2).
The verbal expression of pleasant emotions improves the relational climate and promotes the phenomenon of pleasant emotional contagion. Thus, this skill fosters harmonious interpersonal exchanges and generates positive social bonds.

Main conditions: Expressing one's emotions constructively requires:

An ability to identify one's emotions *(see emotional PSS E1.2)***:** in order to be able to express one's emotional experience constructively, it is necessary to be able to observe it, perceive it fully, accept it and know how to name it.

Language skills and a sufficiently rich emotional vocabulary: the appropriate verbalisation of emotions requires a certain mastery of the language and the acquisition of a diverse lexicon in terms of emotions (*see PSS emotional E1.2*).

Examples of activities to develop the PSS
Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1)

Basic and need I-messages

(Lamboy B., Shankland R. & Williamson M., 2021)

Audience: ☐ Children
☐ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Formulating a basic 'I-message' to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions
☐ Formulating complex 'I-messages' to express one's unpleasant emotions

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

In group format: the facilitator gathers suggestions and helps to reformulate those that deviate from the objective.

Equipment: Print out or copy: the table below; the definitions and examples of basic I-messages and need I-messages (see the theoretical part of the chapter on this PSS)

"Turn the messages below into basic I-messages (1st column), then express your need to create a need I-message (2nd column)."

'Standard' message	Basic I-message	Need I-message
You are really unbearable today, we aren't getting anything done!	I feel anger when I hear a lot of pupils talking and I feel like it prevents us from making progress with the lesson.	I need it to be quieter in the classroom so that I can be sure that everyone can hear and understand the lesson as best as possible.
You did a great job!		
You're really useless!		
What kind of way is that to talk!		
You're really not being nice to each other!		
Why did you tell that story? You've lost all my trust!		
You only think of yourself, you haven't left anything for the other children!		
You're annoying me! You keep interrupting me!		
You are really motivated by this project!		

You-message and *I*-message (group exercise)

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☐ Children
☐ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:
☒ Formulating a basic 'I-message' to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions
☒ Formulating complex 'I-messages' to express one's unpleasant emotions

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Print out or copy the table below

Part one: Demonstration and group discussion

Step 1: Start by explaining to the participants that you are going to convey two messages two them. These two messages are two different ways of expressing the same feeling when something is bothering us or does not suit us.

Step 2: Each person is asked to listen very carefully, to imagine that you are speaking just to them and to note what they feel when hearing these two messages.

Step 3: Give an example by starting all your sentences with the pronoun YOU. **Example of a YOU message**: "YOU leave everything lying around in the room. YOU never tidy up. YOU do it over and again every day, it never ends. YOU don't listen to me when I ask you to tidy up. "YOU are getting on my nerves!"

Step 4: Repeat the same message, but this time starting all the sentences with the pronoun I. **Example of an I message**: "Recently, I've noticed that the room has been dirty. I don't find it very pleasant to work in a place that isn't clean. I've told you about it, but I see there are still papers on the floor. I don't feel good when I work in this room."

Next, initiate a group discussion on the effects of these two modes of expression, using questions like these:

- You were given two messages: did you react in the same way when you heard them both?
- What did you feel when you heard the first message (YOU message)?
- What did you feel when you heard the second message (I message)?
- What is the major difference between these two messages?

If the participants have difficulty identifying the difference between the two messages they can be repeated, before discussing together the different effect that the use of the pronoun I rather than the pronoun YOU can have when one wants to convey a message to someone.
This is indeed a completely different message. YOU messages often sound like accusations. When they are aimed at us, we tend to become defensive spontaneously. By using them, we sometimes create unnecessary and unpleasant conflicts because we transmit 'YOU' messages
which we could very easily replace with 'I' messages.
After this exchange, you can write on the board: 'I' message and 'YOU' message, and formulate a short 'YOU' message together. Then, still working together, practice transforming this 'YOU' message into an 'I' message.

Part two: Practice at producing both message forms in pairs

The participants will be able to practice producing 'YOU' messages and 'I' messages to really grasp the difference between them.

Step 1: The participants get into pairs, opposite one another, and decide who will be A and who will be B. They imagine that B has ripped the jacket that A had lent them.

Step 2: For one minute, A transmits 'YOU' messages to B about this, and B listens in silence.
After one minute, A stops, then speaks a second time about the same subject, but this time using 'I' messages.

Step 3: At the end of the second minute, the roles are reversed. Now B speaks twice to A about a book they had lent them and that A lost. During the first minute, B uses 'YOU' messages, and during the second, 'I' messages. Listen in silence.

After having allowed the members of the group to experience these two ways of expressing their feelings, a discussion is initiated based on questions such as:

- How did you feel when you produced 'You' messages?
- How did you feel when you produced 'I' messages?
- Which type of message was easier to use?
- How did you feel when your partner addressed you using 'You' messages?
- How did you feel when your partner addressed you using 'I' messages?
- Which type of message is it easier to accept?
- What have you learned during this session?

What if we spoke differently?

(Le Voyage des TOIMOINOUS, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Ireps Pays de la Loire PSS Schoolbag)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:
☐ Formulating a basic 'I-message' to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions
☒ Formulating complex 'I-messages' to express one's unpleasant emotions

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: A whiteboard or flip chart

What if we spoke differently?

Source: *Le cartable des compétences* [The skills schoolbag] Ireps Pays de la Loire



Duration

20 mins.

Variable depending on the number of situations and the number of participants.

Equipment

- ✓ A whiteboard or flip chart to jot down the group's comments and arguments.
- ✓ 'Situation cards' to get the participants involved.

Reminder of the objectives

→ To allow a message to be reformulated to make it more constructive and benevolent.

Outline and instructions

The facilitator performs a dialogue in which they address the following message to one of the participants: "*You're damn annoying, you took my pen again, watch out.*"

They could also ask two participants to act out the scene.

The facilitator initiates a group discussion:

"What do you think of this situation? Of the message given?" specifying that it was an aggressive message, and highlighting its characteristics.

The facilitator analyses the message with the participants using the questions below:

- *Why did I react like that?*
- *What am I feeling?*
- *What is my problem? Is the problem solved?*
- *What would I like in the future? What did I want to say to the other person? (express my dissatisfaction, make a request)*
- *Is the message clear?*

The facilitator can conclude by saying: *"Sometimes, we might use aggressive messages without caring and without it helping to solve our problem, just because we are angry. The message is not always clear; we need to express our anger..."*
By way of extension, the facilitator can introduce the activity: The 'I-message'.
How else could this message be expressed? The facilitator then collects the various ideas after a period of work in sub-groups or as one large group.

Strengths

A quick way to raise awareness of the impact of communication in interpersonal relationships.
Asking the group to think about how to reformulate messages helps to develop the participants' individual communication skills.

Points to be aware of

Creating a climate of trust and security so that the exercise does not place some participants in a difficult situation. The exercise must not turn into participants settling scores.

The 'I-message'

(Le Voyage des TOIMOINOUS, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Ireps Pays de la Loire PSS Schoolbag)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Formulating a basic 'I-message' to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions
☒ Formulating complex 'I-messages' to express one's unpleasant emotions

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: The 'I-message' man; pencils

The ‘I-message’

Source: *Le cartable des compétences* [The skills schoolbag] Ireps Pays de la Loire



Duration

10 to 30 mins

Equipment

- ✓ The ‘I-message’ man (he can be displayed during the game to facilitate appropriation of the technique)
- ✓ Pencils

Reminder of the objectives

to analyse the different components of a message (content and form),

to practice formulating one's ideas more positively in order to reduce the climate of aggression.

Outline and instructions

The facilitator outlines the steps of the ‘I-message’ and explains

its purpose (to express one’s emotions without aggression):

- A sentence in the first person: *‘I’*
- The use of a stative verb: *‘I feel...’, ‘I am...’, ‘I experience...’.*
- The name of the emotion: happy, angry, sad, etc.

Examples: *‘I am happy,’ ‘I feel sadness’, etc.*

The facilitator makes groups of 2 to 3 children and gives them one or more ‘I-message’ participant worksheets (below).

The facilitator gives the following instruction: "Use an 'I-message' to communicate in the example situations you have been given."

The facilitator asks each group to read or act out the initial message and then the ‘I-message’.

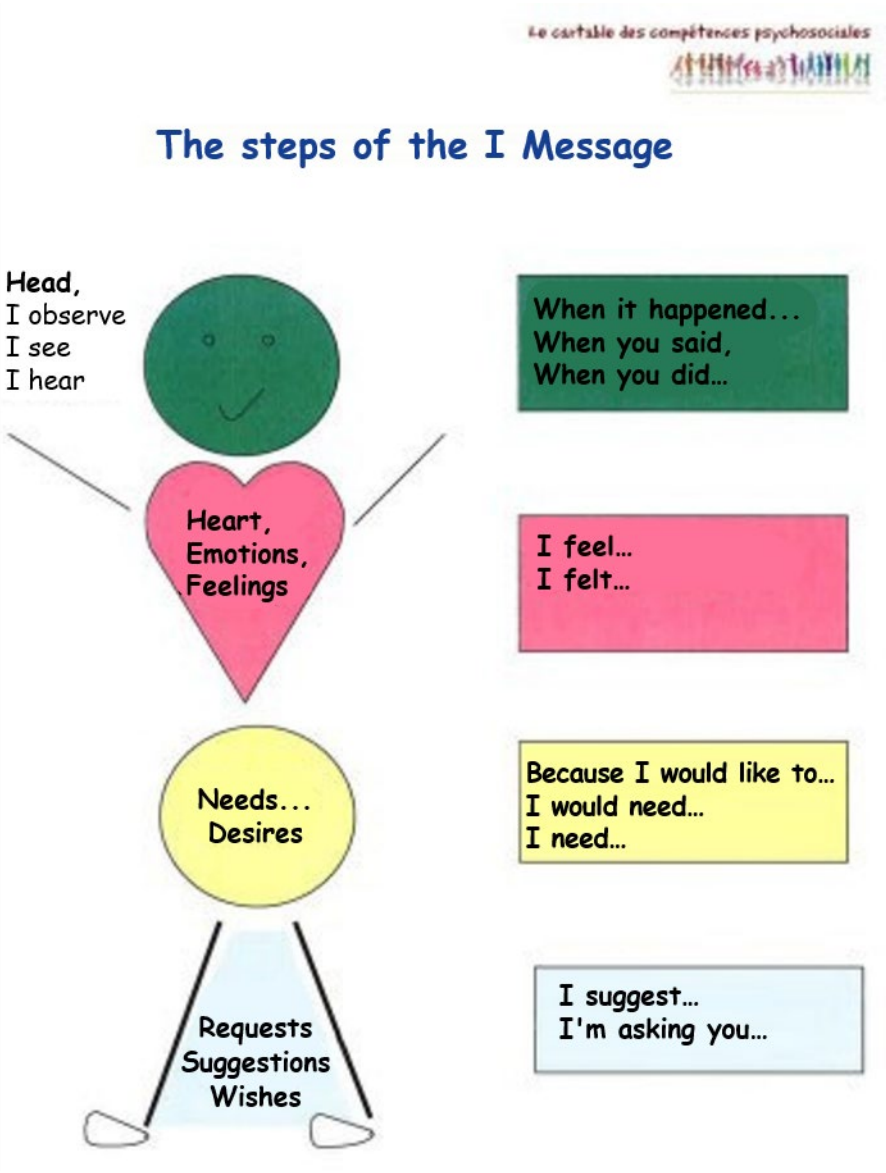
The facilitator organises a debriefing session:

- ✓ Following the presentations: *"Is the message clear? What effect might it have on the person who receives it?"*
- ✓ Then: *"Is it easy or difficult to use?"*

The facilitator concludes with the benefits and limitations of the ‘I-Message’:

- ✓ The ‘I-Message’ allows you to express your emotions, without aggression, and to be able to start a discussion with the person you are talking to.
- ✓ If used alone, the ‘I-message’ does not necessarily make it possible to find a solution to a problem. To do this, we would then need to continue the conversation to find a solution together.

For use in everyday life, the facilitator can give each participant the ‘I-message man’ (below).


Le cartable des compétences psychosociales
The steps of the I Message
Head,
I observe
I see
I hear
When it happened...
When you said,
When you did...
Heart,
Emotions,
Feelings
I feel...
I felt...
Needs...
Desires
Because I would like to...
I would need...
I need...
Requests
Suggestions
Wishes
I suggest...
I'm asking you...

Distinguishing between expressing a judgement and expressing an emotion

(The hidden world of emotions.) An emotional skills development programme for children. Annabelle Godeau-Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:
☒ Formulating a basic 'I-message' to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions
☒ Formulating complex 'I-messages' to express one's unpleasant emotions

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Print out the dialogues below

Activity: Distinguishing between expressing a judgement and expressing an emotion

The facilitator will give two examples based on the following situation:
Charles's friend was supposed to go to the library with him, but Charles changed his mind at the last minute and his friend got upset…
Here are two different ways to react to this situation:

1- Situation 1

Leah: So, are you coming Charles, let's go to the library?
Charles: Oh, I'm sorry but Rafael invited me to play video games at his house, I have to go there.
Leah: No, you've gone too far! It's always like this with you, I can never rely on you! Next time, I'll make plans with someone who keeps their word, you're a terrible friend!
Charles: That's right, you might as well!
The facilitator then asks the children what they think of this exchange between Leah and Charles. Then, he asks them if they think their relationship is going to get better or worse, and for what reasons.
The facilitator then gives out the individual worksheet to the children and asks them to reread the dialogue and underline what they think are criticisms or judgements, then they bring the group back together.
The facilitator then reads the situation 2 dialogue.

- **2- Situation 2, same situation but with a different friend of Charles**

Emma: So, are you coming Charles, let's go to the library?
Charles: Oh, I'm sorry but Rafael invited me to play video games at his house, I have to go there.
Emma: Charles, I am upset and sad. You've been changing your mind a lot lately and it hurts me because I think you don't want to spend time with me.
Charles: Oh, I'm sorry, it's not that at all, it's just that it slipped my mind and so I accepted Rafael's invitation.
Emma: Next time, I would feel better if we could stick to our plans, otherwise could you let me know in advance and not at the last minute, is that possible?
Charles: OK, I'll try not to do that again. How about we go to the library tomorrow? Are you free?
Emma: Yes, I'd love that, good idea!

The facilitator then asks the children what difference they notice between the two situations? What is Emma's approach? How did she react when Charles told her he had other plans? Do they find this approach more appropriate? Why? Finally, ask them which approach they would choose? Next, the facilitator presents the approach, using the second situation to explain the steps for expressing one's emotions.

In situation 2, Emma initially **described** the situation that was bothering her and pointed out to Charles that he had been changing his mind a lot lately. Did you notice that she didn't shout or judge Charles like Leah did? She just described the situation as simply as possible. Then, Emma said **how she felt,** she described her feeling, her emotion. Next, she made **a request** to Charles by simply expressing what she would like next time. Finally, she expressed how she would feel the next day, which is motivating for doing this activity.

The facilitator can then present the following guide which will help the children to identify judgements more easily; this guide is also on the child's individual worksheet.

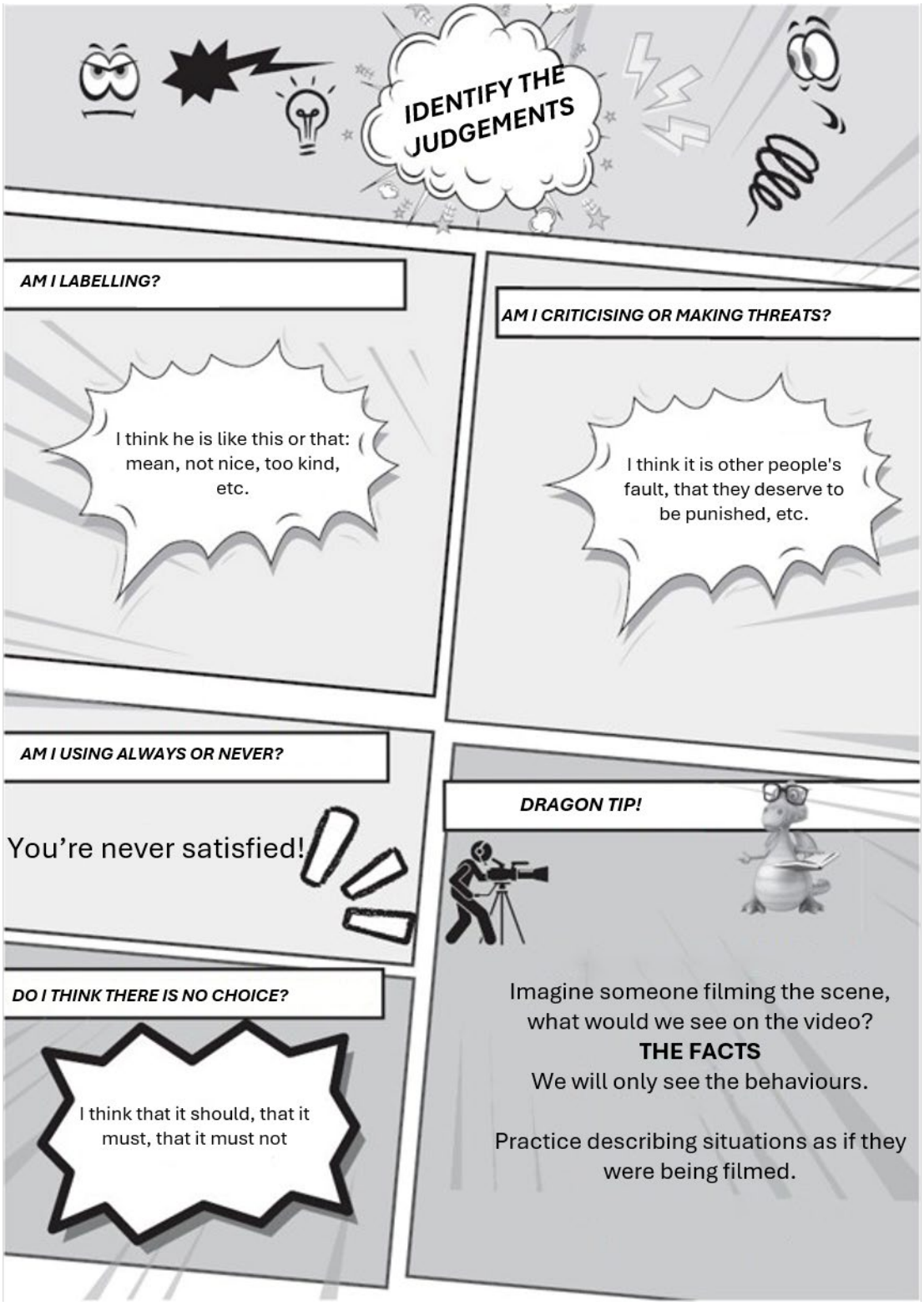
A quick guide to spotting a judgement

- Am I **labelling**? I think he is like this or like that (mean, kind, etc.).
- Am I **criticising**? I think it's someone's fault.
- Do I have **threats** in mind? I think he deserves either punishment or reward, and if he carries on, I will have to take action.
- Am I setting a **reference point for what is right or wrong**, too much or not enough, and using it to assess someone's behaviour?
- Am I using words like always or never?
- Do I think there is no choice? I think that **it should, that it must** or **that it must not**?

Don’t forget: behind a negative judgement often lies an awkwardly expressed unmet need which is generating an unpleasant emotion.

Trick: Imagine someone filming the scene, what would we actually see on the video? The facts. We would only see behaviours; we would not have access to intentions. It is useful to practice describing a situation as if you had filmed it, instead of judging immediately without knowing what is really happening for the other person.

Give out the summary sheet below and discuss it with them.


IDENTIFY THE JUDGEMENTS
AM I LABELLING?
I think he is like this or that: mean, not nice, too kind, etc.
AM I CRITICISING OR MAKING THREATS?
I think it is other people's fault, that they deserve to be punished, etc.
AM I USING ALWAYS OR NEVER?
You're never satisfied!
DRAGON TIP!
DO I THINK THERE IS NO CHOICE?
I think that it should, that it must, that it must not
Imagine someone filming the scene, what would we see on the video?
THE FACTS
We will only see the behaviours.
Practice describing situations as if they were being filmed.

Activity: using the simple I message

(The hidden word of emotions, an emotional skills development programme for children. Annabelle Godeau-Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Expressing one's emotions constructively (E2.1)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:
☒ Formulating a basic 'I-message' to express one's pleasant and unpleasant emotions
☐ Formulating complex 'I-messages' to express one's unpleasant emotions

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Print out or copy the situations and template below

Activity: Using the simple I message

In this first step, the children are invited to express their emotion using the following formula:

I + FEEL + EMOTION AM AM FEELING

Offer the children examples: I am happy, I am feeling sad, I feel anger
The children are then invited to practice; for this, the facilitator proposes different situations and the children are invited to express their emotion using the formula.
Here are some examples of situations

- Winning a prize at a sports competition
- Hearing strange noises in the house at night
- Being excluded from a break time activity with friends
- Receiving an unexpected gift from a friend
- Discovering a birthday present under your pillow in the morning
- Being wrongfully accused of having done something wrong
- Receiving an encouraging compliment from the teacher
- Being criticised by a classmate
- Moving to a new school/city
- Helping a friend overcome a fear

The facilitator then explains that in order to express one's emotion appropriately, we are going to switch from using YOU to using I.

Provide some examples of transforming the accusatory 'YOU' into the responsible 'I'. For the last example, ask the children what transformation they would suggest. The facilitator can also sound the alarm for each sentence that uses the accusatory YOU.

'Accusatory YOU'	'Responsible I'
You can't be trusted!	I feel disappointed
You're not paying attention to me!	I feel lonely and sad
You're really annoying!	I feel irritable

Regulating one's pleasant emotions (E2.2-a)

"**Managing one's emotions**, especially difficult emotions, requires, on the one hand, being able to modify the intensity and consequences of unpleasant emotions, such as anger, sadness and fear, so as not to be overwhelmed by them and, on the other hand, knowing how to pay attention to pleasant emotions such as joy, love and enthusiasm" [1].

Emotional regulation refers to the mechanisms (conscious and subconscious, voluntary and involuntary) used by a person to modify their spontaneous emotional experience (feelings, intensity, duration, frequency and behavioural reactions) [11]. Contrary to certain common preconceptions, this mechanism highlights the fact that people play an active role in their emotional experience [29].

Emotional regulation methods can be classified using different criteria:

- **the level of awareness and intentionality**: voluntary versus involuntary strategies;
- **the valence of the emotions in question**: pleasant emotions versus unpleasant emotions;
- **the psychological components mobilised**: emotional strategies, mind-body strategies, cognitive strategies, behavioural strategies, environmental strategies;
- **effectiveness:** effective (also called: adapted or functional) versus ineffective (or unsuitable or dysfunctional, *see list below*) strategies.

In order to regulate one's emotions optimally, it is necessary to listen to one's emotions and psychological needs, and to know what the effective emotional regulation strategies are.

Regulating one's pleasant emotions involves reinforcing one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective and diverse strategies.

1. Knowing the effective and ineffective emotional regulation strategies

Good **emotional regulation** involves being able to use effective **emotional regulation** strategies through deliberate action acting on both pleasant and unpleasant emotions; these strategies must be flexible in terms of their nature and involve the various psychological components (emotional, mind-body, cognitive and behavioural). Therefore, it is necessary to have a variety of effective strategies (*see table E2.2-a, below*) and to know how to mobilise these flexibly in line with the context and the results observed [14, 30][21][31][11].

An emotional regulation strategy is considered to be effective if:

1. It has beneficial effects on the emotional experience:

- a reduction in the unpleasant subjective feelings and behavioural reactions associated with unpleasant emotions,
- an increase in the subjective pleasant feelings associated with pleasant emotions;

2. It has no negative effect on oneself or others: it harms no one.

Table E2.2-a: Examples of dysfunctional strategies by target emotion valence [10]

Dysfunctional strategies targeting unpleasant emotions	Dysfunctional strategies targeting pleasant emotions
- avoidance (of the emotional feeling) - mental rumination - catastrophising - cynical and demeaning humour - denial - searching for a scapegoat - suppression of emotions - inappropriate expression of emotions - self-harm - alcohol, medication or drug use - eating to forget or to calm down	- suppressing the expression of pleasant emotions - focusing on the inevitable negative aspects of the positive situation - telling oneself that things could have been even better - thinking about everyday worries - engaging in activities that disconnect from the current positive event (e.g., reading emails) - telling oneself that the event will not last

2. Accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs (=basic emotional strategy)

Any effective emotional regulation strategy, regardless of its nature or the type of emotion targeted (pleasant or unpleasant), presupposes full acceptance of one's emotional experience as well as an ability to identify one's emotions and the psychological needs that may be associated with them.

Firstly, the basic emotional strategy requires being able to accept and feel the emotional experience present:
- What bodily sensations are present?
- What subjective feelings are present?
- What is the level of intensity present inside me?
- What is/are the emotion(s) I am feeling called?

➔ **"Then, I can think about my emotional feelings"**

Secondly, the basic emotional strategy entails being able to listen to the psychological need(s) present, which may be associated with the emotional experience:
- ***If the emotion is pleasant***: What psychological need of mine is being met? Are there multiple satisfied needs associated with the pleasant emotion felt?
- ***If the emotion is unpleasant***: What psychological need of mine is not being met? Are there multiple unmet needs associated with the unpleasant emotion felt?

➔ **"Then, I can feel my (dis)satisfactions"**

3. Strengthening one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective strategies

We experience pleasant emotions on a daily basis. However, we do not always pay full attention to them and, as a result, we miss out on a large part of their benefits. There are several ways to maintain and amplify pleasant emotions. Certain strategies are particularly effective in developing, anchoring and increasing our pleasant emotions and taking full advantage of their positive effects on our internal state, our body, our performance, our relationships and our life in general [16][14][30][21][31][11][32][33][34].

Table E2.2-2: List of effective emotional regulation strategies targeting pleasant emotions

Strategy nature by psychological component	**Different effective strategies**
Emotional strategies	**(1) Accepting and listening to** the emotional experience **(2) Verbal expression** of pleasant emotions
Cognitive strategies	**(3) Focusing attention on the positive aspects, coupled with the experience of gratitude**: in the moment, when recollecting, when imagining **(4) Full attention** (external and internal world): formal and informal activities (*see cognitive PSS C1.6*)
Mind-body strategies	**(5) Relaxation exercises** **(6) Breathing exercises** **(7) Sensory relaxation activities** **(8) Physical activity exercises**
Social strategies	**(9) Social sharing** of pleasant emotions, **coupled with the experience of gratitude**
Behavioural and environmental strategies	**(10) Creating a pleasant physical environment** **(11) Positive contact with nature**

3.1 Presentation of emotional strategies

(1) Accepting and listening to the emotional experience (*see section 2, above*) involves paying more attention to pleasant emotions on a daily basis and taking the time to fully embrace all the subjective feelings present.

(2) The verbal expression of pleasant emotions aims to put the pleasant emotion felt into words, orally or in writing; in the moment (when the emotion is present) or later; alone or in interaction (using I-messages) (*see emotional PSS E2.1*). Putting pleasant emotions into words enhances the emotional experience. When shared with someone, this verbal expression improves the relational climate and promotes the phenomenon of the **emotional contagion** of pleasant emotions.

3.2 Presentation of cognitive strategies

(3) Focusing attention on the positive or satisfying aspects of the situation aims to voluntarily direct one's attention to things that are a source of pleasant emotions. This focus on positive aspects can be ***coupled with the experience of gratitude***. When we actively become aware of the positive aspects that are present in our daily lives (and which can be small things such as: a walk in the forest, a hot shower, a starry sky, a job well done, a positive conversation with a friend, etc.), we can feel a sense of contentment and appreciation (or gratitude). This cognitive strategy, to which an emotional dimension (feeling of gratitude) is added, increases the experience of wellbeing and pleasant feelings.

Focusing on positive or satisfying aspects can be done in different ways:

- **in the moment**, when the positive element is present (*E.g.: I focus my attention on the children who are playing together nicely and I feel satisfaction);*
- **by recalling** a pleasant moment: in the evening, I think about a positive thing I experienced during the day or a positive thing for which I feel **gratitude**.
- **by imagining** a pleasant situation through **visualisation:** I can relax by closing my eyes and imagining a pleasant environment (imaginary, positive future, etc.).

(4) Full attention is the ability to voluntarily direct one's attention to the present sensory experience (whether external or internal), and to fully embrace the observed experience. It can be put into practice during formal and informal activities (*see cognitive PSS C1.3*).

3.3 Presentation of mind-body strategies

(5) Relaxation activities: Among the techniques that have proven their effectiveness is progressive muscle relaxation, developed by Jacobson. This consists of tensing and relaxing the muscles of each part of the body in turn.

***(6) Breathing activities*:** Synchronised breathing is also a technique that has proven effective in regulating emotions. It involves deep and regular breathing. To help yourself, you can count to 5 on the inhale and to 5 on the exhale in order to keep to a regular rhythm. This breathing technique can be used for a few minutes each day (for example, 5 minutes, 3 times a day).

(7) Sensory relaxation activities involve taking the time for relaxing and pleasant moments that engage the 5 senses *(E.g., smelling a flower or perfume, listening to music, massaging oneself or receiving a massage, taking a bath, etc.).*

(8) Physical activity exercises that generate pleasure and relaxation. Adults are recommended to do at least 30 minutes of vigorous physical activity per day (brisk walking, running, sports, etc.), at least 5 times a week. For children and teenagers, 1 hour of physical activity per day is recommended (at least three hours for young children up to 5 years old).

3.4 Presentation of behavioural and environmental strategies

(9) The social sharing of pleasant emotions aims to share moments and situations in which we experience pleasant emotions with loved ones. It is about associating the people we love with the big and small joys and successes that come our way and rejoicing with them in theirs.

This social sharing of pleasant experiences and emotions can be ***coupled with the experience of gratitude***. When we actively become aware of these pleasant experiences and this positive social sharing, we can feel a sense of contentment and recognition (or gratitude) that we can express to the other person. This social strategy, to which an emotional dimension is added (feeling and expression of gratitude), further increases the experience of wellbeing and pleasant feelings.

(10) Creating a pleasant physical environment involves enhancing our living environments with beautiful, inspiring and natural things. By surrounding ourselves with things we love, especially objects with positive emotional value (*e.g., photos of people we care about, images and quotes that inspire us, etc.*), we encourage pleasant emotions to arise, not only for ourselves, but also for the people around us.

(11) Positive contact with nature has beneficial effects on physical and mental health, as well as on cognitive functions. Nature has a calming effect; it also helps to restore attentional capacities.

Regulating one's unpleasant emotions (E2.2-b)

As with pleasant emotions, regulating one's emotions optimally entails listening to one's emotions and psychological needs, and knowing what the effective emotional regulation strategies are *(see previous chapter)*.

In order to regulate unpleasant emotions, on a day-to-day basis it is important to be able to reduce one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies, and in crisis situations, it is necessary to reduce the intensity of one's emotions using appropriate strategies.

4. Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis

We experience unpleasant emotions on a daily basis. Most of the time, we seek to control them, avoid them or even deny them by using a common (protective) mechanism: **experiential avoidance** (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*). The latter can give us the impression that we have a certain control over ourselves and the situation. However, it is very costly psychologically on account of the internal tensions and conflicts it generates. Furthermore, it prevents us from listening to our psychological needs and does not allow us to satisfy them, which is a source of imbalance and unease.

Therefore, any effective strategy for regulating unpleasant emotions requires first mobilising *the strategy of accepting and listening to the emotional experience(1)* *(see previous chapter: emotional PSS E2.2-a).* Several effective strategies can also reduce the frequency and intensity of unpleasant emotions, both in day-to-day life and in crisis situations [14][21, 30][31][11][29].

Table E2.2-b List of effective strategies for regulating unpleasant emotions, in day-to-day life and in crisis situations

Type of situation --- **Strategy nature** by psychological component	**On a day-to-day basis**	**In a crisis situation**
Emotional strategy	**(1) Accepting and listening to** the emotional experience **(1a) Emotional self-support** **(2a) Verbal expression** of unpleasant emotions	**(1) Accepting and listening** to the intense unpleasant emotional experience
Cognitive strategy	**(11) Cognitive reappraisal** of the situation	**(15) Refocusing attention** on a neutral or positive element **(4) Full attention** in relation to the internal experience and breathing **(11) Cognitive reappraisal** of the crisis situation
Social strategy	**(12) Social support**	
Behavioural and environmental strategy	**(13) Preventive management of emotions** **(14) Problem solving**	

4.1 Presentation of emotional strategies

(1) Accepting and listening to the emotional experience

During the day, it is possible to carry out self-observation work regularly. Attention is then focused on internal feelings.
I might ask myself:
- How do I feel now?
- How do I feel in this situation? With this person?
- When I feel unease, what exactly am I feeling? How does this manifest itself inside me? In my body?
- What are my emotions?
- What are my (unmet) needs? What would I need to feel better?

In a situation of loss, lack or separation, it is normal to feel sadness (or the whole range of emotions from that family). Similarly, when we feel we have not been respected, the emotion of anger and related emotions signal to us that our needs have not been met. It is essential to embrace these emotional experiences (feelings and needs) in order to be able to hear them and provide a conscious and appropriate response. By reminding us that every emotion is useful because it conveys information that guides us and helps us restore our psychological balance, accepting and listening to the emotional experience become prerequisites for any operational strategy. By allowing the emotional experience to unfold, this internal listening and this posture of openness give us access to our needs and allow us to let the appropriate responses emerge to satisfy them.

It is also essential that this self-observation be done with an attitude of kindness towards ourselves. This is referred to as an ***emotional self-support strategy (1a)***. This refers to "individuals' ability to support themselves, to encourage themselves, to take care of themselves and to develop or maintain a kind attitude towards themselves when regulating their emotions" [11].

(2a) The expression of unpleasant emotions aims to put the unpleasant emotion felt into words (*see emotional PSS E2.1*). In the context of social interactions, the use of '**I-messages**' makes it easier to express emotions appropriately. This constructive verbalisation helps to reduce the intensity of the unpleasant emotion and to maintain a quality relationship.

4.2 Presentation of cognitive strategies

(11) Cognitive reappraisal consists in questioning and modifying the way we represent a situation to ourselves, by reminding ourselves that events are only triggers and that emotions emerge from our psychological needs.

There are several cognitive reappraisal techniques for identifying a positive or satisfying (or at least acceptable) aspect of the situation:

- *Putting things into perspective*: Is this situation really that serious/problematic/disturbing? *E.g.: "I wasn't able to finish my paper this evening, as planned; but it's not so bad because there's still a bit of time before the deadline; I've made as much progress as I can; I'll carry on with it next week."*

- *Questioning the intentions of others*: Is the other person's problematic behaviour really related to me? *E.g.: "Hugo spoke to me in an unpleasant way, but perhaps it wasn't directed at me? "Maybe it wasn't because of me... Maybe he's upset, tired or worried about something else..."*
- *Looking for positive or satisfactory points*: Identifying what I can learn from this situation or what other perspectives it opens up for me. *E.g.: "I didn't get any invites for this weekend, so I'm going to take advantage of the time to rest and put my things in order."*

- *Looking for long-term benefits*: Identifying the useful human qualities or skills that I will be able to develop through this situation; how it allows me to move forwards. *E.g.: "I'm not really motivated by the task I've been asked to do, but it will allow me to strengthen my skills and my relationships with the others involved in this task."*

4.3 Presentation of behavioural and environmental strategies

(12) Social support aims to seek help and a listening ear from trusted individuals. When faced with a problematic situation and difficult emotions, this entails recounting one's experience and putting one's unpleasant emotions into words to a benevolent person who is capable of embracing one's emotions without judging and thus providing emotional support.

(13) Preventive emotion management involves analysing one's reactions and emotional experiences in relation to a (recurrent and/or future) problematic situation and taking concrete steps to avoid being confronted with the same experience again. *E.g.: "To avoid getting angry again at the next family meal, I decided to do some mind-body exercises before joining my loved ones, to sit next to the people I feel comfortable with, and to talk about the things that are important to me."*

(14) Problem solving aims to act directly on the triggering events. This involves putting concrete and effective actions in place to resolve the problematic situation (*see cognitive PSS C2.3 & 2.4).*

5. Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

From time to time, we are confronted with acute difficult situations in which we experience strong unpleasant emotions (anger/exasperation, fear/panic, sadness/despondency, disgust/horripilation). Succeeding in managing these emotions effectively and optimally helps to reduce the intensity of the emotional feeling and to avoid inappropriate, unintentional and impulsive behavioural reactions (which we may regret later). Figuratively speaking, it is about managing to go from 'red', to [30] 'orange' and if possible, to 'green' before doing or saying something.

Two prerequisites are necessary to effectively manage intense emotions in a crisis situation:

1. Having developed good emotional regulation on a day-to-day basis: accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs, strengthening pleasant emotions and reducing unpleasant emotions using effective strategies;

2. Having decided 'not to act out': wanting to reduce the intensity of one's emotions and having the intention of not (re)acting immediately and impulsively. The choice of action must be conscious and concordant with one's values and longer-term goals (*see cognitive PSS C1.3).*

In acute situations, it is necessary to mobilise one's capacity for **self-control** by drawing on the mental actions of attention and analysis using the **subject Self** (corresponding to the first two As of the acronym **AADA**) (*see cognitive PSS C2.2*).

Three steps must be taken to effectively manage one's intense emotions in a crisis situation (i.e., moving from 'red', to 'orange' and to 'green').

Step 1 'RED': focus your attention on your internal experience and become aware of being on 'red'. In order to stop the impulse and the action tendency generated by the emotion that drives us to take action, it is useful to start by perceiving the emotion using ***strategy (1) Accepting and listening to the emotional experience*** and thus not letting ourselves be controlled automatically.

Step 2 'ORANGE': remove your attention from the triggering event (external or internal) (i.e., take a 'pause' or a 'freeze frame'). The emotional intensity will then automatically decrease,

which will prevent action being taken impulsively and allow one to continue acting constructively according to one's will and goals.
To achieve this, an effective cognitive strategy that directs attention towards something neutral or positive needs to be implemented:

- ***(15) Refocusing attention*** on something different from the triggering event and crisis situation, preferably something pleasant:
- on a thought or a mental image. *E.g.: "I count to 10, I say words of support to myself, I visualise a pleasant image, etc.";*
- and/or on something else by changing the immediate environment. *E.g.: "I change rooms, I go outside, I talk to someone else, I do something else enjoyable, etc."*
- ***(4) Full attention***:
- in relation to the present perceptible experience: embracing feelings without judgement and without seeking to modify them;
- and/or in relation to breathing, letting oneself go with the flow of the breath.

Step 3 'GREEN': modifying one's emotional experience in order to get back to 'green' using *(11) Cognitive reappraisal*. This entails questioning how we perceive and represent (interpret) the crisis situation:

- *through reflection*: by identifying the emotions felt, by analysing the real trigger(s) of the emotion and by reflecting on the negative consequences of taking action,
...➔ **"Then, I can think about my feelings";**
- *by paying attention to my unmet/frustrated psychological needs* in the crisis situation.
➔...➔ **"Then, I can feel my (dis)satisfactions."**

Once the acute situation has passed, other effective emotional regulation strategies can be mobilised again.

Regulating one's (pleasant and unpleasant) emotions generates numerous benefits for wellbeing, overall health and success.

Indeed, good emotional regulation improves emotional balance, wellbeing and the ability to achieve personal goals. The optimal regulation of pleasant and unpleasant emotions in day-to-day life and in crisis situations promotes **psychological homeostasis**, has a direct impact on the state of wellbeing and the capacity for action which impact mental health, physical health, the quality of relationships, and academic and professional success [14][30][31][11].

Regulating one's (pleasant and unpleasant) emotions involves three main conditions:

- **a certain neuropsychological development and language skills:** just like the capacities for **self-control**, and **behavioural and cognitive regulation** (*see cognitive PSS C2.2*), children are not born with innate capacities for regulation. They can acquire these skills through **natural neurological development** (including the growth of the brain, prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex), the **development of language skills** and through **learning** (by experience, observation, practice, etc.) [18].

- **adults who show empathy and respond to the child's physiological and psychological needs** *(see social competence S1.2)***:** children are born with great neuropsychological immaturity and are totally dependent on adults to meet their physical and psychological needs. The adult must be able to perceive and understand the internal experiences lived by the child in order to be able to provide responses that can best meet their (psychological and physiological) needs. This primordial **hetero-regulation** based on the adult's empathy allows the child to develop, in the long term, their own capacities for **emotional and behavioural self-regulation**. Research has also shown that this hetero-regulation facilitates co-regulation of the child's emotion through the presence and emotional support of the adult [35].

- **adults exhibiting good emotional regulation:** the development of this skill depends largely on how adults in educational positions embrace, perceive and regulate their own emotions [11].

Key takeaways (E2.2-a and E2.2-b)

Conceptual definition: "**Regulating one's emotions** is the ability to manage one's own emotions and maintain an emotional balance (...). **Managing one's emotions**, especially difficult emotions, requires, on the one hand, being able to modify the intensity and consequences of unpleasant emotions, such as anger, sadness and fear, so as not to be overwhelmed by them and, on the other hand, knowing how to pay attention to pleasant emotions such as joy, love and enthusiasm. This skill involves being able to maintain an emotional balance between unpleasant and pleasant emotions on a day-to-day basis. It requires the ability to master various effective emotional regulation techniques" [1].

Operational definition: Regulating one's emotions optimally involves several knowledge items and practical skills:

1. Knowing effective emotional regulation strategies, i.e., strategies that have beneficial effects on the emotional experience (decreasing subjective feelings and behavioural reactions for unpleasant emotions and increasing subjective feelings for pleasant emotions) and that have no negative effect on oneself or others.

2. Accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs on a day-to-day basis is a basic emotional strategy that is necessary for the optimal implementation of the other strategies.

3. Strengthening one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective and diverse strategies: Accepting and listening to the emotional experience & verbal expression of pleasant emotions (emotional strategies), focusing attention on positive aspects & full attention (cognitive strategies), relaxation and breathing exercises & sensory relaxation activities & physical activity exercises (mind-body strategies), social sharing of pleasant emotions (social strategies), creating a pleasant physical environment & positive contact with nature (behavioural and environmental strategies).

4. Reducing, on a day-to-day basis, one's unpleasant emotions using effective and diverse strategies: Accepting and listening to the emotional experience & emotional self-support & verbal expression of unpleasant emotions (emotional strategies), cognitive reappraisal (cognitive strategies), social support (social strategies), preventive management of emotions & problem-solving (behavioural and environmental strategies).

Key takeaways (E2.2-a and E2.2-b *continued*)

Operational definition *(continued)*:

5. In a crisis situation, managing one's intense unpleasant emotions using effective and diverse strategies in order to quickly reduce the intensity of emotional feelings and avoid impulsive and inappropriate behavioural reactions ('going from red to orange to green'):
- realising one is on red by accepting and listening to the emotional experience

- then, pausing and withdrawing one's attention from the triggering event by refocusing attention (neutral/positive thought or image, or another place) and/or full attention (in relation to the sensory experience or breathing)

- finally, modifying one's emotional experience to get back to 'green' through cognitive reappraisal (reflection on the causes and consequences and/or attention to unmet/frustrated psychological needs).

Main effects: Regulating one's (pleasant and unpleasant) emotions generates numerous benefits for wellbeing, overall health and success. Good emotional regulation improves emotional balance, wellbeing and the ability to achieve personal goals. The optimal regulation of pleasant and unpleasant emotions in day-to-day life and in crisis situations has a direct impact on the state of wellbeing and the capacity for action which impact mental health, physical health, the quality of relationships, and academic and professional success.

Main conditions: Regulating one's (pleasant and unpleasant) emotions requires:

- **a certain degree of neuropsychological development and language skills:** children are not born with innate regulatory abilities. They can acquire these through natural neurological development, the development of language skills and through learning.
- **adults who show empathy and respond to the child's physiological and psychological needs:** children are born with great neuropsychological immaturity and are totally dependent on adults to meet their physical and psychological needs. The adult must be able to perceive and understand the internal experiences lived by the child in order to be able to provide responses that can best meet their needs. This primordial **hetero-regulation** based on the adult's empathy allows the child to develop, in the long term, their own capacities for **emotional and behavioural self-regulation**.
- **adults exhibiting good emotional regulation:** the development of this skill depends largely on how adults in educational positions embrace, perceive and regulate their own emotions.

Examples of activities to develop the PSS
Regulating one's pleasant emotions E2.2(a)

The practice of gratitude journaling

(CARE Programme in Shankland et al., 2018, pg. 153)

Audience: ☐ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (pleasant) emotions (E2.2 (a))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Knowing the effective and ineffective emotional regulation strategies
☐ Accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs (basic emotional strategy)
☒ Strengthening one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective strategies

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Print out or copy the situations and template below

"**The practice of gratitude journaling** aims to develop attention that is more open to satisfying interactions with others and the positive dimensions of the environment. Working individually, the participants take time to recall up to three things that happened during the previous week for which they feel gratitude or appreciation today. The facilitator clarifies that they do not need to come up with something extraordinary. It can simply be the gratitude felt when it is raining outside, but one is sheltered, or when one admires a beautiful landscape, or even when a passerby holds the door open for us when we leave a shop.

The facilitator then invites each participant to consider why the three contexts selected now generate a feeling of gratitude. Identifying the reason why they were affected by this gesture or event sheds a little more light on their values and what gives meaning to their life. Furthermore, taking time to explain what we feel grateful for increases the positive effect of the gratitude journal on wellbeing.

Next, the participants are invited to get into pairs or groups of three, and to exchange views on the information they have updated individually, the situations mentioned in their practice, the feeling of gratitude experienced, and the values to which this brings them back. Finally, the facilitator proposes a whole-group discussion so that some examples can be shared."

Enriching my repertoire of positive actions

(The hidden world of emotions. An emotional skills development programme for children. Annabelle Godeau-Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (pleasant) emotions (E2.2 (a))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Knowing the effective and ineffective emotional regulation strategies
☐ Accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs (basic emotional strategy)
☒ Strengthening one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective strategies

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

This activity is not suitable for children under 8 years of age; it should also be adapted based on writing competency.

Equipment: Print out the grid below; 'My resources' template for the individual activity

Enriching my repertoire of positive actions

"[...]" This activity aims to cultivate pleasant emotions by enriching the repertoire of actions that the children can implement to cultivate these emotions. This exercise takes the form of a group game: 'The communication rally'. For this exercise, the children are in pairs; the facilitator gives out a table to each pair with the following template:

My pleasant emotions	The activities I do to cultivate this emotion	The activities I used to do or could do
Example: curious	Reading books about nature	Exploring in nature
Proud	G1: G2: G3: …….	G1: G2: G3: …..

Each pair will have a table with a different pleasant emotion, for example:

- Pair 1: proud
- Pair 2: amazed
- Pair 3: delighted
- Pair 4: relaxed
- Pair 5: enthusiastic
- pair 6: happy
- etc.

Each pair will interview the other pairs to complete the table by asking others about the activities they already do that allow them to feel this pleasant emotion, or other activities they would like to do or may have done in the past (this can be small actions like sending a message to a friend or calling them, making a cake, watching a funny film, etc.) and that could generate this emotion.

All the pairs will interview each other in turn and the facilitator ensures that everything runs smoothly, guiding the children towards those they have not yet interviewed if necessary. To make it easier to keep track, you can enter in the table how many pairs need to be interviewed.

At the end of the activity, each pair has gathered all the answers from the other pairs and entered them in their table. The facilitator then proposes a group discussion where each pair of children will report on the activities collected from the other children in relation to the emotion that appeared in their table.

This time for sharing allows the children to give each other ideas and to become aware of the diversity of possible strategies to cultivate pleasant emotions.

Individual version of the activity: for an individual version of this activity, use the individual activity sheet below.





My garland of pleasant moments and memories

(The hidden world of emotions. An emotional skills development programme for children. Annabelle Godeau-Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (pleasant) emotions (E2.2 (a))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Knowing the effective and ineffective emotional regulation strategies
☐ Accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs (basic emotional strategy)
☒ Strengthening one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective strategies

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Print out the template below

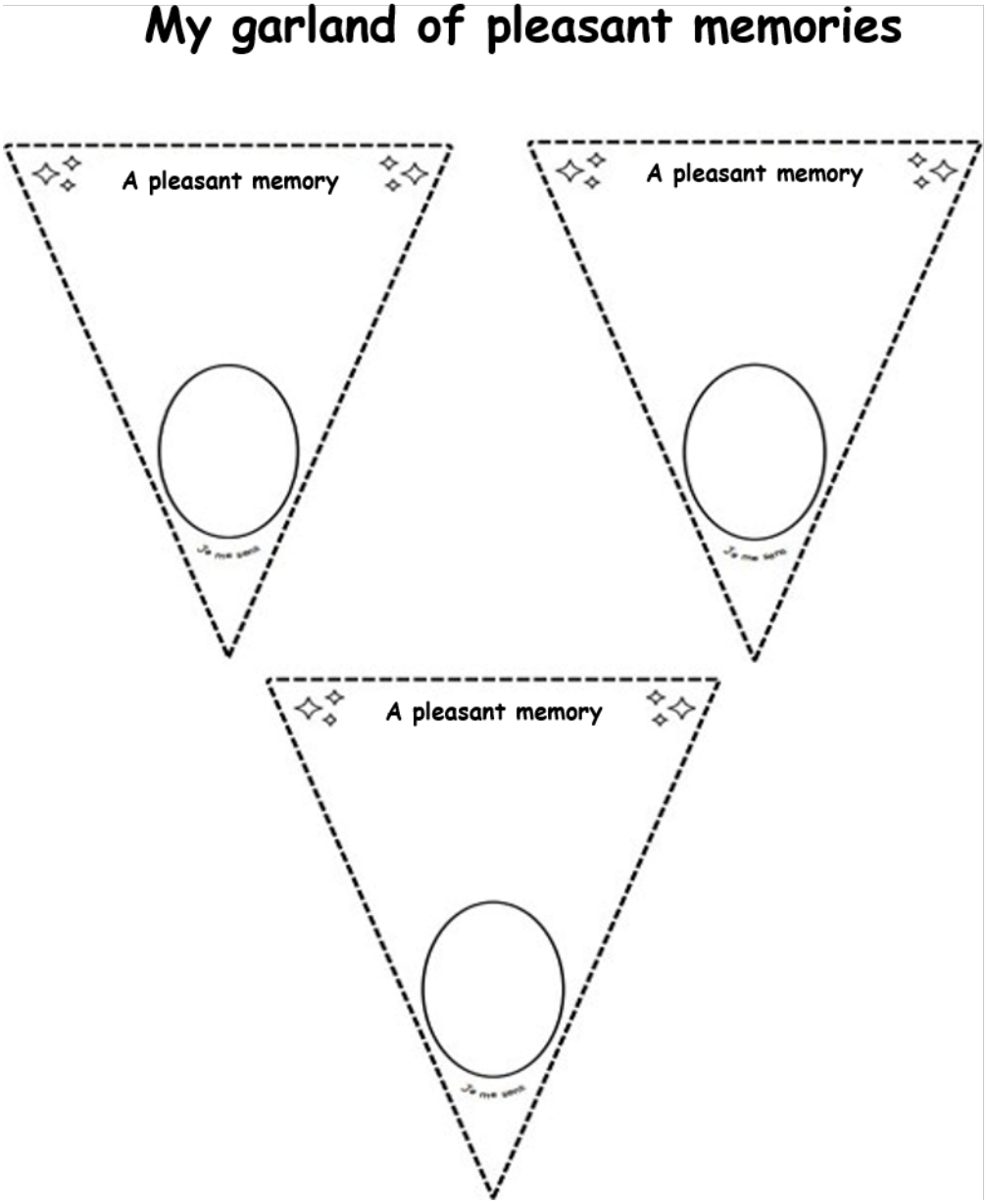
My garland of pleasant moments and memories
"[...]" In order to fully savour something, it is helpful to slow down and stop for a moment to pay attention to what we are doing, to our senses and to the pleasure of being in a situation. This practice also aims to allow children to become aware of the positive impact of sharing emotions socially; sharing one's emotion creates an emotional contagion effect. To begin this exercise, which starts individually and then continues in pairs, the facilitator can give the following instruction:

Savouring the pleasant moments
Have you ever noticed that at the end of the day, you tend to dwell on negative events more often than on the 'best of', i.e., the best moments of your day? For this experiment, I suggest you give more importance to the events that have given you satisfaction. This does not mean that you get rid of problematic information, rather that, by remembering the pleasant moments, you will feel the pleasant emotion again in the present, which can help you relax and fall asleep.

I suggest you jot down on your piece of paper three situations that gave you satisfaction and pleasant emotions. Then, for each situation, I invite you to take the time to fully relive them by recalling the sensations and emotions, and then to share them with your neighbour.

Once each child has completed their garland, they can swop with their neighbour and share their pleasant moments.

The facilitator can conclude this exercise with a group discussion, highlighting the benefits of sharing emotions and reminding the children that they can practice making events a source of satisfaction. They can also suggest that the children create their own memory box at home in which they could keep these moments and then, from time to time, decide to take a trip down memory lane and open the box to relive those moments that generated satisfaction. This allows us to cultivate positive emotions, like we would cultivate a garden. This also allows one to create a library of satisfying moments, which in turn increases satisfaction with life and relationships.


My garland of pleasant memories
A pleasant memory
A pleasant memory
A pleasant memory

Relaxation: breathing, 'safe place' visualisation, passive progressive muscle relaxation

(Extract from the Manuel de gestion du stress avec le CBSM (Cognitive Behavioral Stress Management). Aurélie Gauchet)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (pleasant) emotions (E2.2 (a))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Knowing the effective and ineffective emotional regulation strategies
☐ Accepting and listening to one's emotions and psychological needs (basic emotional strategy)
☒ Strengthening one's pleasant emotional experiences using effective strategies

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

Note. In groups: explain emotional regulation and the mind-body strategies that can enhance pleasant emotional experiences (theoretical part of the chapter on the PSS). Clarify that participants who are not comfortable closing their eyes can keep them open. In addition, participants who have difficulty with visualisation can draw a landscape they find calming.

Equipment: A floor mat (optional)

Goals

To practice passive progressive muscle relaxation using the 'safe place' imagery technique.

Imagery: safe place

"Now, you are going to get into a comfortable position. If it makes it more comfortable, you can close your eyes if you want…

Now, without forcing it, let the image of a place you particularly enjoy come to mind, a place where you feel good, calm and rested… It could be a place you've been to before (a beach, a field, a forest, etc.), a place from your everyday life like… your bedroom, or even an imagined place (a cabin in a Japanese garden, etc.).

Imagine you are in film that you are watching in your mind… But more than just watching a film, try also to feel the film, as if you were really there… You feel good in this place and your senses are awakened… Pay attention to what you see around you, the brightness of the place, or the half-light... The sounds or the silence you can hear… Perhaps you can smell scents that make you feel good… Now, focus your attention on the physical sensations passing through you… Your body is relaxed, loose, soothed…

Stay with this image for a few moments…

As soon as you feel ready, take a calm, deep breath in, opening your abdomen or rib cage wide…

Now, very calmly, you are going to leave the image of this place and come back here, to me… And when you feel ready, you can open your eyes…"

Examples of activities to develop the PSS: Regulating one's unpleasant emotions E2.2(b)

How am I feeling?

(Lamboy B, Shankland, R. & Williamson, M. 2021)

Audience: ☐ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☐ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:
☐ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☒ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☐ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☒ Individual
☐ Group

Activity suited to regulating unpleasant emotions on a day-to-day basis. In situations of crisis or distress, this activity is not suitable without support.

Equipment: Print out or copy the situations and template below

"During the day, take brief moments for yourself, alone with yourself. Turn your gaze inwards and let the answers to these questions come to you (this can be done in a few seconds!):

- *How do I feel here and now?*
- *What do I feel inside?*
- *What are my bodily sensations? My emotions? My needs?*

Make it a habit to let yourself engage in these moments of introspection several times a day. Consider using this technique when you feel unease, whether alone or in relation to someone.

When I'm on 'red'

(Lamboy B, Shankland, R. & Williamson, M. 2021)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:
☐ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☐ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☒ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

The activity is suitable for crisis situations that the person (or group) is capable of managing. In cases of major distress, support is essential.

Equipment: Print out or copy the tables below

"In what situations do you tend to be on 'red'?" In each of these 'red' situations, note the problematic consequences of this state (for you and for others). What do you usually do to calm yourself down? In view of the criteria set out above in the theoretical part, assess whether this/these technique(s) can be considered effective (+) or ineffective (-).

Situations in which I am on red	Problematic consequences (for myself and for others)	What I do to calm myself down	Effective Yes (+) or no (-)
1/			
2/			
3/			
4/			
5/			

For each of the situations you have identified above and wish to improve, choose effective techniques for moving from red to orange/green (using the different techniques presented in the theoretical part). Note the first day you managed to implement this effective technique and the (positive) consequences that ensued.

Situation No.	New effective techniques	First day	Consequences

Tensing/relaxing your body to regulate your emotions

(Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions at school] Volume 2, Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs & Santé publique France [36])

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☐ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☒ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

This activity is suitable for all ages, and can be adapted according to the audience.

Equipment: A box or a hat, squares of paper

An activity to learn how to regulate your emotions - 2

Tensing/relaxing your body to regulate your emotions

Level: Age 3-5 years.

Objective: to learn how to regulate one's unpleasant emotions using the natural capacities of the muscles.

Links can be made with skills such as 'increasing one's *knowledge of emotions' and 'identifying one's emotions', as well as with lessons in science or physical education about muscles and movement.*

Duration: 2 x 30 minutes (this session is divided into two parts: the first session focuses more heavily on lessons learned in science and the second directly targets the objective of regulating emotions).

Format: whole-class activity during a motor skills session.

Prerequisites: knowledge of the seven fundamental emotions: joy, love, fear, anger, sadness, disgust and surprise; ability to identify one's emotions (name them, describe their greater or lesser intensity, and the pleasant or unpleasant feelings associated with them); strengthening one's attention using bodily sensations.

Equipment: objects of different weights and sizes: a marble, an inflated balloon, a basketball, a feather, a bag of seeds, a bucket full of pebbles, a light book, a heavy book, a pencil, etc. (If possible, choose objects that are all of different colours to avoid sorting by colour).

Two hoops or two boxes per group of pupils for sorting the objects.

Suggested activity plan (part 1)

1 - Set-up phase

- Give a reminder of, or have the pupils recall, the work previously done on emotions.
- Explain the objectives of the activity to the pupils: to discover how our body works and in particular our muscles.

2 - Implementation

Step 1: during a motor skills session, put the pupils into groups. Each group has a set of objects of different weights placed in the centre of the group.

Instructions: "You are going to take turns in trying to lift the objects up. You need to pay attention to what happens in your body when you try. Be careful not to hurt yourself. It does not matter if you succeed or not. That is not what is important."

Step 2: next, ask the pupils to classify the objects according to common criteria that they will define: "In the two hoops (or boxes) you need to put together the objects that have things in common, that resemble each other, and you will have to explain why you put them together."

Each group can make several proposals.

Sorting possibilities (the teacher can suggest some classifications to broaden the proposals):

① Large objects/②Small objects.

① Objects that are difficult to lift/②Objects that are easy to lift.

① I only need one hand to lift it/②I need both hands to lift it/③It takes several people to lift it.

① A lot of strength is needed/②A little strength is needed/③No strength is needed.

① Heavy objects/②Light objects.

Step 3: feedback as a whole class. Ask the pupils to describe the sorting method they have chosen. The discussion leads to the concept of weight/strength.

Discovering your muscles and their role.

- What happens in your body when you try to lift a heavy object? We need our muscles/arms.
- Does everyone have muscles? Where are the muscles in your body? In the legs and thighs, in the arms, in the back, etc. Each child can touch their muscles.

Guide their thinking in terms of the specific situations in which muscles can work or be at rest.

- What can you do with your muscles? Muscles make us move, when we run, jump, swim, climb stairs, etc. So, when we make a physical effort.
- Are your muscles working all the time? When we are calm or when we are at rest, we need our muscles less.
- And where are the muscles in the face? To find them, which parts of the face can you move? Muscles are everywhere: in the cheeks, between the eyebrows, around the eyes, around the mouth, on the forehead, etc.

Other formats

The teaching assistant and the teacher can help any pupils who have motor difficulties to lift the objects.

Depending on the age of the pupils, it is possible to have more or fewer objects to compare (between 5 and 10).

Suggested activity plan (part 2)

1 - Set-up phase

- Give a reminder of, or have the pupils recall, the work previously done on muscles and on emotions.
- Explain the objectives of the activity to the pupils: to use what we have learned about our muscles to come up with techniques, to learn to calm down (to regulate one's unpleasant emotions, to make them less intense).

Step 1: the role of the muscles in relation to emotions.

Ask where we have muscles in our body.

Expected answer: we have muscles in all the parts of the body.

Ask in what situations the facial muscles are used. Expected answer: When I laugh, when I cry, when I frown, etc.

Explain that our muscles allow us to express emotions.

Muscles allow us to move, they allow us to express emotions. They also allow us to react to an emotion. Make the link between the need for action (the muscles work) and our emotions, especially unpleasant emotions.

"What do you do if you are afraid? We run to mummy/daddy and get a hug from them.

What do you do when you are angry? "We hit, we slam the door, etc."

Step 2: play at tensing and relaxing your muscles.

The pupils sit comfortably in their chairs, with their feet flat on the floor. Those who want to can close their eyes.

Suggest they do one or more movements of their choice from the list below. Pupils who want to can close their eyes.

- "Clench both your fists tightly, gently unclench your fists, then observe what you feel," repeat this sequence once or twice.
- "Make the biggest smile you can, with the corners of your mouth as close to your ears as possible, stop smiling, then observe how you feel," repeat this sequence once or twice.
- "Work all the muscles in your face by making the biggest grimace you can, stop grimacing, then observe what you feel."

It is possible to coordinate these movements with breathing (slow and deep): the contraction takes place throughout the inhalation and the release throughout the exhalation.

Step 3: invite the pupils to share their observations.

- Did they experience any particular sensations during the pause: tingling, warmth, coolness, heaviness, lightness, calm, etc.
- Was it pleasant? Unpleasant? New? Familiar?

The responses can be noted down, with kindness and without judgement, to identify common points, but also the diversity of feelings.

Explain that the pleasant sensation associated with releasing the muscles can be used to relax in situations of stress, tension or anger. When you need to relax, you can contract your muscles for a few seconds as in the previous activity, then release, and repeat this two or three times, while breathing deeply. Demonstrate this to the pupils while explaining it.

3 - Review of the activity

- Ask the pupils what they have learned from the activity.

- Establish the importance of knowing how to identify one's emotions, especially unpleasant emotions, and of knowing how to use tools such as muscle relaxation to learn to regulate them and regain calm so as to behave appropriately with others.

Other formats

For younger children, limit the number of examples.

Other suggested movements...

- Becoming aware of the sensations associated with muscle relaxation.

"Standing, with your arms hanging loosely by your sides, make quick shrugging movements, stop and observe the sensations associated with this pause: the shoulders feel lower, sensations of coolness, warmth, tingling, blood pulsing in the hands, etc."

- Flushing out unpleasant emotions and associated tensions.

"Imagine that your body is covered in confetti. This confetti represents everything that bothers you. We will remove it bit by bit by gently brushing it off using both hands. Let's start with the lower body and then gradually work our way up to the hair (the teacher can guide the pupils by indicating the different parts of the body). When our body no longer has any confetti on it, we stop moving, close our eyes if we want, and observe our sensations."

- Savouring the joy.

"While standing, remember a joyful moment, start jumping on the spot and then jump higher and higher to show your joy. Stop and observe your sensations."

This activity can lead to the calming down rituals used after certain activities, such as coming back in after break time.

Using your breath to regulate unpleasant emotions

(Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions at school] Volume 2, Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs & Santé publique France [36])

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☐ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☒ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

This activity is not suitable for children under 8 years of age; it should also be adapted based on writing competency.

Equipment: Print out the grid below; 'My resources' template for the individual activity

An activity to learn how to regulate your emotions - 5

Using your breath to regulate unpleasant emotions

Levels: ages 6 to 11.

Objective: to learn to regulate one's unpleasant emotions using the breath.

Links can be made with the skills: 'improving one's knowledge of emotions' and 'identifying one's emotions', and *with science or physical education lessons.*

Duration: 15 minutes.

Format: group activity, then the whole class.

Prerequisites: knowledge of the seven fundamental emotions: joy, love, fear, anger, sadness, disgust and surprise; ability to identify one's emotions (name them, describe their greater or lesser intensity, and the pleasant or unpleasant feelings associated with them); strengthening one's attention using one's breath.

Important note: pay attention to and adapt any breathing exercise for pupils who have health problems, such as asthma (seek advice from the school doctor or nurse if necessary). More generally, to ensure the activity remains comfortable, give everyone the freedom to adapt the instructions.

Suggested activity plan

1 - Set-up phase

- Give a reminder of, or have the pupils recall, the work previously done on emotions.
- Explain the objectives of the activity to the pupils: to learn to better regulate their emotions.

2 - Implementation

Step 1: ask the pupils if we always breathe in the same way. Together, establish that breathing is changeable; sometimes it is rapid, and sometimes it is slower and deeper.

Step 2: put the pupils into small groups of two to four pupils and ask them to write down examples of situations in which breathing changes (make a table with two columns: 'breathing speeds up when…' and 'breathing slows down when…'). Examples of expected answers:

- Breathing speeds up during physical exertion (sports, walking briskly, etc.), when we are stressed, when we are afraid, when we are angry, etc.;
- Breathing slows down when we are calm, or when we are asleep, etc.

Step 3: ask the groups to present their answers and write them on the board. Make the connection between the breathing pattern and emotions.

Take a moment to review the two phases of breathing (inhalation and exhalation). A demonstration can supplement this information depending on the pupils' prior knowledge and age.

Step 4: focus on your current breathing.

The pupils sit comfortably in their chairs, with their feet flat on the floor. Those who want to can close their eyes. Alternatively, you can put your hands on your stomach or chest. Next, ask them to focus their attention on their breathing in that moment. Practice over 2 to 3 breathing cycles (one cycle = one inhalation then one exhalation) to feel the movement of your belly and/or chest during inhalation and then during exhalation. Next, over one respiratory cycle, count how long the inhalation takes and then how long the exhalation takes. The pupils can then note down the two numbers: the one corresponding to the duration of the inhalation and the one corresponding to the duration of the exhalation.

Step 5: invite the pupils to share their observations.

- Which parts of my body move when I breathe? Stomach, chest, shoulders, etc.
- How do my stomach and chest move when I inhale? My stomach swells, my chest moves outwards.
- How do my stomach and chest move when I exhale? My stomach hollows, my chest goes back in.
- How long did my inhale take? My exhale?

The responses can be noted down, with kindness and without judgement, to identify common points, but also the diversity of feelings.

Give a short explanation of role of inhalation and exhalation: inhalation increases energy in the body like an accelerator, exhalation calms the body like a brake.

Step 6: play with your breath by lengthening the exhalation to regain calm.

The pupils are asked to get back into a comfortable position in their chairs. Start by observing the current breathing pattern (as in step 4) then gradually lengthen the exhalation. Counting can make it easier to follow the instructions, but suggest that each pupil adapt the pattern so that it remains comfortable for them:

- count 1-2 on the inhale, 1-2 on the exhale for 2 to 3 breathing cycles;
- count 1-2 on the inhale, 1-2-3 on the exhale for 2 to 3 breathing cycles;
- count 1-2-3 on the inhale, 1-2-3-4 on the exhale for those who want to and if it is comfortable;
- stop counting and let your breathing return to a natural pattern.

Those who want to can share their feelings, without comment.

- Was it pleasant? Unpleasant?
- Was it easy to lengthen the exhale? Or quite difficult?
- Did your feelings change between the beginning and the end of the activity?

3 - Review of the activity

- Ask the pupils what they have learned from the activity. Emphasise that the breath can be used as a means to regulate emotions, especially in stressful situations.
- Establish the importance of knowing how to identify one's emotions, especially unpleasant emotions, and of knowing how to use tools such as the breath to learn to regulate them and regain calm so as to behave appropriately with others.

Other formats

To bring one's attention to the breath in the moment:

- this step can also be done standing to facilitate abdominal movements;
- you can suggest that the pupils exhale deeply, drawing their stomach in at the level of their navel to begin the activity. This then facilitates inhalation and the 'sequence of breathing cycles'.

To strengthen the exhale without having to count:

- ask the pupils to exhale forcefully, making a noise if they want, with the intention of getting rid of everything unpleasant (anger, annoyance, sadness, fear, etc.);
- use objects: a straw to blow through, a feather to move gently;
- imagine a coloured balloon that inflates with each exhale and that gets filled with unpleasant emotion. This balloon can inflate more and more with each exhalation. Finally, imagine tying off the balloon and throwing it far away. Choose the colour and shape according to the emotion, or let each pupil choose. Examples: red balloon for anger, green for disgust, white for sadness, etc.

After practicing this exercise formally, to promote transfer you can suggest using the breath when a classroom activity triggers an unpleasant emotion in the pupils or when coming back into the classroom after an incident during break time.

Margot's day

('Le Voyage des TOIMOINOUS, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA – inspired by the Ireps Pays de la Loire Psychosocial Skills Schoolbag)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:
☒ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☐ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☐ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Balloon; story below

Margot's day

Source: *Le cartable des compétences* [The skills schoolbag] Ireps Pays de la Loire



Equipment

Balloon

'Margot's Day'

Reminder of the objectives

- → to identify and express one's emotions,
- → to understand that an emotion responds to an individual need,
- → to devise strategies to manage one's emotions, and in particular anger.

Outline and instructions

Read Margot's story while another adult or group participant gradually inflates a balloon as Margot experiences various events.

Facilitate a discussion based on the following questions:

"How does Margot feel throughout the day? How do we know?"

"What does the balloon represent?"

"How many people felt Margot's anger during her day?"

"Who is Margot really angry with?" (Introduce the concept of scapegoating - expressing anger against someone who has nothing to do with the real reason for our anger)

"What do you think of Margot's reaction? Especially when she answers Sylvie?"

"What does Margot want? What is troubling her?" (Introduce the concept of frustration)

Extension: invite the group to express what can be learned from this story and this exchange. Review and expand on the key points identified by the pupils.

- → Anger is an emotion; it is linked to frustration, and the need for justice and respect.
- → Anger is an emotion that is triggered by an EVENT and it produces a physical REACTION, a bodily tension.
- → This bodily reaction gives a SIGNAL of what is happening inside us: a feeling of injustice, disrespect or an unmet need.
- → It can lead to an EXPLOSION if the person does nothing to ease their tension.

In conclusion, it is important to listen to the signals given by the body and to calm the tension caused by the anger before another event causes new tension.

Strengths

This technique helps to facilitate a discussion on the topic: *"Have you ever seen someone explode in front of you for no apparent reason? How did you react?"*

To better understand Margot's needs at each event: What does she need? What can she do to satisfy her need?

Explore ways to better cope with rising anger. The children can work in groups, each with different instructions:

- What are some good ideas for 'deflating' the balloon as the day progresses?
- How could Margot have reacted to express her anger in a different way? In particular, at the various times when she is in contact with someone (her classmate Sylvie, her brother Daniel).

Pool the group's ideas. Give them value in collective and/or individual documents.

Variation

Margot's story is taken from the guide referenced below. It is perfectly possible to replace it with another story created for the same purpose.

Depending on the time available, you can deepen knowledge of the body language that indicates anger: taking turns in a circle, each person is invited to come forward and mime anger, then to identify how anger is expressed in the body.

Sources: *Pour une éducation à la non-violence [For an education in non-violence],* J. Gerber, 2006

Margot's day

It is 7:30 in the morning. Margot wakes up with a start. She is late. "Damn," she says. "I forgot to set my alarm again last night."

(Inflate the balloon a little)

Quickly, she gets up and looks for her pink t-shirt, which she finds under a pile of dirty washing. She kicks the pile of clothes.

(Inflate the balloon a little more)

Margot arrives at school stressed and irritated. The bell rings and Margot goes into the classroom. "Geography test," the teacher announces. "Oh drat," thinks Margot, "I completely forgot to revise my geography!" Plus, her mother had warned her that if she got a bad mark on this test, she wouldn't let her go to the mountains for the weekend with her father! Margot nibbles the end of her pen.

(Inflate the balloon)

During the break, Sylvie, her best friend, asks her how the geography test went. "Mind your own business," Margot replies.

(Inflate the balloon)

When she gets home from school, she finds her younger brother Daniel sitting in front of the television. Margot sits down comfortably next to him. "Mum said it was your turn to prepare dinner tonight," Daniel tells her. "What are we going to eat? I'm hungry!"

Margot jumps up. "I'm always the one who has to do everything in this house. You never take care of anything."

(Inflate the balloon)

Angry, Margot goes into the kitchen, opens the cupboard and takes out a packet of spaghetti. She opens the packet angrily and the spaghetti scatters all over the floor. At that moment, her mother comes into the room.

Source: *Pour une éducation à la non-violence [For an education in non-violence],* J. Gerber, 2006

Jules on the diving board

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☐ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☒ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

The facilitator reads the story below entitled '*Jules on the diving board'* to the group. After reading the story, they ask the group the following questions: "- *In your opinion, what did Jules feel when he stepped onto the diving board?*"
"- *And how did Jules feel when he left the pool?*" "-*When Jules was too scared to dive and started insulting the others, what could he have done instead?"* "- *If he had acted differently, would he have ultimately felt better?*" After having read out the story and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the main character's actions, the facilitator leads a group discussion using questions such as: "- *Have you ever really wanted to do something, but lacked confidence?*" "- *Conversely, have you ever succeeded in doing something even though you were afraid at first?*" "*How did you feel at that moment?*" These questions can lead the children to share a personal story, as in a speaking group. The facilitator will then welcome each story by reformulating what the child has said so that they feel listened to and understood, let them add to their story if they want and then thank them, before giving the floor to another participant.

Story of Jules on the diving board
Jules is a very good swimmer and wants to learn to dive off the diving board. He has already managed to do it twice when his father was sitting by the pool and watching him do it. He wants to do it again today.
There is almost no one there when Jules arrives at the swimming pool. So, he climbs onto the diving board, even though he is a bit scared.

Having reached the end of the diving board, he looks down and suddenly has the impression that the pool is much deeper than usual. Then, he starts to shake, but he still wants to dive. He feels his heart pounding, his toes and fingers tingle and his knees tremble.

Jules is about to dive when he hears voices behind him. He turns around and sees a group of young people waiting their turn to get on the diving board. Then, he gets very scared. The others are talking loudly and laughing. Jules starts to think that the others are watching him and making fun of him because he is afraid. He glances at the pool and once again gets the impression that there is much more water than usual.
At that precise moment, the lifeguard arrives on the scene and shouts very loudly: *"Go on Jules! The others are waiting for their turn. They also want to dive. Go on...* " Jules is so frightened and upset that he becomes unable to dive. He turns around and gets down off the diving board. He feels very uncomfortable with himself and he really does not know how he should react anymore; so he starts shouting at the others: *"I didn't want to dive into that stupid pool anyway. This isn't fun. Nothing could be more stupid. Go ahead, you bunch of idiots! Dive if you want. I'm not diving*." Then, the others also start shouting at the top of their lungs and calling him a coward and a weakling. Jules feels really uncomfortable with himself, he gets dressed again and goes back home.

Simon's strategies

(The hidden world of emotions. An emotional skills development programme for children. Annabelle Godeau-Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☐ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☐ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

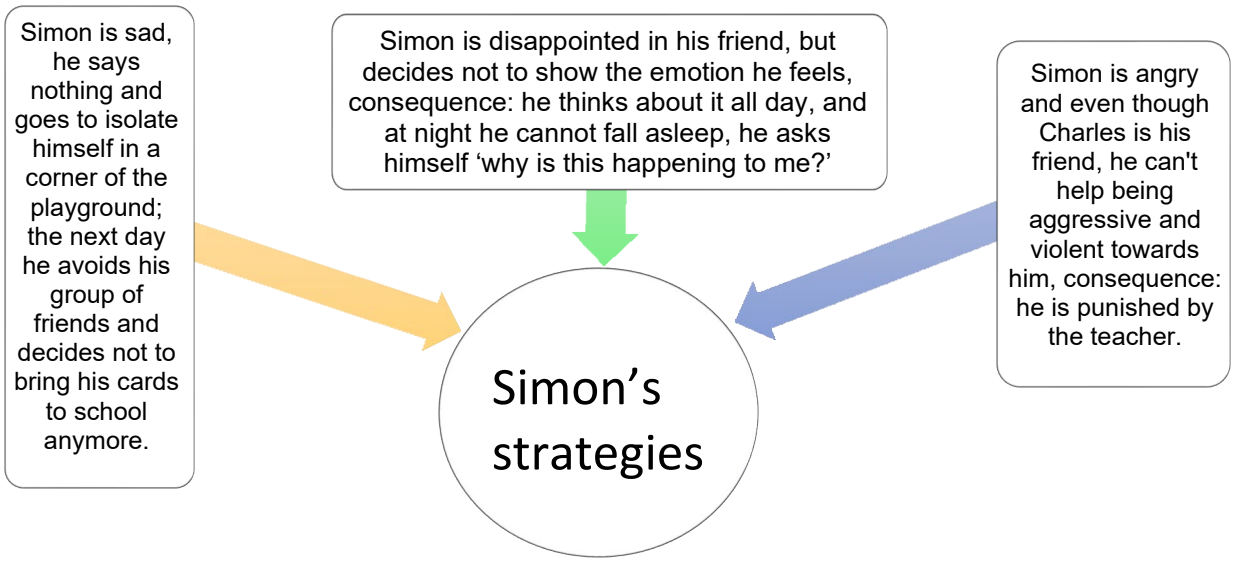
Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Templates below to print out or reproduce

The facilitator introduces the exercise by illustrating it using the following example and guiding the children to identify the different strategies that Simon could put in place. Each strategy has a cost/benefit ratio, so some strategies, even if they provide us with relief in the short term, have harmful effects over time.

How do you react when faced with an unpleasant emotion? You have seen that all emotions are useful because they convey a message to us, but be careful, just because an emotion is useful does not mean that the reactions it provokes are also useful. For example, anger informs you that you may be facing an unfair situation and that you need to react, but if you react with violence, then the consequences can be even more negative.

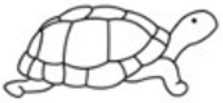
Let's look at the example of Simon: During break time, Simon often swops trading cards with his friends in the playground. Charles took three high-value cards from him without giving him anything in return. What do you think Simon will feel? What strategies will he put in place to overcome this situation?



Perhaps you too have found yourself in a situation where you used some of these strategies? At first, you feel a sense of relief, but afterwards you realise that the problem is still there and that your emotions are even more intense than before. You risk isolating yourself from your friends and feeling lonely, or having relational problems with your friends because you cannot control your violence, or you feel increasingly devalued and unwell from constantly dwelling on your problems.

Identifying certain strategies

The facilitator then compares the different strategies to animals. This enables the children to better understand their characteristics. The facilitator displays images of each animal on the board, describing the strategy that corresponds to it.

	The zebu, that is always ruminating and rethinking the problem, its causes and its consequences
	The chameleon that will go and hide and mask the emotions it feels
	The tiger that will bare its claws and attack using aggressive behaviour
	The tortoise that retreats into its shell to avoid the situation that causes the emotion

The facilitator then offers a practical exercise and asks each child to take time to reflect on their own strategies for dealing with an unpleasant situation. To do this, they will invite the children to think back over a situation and imagine what animal they would be to deal with that situation. They can also pick from the situation cards and propose one or two situations to the children.

While the children take time to think individually, the facilitator will put up an image of an animal in each corner of the room, and then invite the children to go to the image that corresponds to the strategy they have chosen. Once all the children have chosen one of the four corners of the room, they ask them to exchange ideas, if they wish, on the situation they have chosen and the strategy put in place, and to reflect together on the long-term effects of this strategy. Next, offer time for collective discussion, inviting each sub-group to express their views on their strategy and the long-term effects it may have. The facilitator can supplement the practice by reviewing each strategy and the effects they induce in the short and long term, and conclude as follows.

What you sometimes believe to be a solution becomes the problem. Avoiding, fleeing from or fighting your inner dragons contributes to increasing your long-term unease. Each time an unpleasant emotion arises, you can become aware of the automatic tendency to try to avoid, control, or mask it. "..."

The fire and the wings of the dragon

(The hidden world of emotions. An emotional skills development programme for children. Annabelle Godeau-Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☐ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☐ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Adapt the activity based on the age of the participants.

Equipment: Printable template below

Give out the activity sheet to the children. First, ask them what situations cause the dragon's fire (anger); the children fill in the dragon's flames. Next, propose some time for group sharing and ask how they react when they are in the dragon's fire. Depending on their answers, ask them about the consequences of certain ways of reacting and what the effects are for themselves and for others? Write the answers on the board as they are given.

Next, ask them if each technique is effective or not?

Then, ask the children to think about what triggers anger: the external situation and the internal origin (needs). Next, explain that a technique for regulating one's emotions must be good for oneself and one's health, have no negative consequences for others, and allow one to reduce the intensity of one's emotions (the dragon's fire). "..."

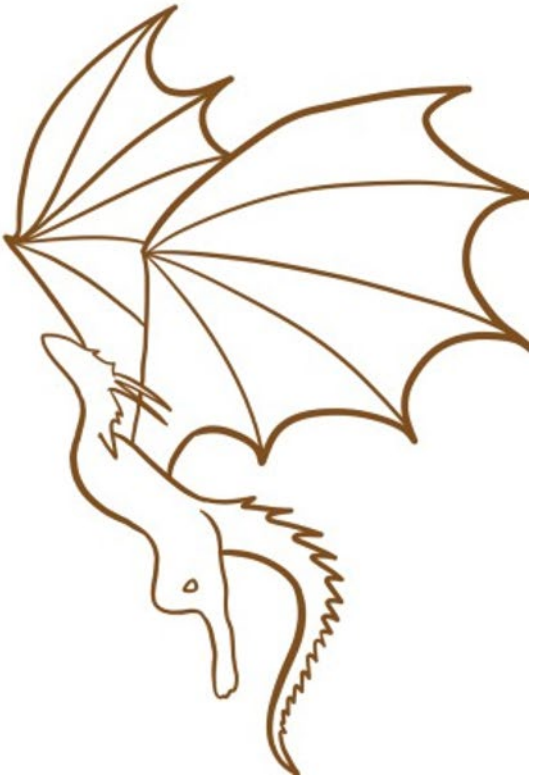
Then, ask the children to write down what calms them down when they are in the dragon's fire; ask them to write on the dragons' wings what reduces their anger and what appeases them. They can revisit a situation they previously listed.

If they are having difficulties, help them by offering examples: taking a break, going for a walk, listening to music, isolating themselves to shout, doing sports, etc.

The dragon's fire



The dragon's wings



Regulating your anger in two steps

(The hidden world of emotions. An emotional skills development programme for children. Annabelle Godeau-Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☐ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☒ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Situation card template and the wand below

Regulating your anger in two steps

The aim of this activity is to offer children an effective regulation technique during a crisis, so that they do not get carried away by anger. The goal is to move from the red of the dragon's fire to orange, or even green.
Tell the children that to use this technique, they will be able to use their magic object - the fire wand. Explain to the children that the fire wand will teach them several techniques for regulating their anger in a crisis
However, to use one's fire wand properly, one needs to know how to you use it. For it to work, there are two key conditions:
The first condition is not using your wand to act when you are in the red of the dragon's fire, the second condition is listening to your emotions and your anger because these convey a useful message. Using the examples given in the previous activity, remind the children what happens if you use the fire wand and lose control when you are angry.
Next, invite the children to learn the two-step fire wand technique for regulating their anger.

- **Step 1**: I take a break. With the fire wand, I can pause time so I can take a break when I feel the dragon's fire rising within me.

- **Step 2:** I use a technique that my fire wand taught me, which allows me to calm down immediately.

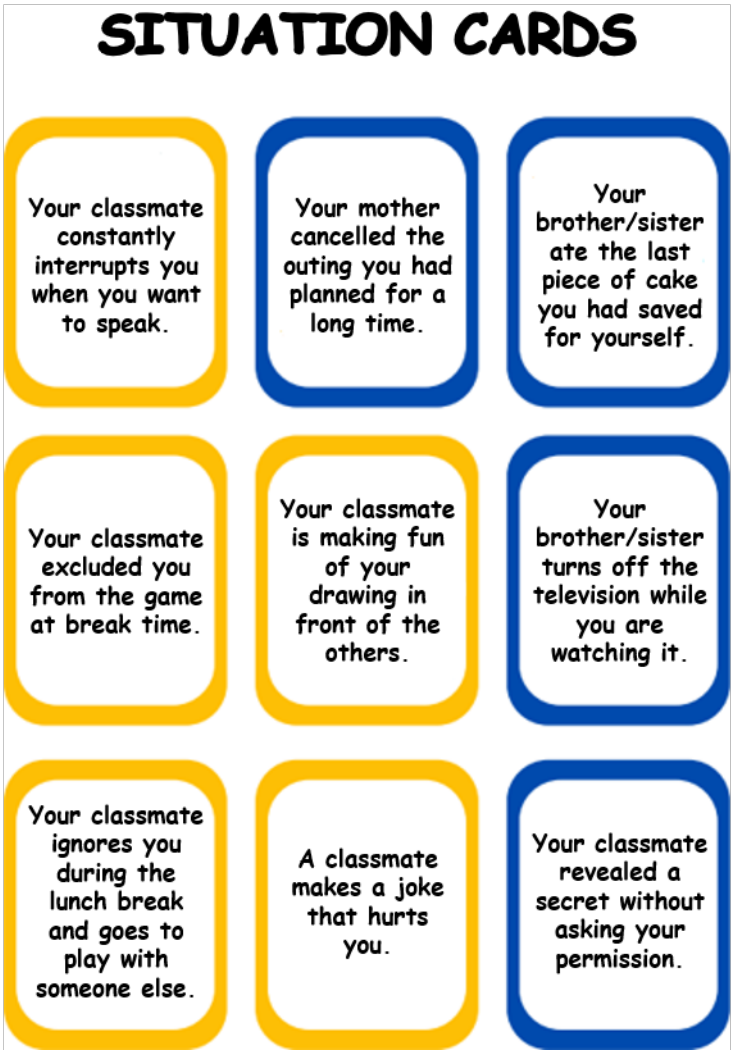
Next, invite the children to find out about the fire wand technique wheel by giving them examples for each technique.

- Shifting my attention elsewhere: when I am in the red, I shift my attention to something pleasant to lower the intensity of my emotion (I count to 10, I hum a song, I think of something pleasant).
- Re-assessing the situation: remind the children that the emotion is not caused directly by the situation but also by their internal state (their needs) and their interpretation of the situation (their thoughts). By identifying their need and changing how they interpret the situation, they can reduce their anger.
- Breathing: I focus my attention on my breathing, I take 5 to 10 deep, abdominal breaths with full attention.
- Observing what is happening within me, I turn my attention away from the outside to focus it on myself, what do I feel in my body, what sensations do I have, what are my thoughts?

- Relaxing: I can use the progressive muscle relaxation method (see facilitator resource sheet).
- Visualising: I immerse myself in another, positive, universe. Using my five senses, I imagine a scene that relaxes me.
- Seeking support, talking about it: I look for someone I trust and express my emotions to this caring person.
- Expressing my emotion using an I-message: when I am in the red, I put my emotions into words using positive communication and an I-message (I feel angry).

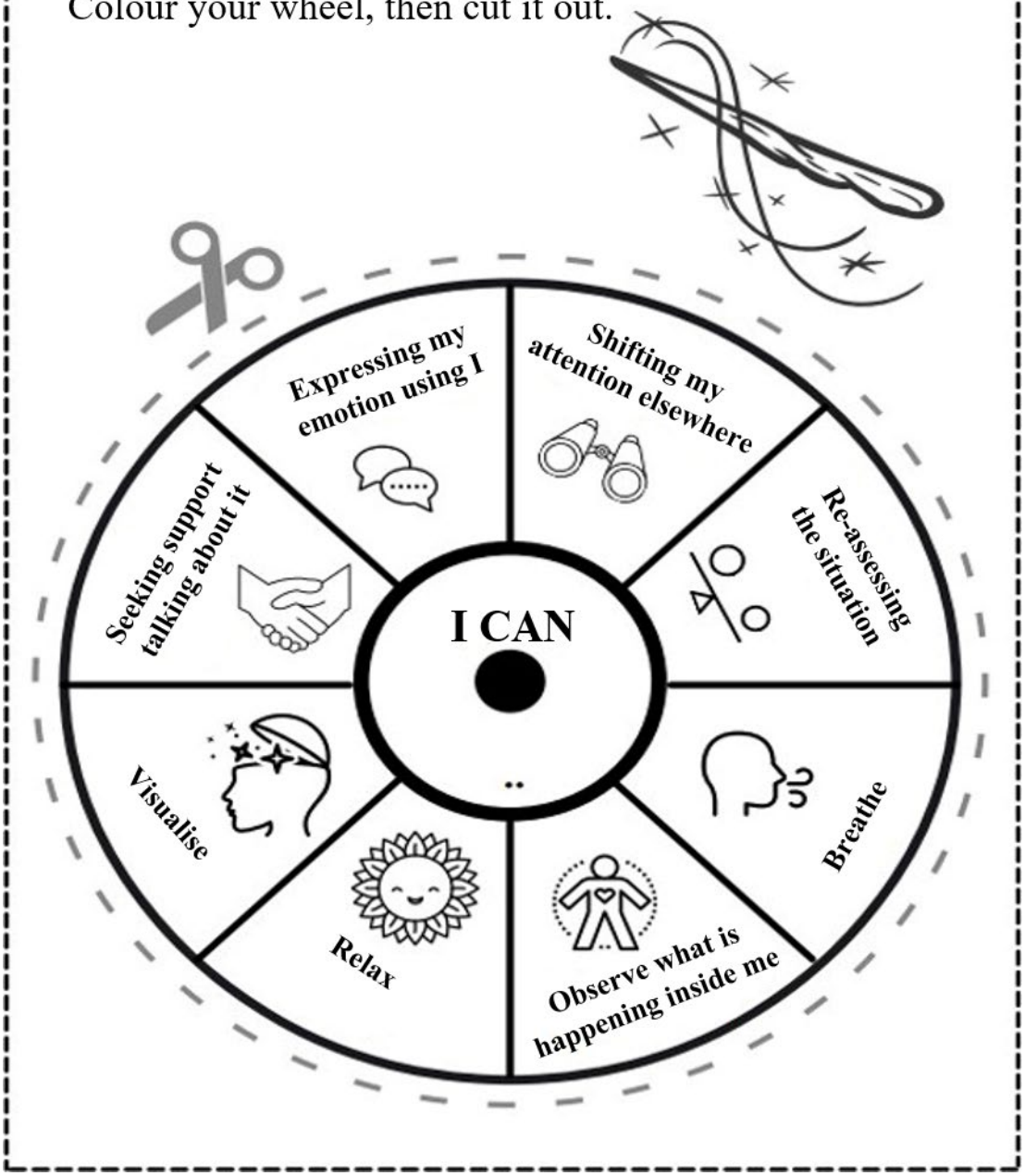
Once the techniques have been explained, tell the children that some are more effective for immediately calming down when one is on red and in the dragon's fire.
Then, give the children the opportunity to try out some of these techniques using specific situations. To do this, they get into small groups, each group has a regulation wheel and several situation cards that they can pick from to practice the regulation techniques.
For each situation card drawn, the group must relive the situation using a technique for effectively regulating their emotions. When the groups have finished, take time for a whole group discussion so that each sub-group can share the techniques they have tested.





MY REGULATION WHEEL

Colour your wheel, then cut it out.



The butterfly

(Pilou and Filou® Approach to supporting the development of psychosocial skills in children from 18 months to 5 years old Centre de psycho-éducation du Québec & Ensemble pour la Petite Enfance, 2023 Edition)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☒ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☐ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:

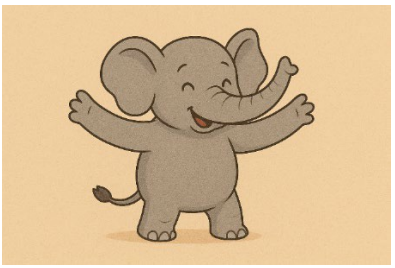
☒ Individual
☒ Group

An activity to be done in 3-5 minutes during transition times, before eating, before a nap or when feeling frustrated

Equipment:

The butterfly*

- **Aims**: To learn to tolerate frustration and to calm down. To practice controlled breathing.
- **Instructions**: The child is invited to stop, in a standing or sitting position, to spread their wings by opening their arms and to make a flying butterfly. They inhale and exhale while fluttering the butterfly's wings.





Accepting/being tolerant in response to painful feelings and emotions

(Extract from the Manuel de gestion du stress avec le CBSM (Cognitive Behavioral Stress Management). Aurélie Gauchet)

Audience: ☐ Children
☐ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☒ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☐ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

This activity can be offered to teenagers, depending on the context, and with support.

Equipment:

Slowly, close your eyes and start thinking about a minor physical pain you are experiencing or something you don't want do or that scares you, etc. Let that feeling fill your body. Remember to breathe deeply. If you feel tension/pressure in a part of your body, you can massage or rub it gently… If you have negative emotions, leave them alone… Try not to fight them… You don't have to worry about these feelings… You don't have to solve problems or understand where your feelings come from… Simply let this sensation exist, gently, without judging it and without trying to escape from it. You can allow yourself to place your hand on the area that hurts in a way that will almost relieve you and say to yourself: "Yes, this is what I feel now, this is real for me now." You may find that this sensation lessens or eases off somewhat. Let yourself be soothed by this feeling as you would soothe a child who is in pain… Let this sensation exist… Tell yourself that it is normal to feel this way. It is normal to feel pain, worry, sadness, or any other feeling at that moment… Acknowledge the attitudes, feelings or emotions you become aware of by continuing to pay attention to what you feel at each point in time. If words or images come to mind, let yourself be fully aware of them.

Now, slowly bring your awareness back to the room, maintaining your perception and gentleness/tolerance for yourself.

Monitoring anger

(Extract from the Manuel de gestion du stress avec le CBSM (Cognitive Behavioral Stress Management). Aurélie Gauchet)

Audience: ☐ Children
☐ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Regulating one's (unpleasant) emotions (E2.2 (b))

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Knowing how to regulate unpleasant emotions
☐ Reducing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies on a day-to-day basis
☐ Managing one's unpleasant emotions using effective strategies in a crisis situation

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Table template below to reproduce

Use this table to note down the situations that trigger anger and your responses. Think about healthier ways to respond to these situations.

Anger-inducing situation	Emotional/physical reaction	Assessment/internal dialogue	Alternative cognitive/behavioural responses	Alternative responses to anger
Example: *being cut up on the road*	*Anger* *Tense shoulders, heart beats faster*	*What an idiot!* *I shouldn't have let him do that*	*Sounding the horn* *Shouting out the window*	*Turn on the radio (or turn it up louder) and listen to the music while calming myself down*

Changing poorly adapted anger patterns

To change how you deal with anger, try using the PSAP method described below. It will allow you to act in a way that is concordant with yourself and your goals when faced with a situation that has triggered anger in you.

P = perception	Why am I angry? What is the real reason?
S = source	Who or what am I angry at?
A = alternatives	What do I want to do? Do I have a choice of different options?
P = plan	Choose an 'action plan'.

What are your options for expressing your anger?
➔ You have two options: change strategy OR have alternative options

Option strategy

- Recognise your needs
- Recognise the needs of the other person
- Assess the timing (Do I need to be in a better mood to talk about this? Does the other person need to be in a better mood?)
- Establish the desired outcome (Do you want to save your relationship? Do you want to achieve a certain goal, regardless of what happens to your relationship?)
- Determine the power imbalance in the relationship (Who holds the power in this situation? Are you above, below or on equal footing with this person?)
- Determine the nature of the relationship (Are you close to this person? Will you have any further contact with this person in the future?)

Alternative options

- Affirmation (for example: "when you do that, I feel like that")
- Calm down (wait for the right moment, let go of the tension)
- Defuse (seek advice)
- Get some exercise (go for a walk, for example)
- Speak up (let the person know that you think they are treating you unfairly, for example)
- Gather information (to obtain more details about the situation, or what the person is communicating)

Managing one's stress (E2.3)

In order to manage one's stress, it is necessary to have a better understanding of day-to-day stress and stress in situations of adversity, to be familiar with effective stress management (or coping) strategies, to reduce stress reactions using emotional experience-focused strategies and to act in relation to stressful events using problem-focused strategies.

1. Knowing what stress is

Stress is a psychological and physiological response caused by exposure to an internal or external stressor. Stress occurs when demands (stressors) exceed an individual's perception of their coping mechanisms [37]. This state of tension has an adaptive purpose as it allows the organism to put in place the resources needed to manage the stressors present in the environment and thus regain its original state of equilibrium (homeostasis). Stress impacts all systems of the body and psyche, and causes physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and social symptoms. In the long term, excessive stress can lead to physical and mental health problems, and a deterioration in a person's quality of life.

The conceptual definitions of the terms 'stress' and 'emotion' are similar in some ways [37][38] (*see emotional PSS E1.1*). It is a response of the organism resulting from exposure to an internal or external event, which aims to maintain the balance of the organism (Selye, 1956) and to satisfy its basic needs. However, in the scientific literature, the concept of stress is treated separately from other emotions. Several factors have led to this distinction:

- *diverse and complex manifestations with an important physiological dimension*: a wide range of emotional, cognitive and physiological responses; biological manifestations which are inseparable from stress [39];
- *the absence of valence (pleasant or unpleasant) and the importance of intensity [37]*: stress is positive up to a certain point, "it is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. [...] A little bit of stress is good and can help us perform daily activities." (WHO, 2023). Beyond this threshold, stress loses its stimulating aspect and can become paralysing and harmful to the individual; this continuum of operation is specific to stress and distinguishes it from other emotions which have a binary operating mode: pleasant or unpleasant.
- *the importance of triggering events (or stressors)*: **stressors** are events, forces or conditions that will cause a state of stress in an individual. Stressors can be internal events (e.g., a thought: 'I'm going to fail my exam') or external events (e.g., 'my exam is in two days') that will require an adjustment or coping strategy to be put in place [40]. An individual's assessment of these stressors is entirely subjective and more important than the facts themselves [41].

2. Knowing effective stress management strategies (or coping strategies)

When faced with a stressful situation, different physiological and psychological responses can occur. When we are confronted with a stressor, our body puts a set of spontaneous responses in place, such as fight, flight or freeze [42]. These responses, which have been present since our origins, trigger a rapid response from the body and enabled our ancestors to cope with the physical dangers present in their environment. Today, these physiological reactions persist and can eventually generate many deleterious effects (decreased capacity for action, somatic problems, psychological

distress, relational difficulties, etc.) as well as physical (ulcer, cardiovascular disease, etc.) and psychological pathologies known as 'burn-out', or professional and/or parental exhaustion.

In the scientific literature, stress management strategies are called coping strategies. Coping can be defined as an action, a series of actions, or a thought process used to deal with stressful situations [37]. Coping requires adaptation to the context, the situation and the nature of the stressor.

- **Effective strategies (or active strategies)**

It is important to distinguish between active or effective coping strategies, and passive and often ineffective coping strategies. **A coping strategy is said to be active** when it is voluntary and acts to resolve the problem itself (the stressor) or the physiological and psychological consequences thereof (the emotional experience of stress). By actively focusing on the problem (or stressor), the person can seek information, make decisions, resolve conflicts or ask for help. By actively focusing on their emotional experience, the person will be able to seek emotional comfort and engage in mind-body exercises. **A strategy is said to be passive** when it provides relief in the moment and may even work in the short term. However, we must exercise caution because such strategies can prove ineffective and even harmful in the long term. When the passive strategy is problem-focused, this can result in avoidance, procrastination, abandonment or denial behaviour. When the strategy is focused on the emotional experience, the person may then repress their emotions or resort to abusive medication or psychoactive substances (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, drugs). *E.g.: After being told they have a serious illness, a person may deny the diagnosis by saying 'that's not possible'. In the short term, this strategy may reduce initial stress and give them time to accept their diagnosis. However, if they continue to use this kind of passive coping, in the long term it will prevent them from properly adhering to the appropriate care and will endanger their life.*

Thus, a stress management (or coping) strategy is considered effective if:

1. It has beneficial effects on stress reactions: reduction of subjective feelings and physiological reactions;
2. It has no negative effect on oneself or others: it harms no one.

Like for emotional regulation, good stress management involves being able to voluntarily mobilise effective strategies that act on the stressful experience (feelings of stress and stressful events). These strategies must be flexible in their nature and involve the different psychological components (emotional, psychophysical, cognitive and behavioural). Therefore, it is necessary to have a variety of effective strategies (*see table E2.3-a, below*) and to know how to mobilise these flexibly, in line with the context and the results observed.

- **Two main coping strategies: problem-focused strategies and emotional experience-focused strategies**

Stress management (or coping) strategies are generally grouped into two main categories: problem-focused strategies and emotional experience-focused strategies.

Problem-focused coping strategies primarily entail focusing attention on the stressful event and acting on that problem or an aspect of the problem. There are several types of problem-focused strategies, including cognitive strategies, and behavioural and environmental strategies. *E.g.: I am stressed about my next exam. So, I can think about what I find difficult and what is worrying me; I can ask a classmate or my teacher for help. I can set clear goals, plan how I will prepare for the exam and use an effective study method.*

Emotional experience-focused coping strategies involve paying attention to and acting on the emotional reactions felt. We can then use various emotion regulation strategies, including emotional, cognitive, mind-body and social strategies (see emotional PSS E2.2). *E.g.: I am stressed about my next exam. I can do mind-body exercises to relax and remind myself that I got good marks last time. I can talk with a trusted friend and share my concerns and experiences.*

Table E2.3: Summary of effective stress management strategies

Categories	Strategies	Techniques
Emotional experience-focused strategies	**Emotional strategies**	**(1) Accepting and listening** to the emotional experience **(1a) Emotional self-support** **(2a) Verbal expression** of unpleasant emotions
	Cognitive strategies	**(4) Full attention** (external and internal world): formal and informal activities (see C1.3)
	Mind-body strategies	**(5) Relaxation exercises** **(6) Breathing exercises** **(7) Sensory relaxation activities** **(7) Physical activity exercises**
	Social strategies	**(12) Social support**
Problem (stressor)-focused strategies	**Cognitive strategies**	**(11) Cognitive reappraisal** of the stressful situation
	Behavioural and environmental strategies	**(14) Problem solving**

3. Reducing one's stress reactions using emotional experience-focused strategies

3.1 Presentation of emotional strategies

(1) Accepting and listening to the emotional experience

To be able to manage one's stress, it is essential to recognise it, accept it, and observe it. In order to identify one's stress reactions, it is necessary to accept and feel one's internal experience, even when this is perceived as unpleasant or even painful. This constructive mechanism is called **experiential acceptance** (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*); it refers to a key emotional regulation strategy, that comes before all other strategies.

Therefore, reducing one's stress reactions involves being able to recognise the mind-body signs of stress. The first step consists in becoming familiar with these manifestations in order to realise that a state of stress is present. This entails embracing internal feelings of stress without judgement or interpretation: emotions, sensations, thoughts, etc.

To practice, it is possible to recall past stressful situations and to note, from memory, the feelings at that time. We can also note the intensity of the unpleasantness associated with each feeling on a scale of 1 to 10 [43]. This example practice demonstrates the benefit of working on these emotional strategies before stressor-focused strategies; they can be used on a daily basis even before being exposed to stressors.

> ***Example of embracing the experience:*** *This week is intense. It is the start of a new academic year and I am going to a new college. I feel tense and stressed. Every day, I take 5 minutes in the morning, 5 minutes at midday and 5 minutes in the evening to pay attention to my internal feelings. I sit in a quiet place, I close my eyes (or not) and I take the time to observe 1/ my emotional state, 2/ my physical sensations, 3/ my thoughts (=my inner dialogue) and 4/ my needs. I observe these without judgement and in a benevolent manner.*

(1a) Emotional self-support

It is essential to embrace these emotional experiences in order to be able to hear them and provide a conscious and constructive response. It is also essential that this self-observation be done with an attitude of kindness towards ourselves. This is known **as an emotional self-support strategy**. This refers to individuals' ability to support themselves, to encourage themselves, to take care of themselves and to develop or maintain a kind attitude towards themselves when regulating their emotions.

(2a) The expression of unpleasant emotions aims to verbalise the emotional experience felt (*see emotional PSS E2.1*). Putting things into words in this way entails directing one's attention, and observing and naming one's feelings and needs; this leads to a decrease in the intensity of the emotional experience of stress [28]. In the context of social interactions, the constructive expression of the emotional experience entails having taken note of one's feelings and prevents emotional acting out. It also enables the other person to better grasp one's experience. The interlocutor can better understand our point of view and experience, which facilitates the mobilisation of their empathetic capacities. This means that the other person can hear us better and adjust their behaviour accordingly.

3.2 Presentation of cognitive strategies

(4) Full attention is the ability to voluntarily direct one's attention to the present sensory experience (whether external or internal) and to fully embrace the observed experience. It can be put into practice during formal and informal activities (*see cognitive PSS C1.6*).

3.2 Presentation of mind-body strategies

These strategies are particularly effective because they allow us to act directly in relation to bodily reactions and sensations of stress. They promote physical relaxation and wellbeing, which helps to reduce the (day-to-day) state of stress. These strategies can take the form of formal exercises or informal activities. Formal mind-body exercises are specific techniques and practices that are learned and applied intentionally to promote a state of wellbeing. Informal mind-body activities are practices that promote wellbeing, are less structured, and are integrated into everyday life throughout the day. Examples of mind-body practices are: ***relaxation activities (5)***, ***breathing activities (6)***, ***sensory relaxation activities (7)*** and ***physical activity exercises (8)*** (see emotional PSS E2.2a).

4. Addressing stressors using problem-focused strategies

A person's assessment of these stressors is entirely subjective; it is just as important as the facts themselves [41]. This is why it is interesting to initially focus attention on the thoughts and representations associated with the stressor and to question their consistency with the facts.

4.1 Presentation of cognitive strategies

(11) Cognitive reappraisal of the stressful situation (stressor) consists of questioning and changing the way in which we represent a situation to ourselves. In fact, distorted representations of reality occur frequently; called **cognitive distortions**, these common thinking errors lead to biased or inaccurate interpretations of facts. These automatic and irrational thoughts can be a source of unpleasant emotions and stress. We can thus manage our stress (and change our relationship to the stressor) by replacing these thoughts with more rational ones; this is called **cognitive restructuring**. Cognitive restructuring involves becoming aware of our representations and thoughts, and questioning them: "To what extent do I believe this thought to be true?" or
"Is there a more rational explanation?" When possible, the next step is to replace these thoughts with thoughts that are more aligned with the facts, and then to assess whether this effectively reduces the state of stress. The stressful situation has been transformed because our perception thereof has been altered.

On the other hand, if the stressor is actually present in the environment, it is important to know how to implement problem-solving strategies to deal with it (*see the strategies below*).

4.2 Presentation of behavioural and environmental strategies

(14) Problem solving aims to act directly on the stressful events. This involves putting concrete and effective actions in place to resolve the problematic situation (*see cognitive PSS C2.3 & 2.4).*

When faced with a stressful situation, it is necessary to begin with a phase of observation and analysis. Thus, before performing verbal or behavioural actions, the **subject Self** will have to perform mental actions: Attention to and observation of the information present and Analysis of the information present using lessons learned (the first two As of the **AADA** acronym).

- **Observing the stressful situation**

As mentioned in the chapter describing cognitive PSS C2.3, it is first necessary to describe the stressors.

This entails focusing all one's attention on the stressors encountered and to be able to describe them factually:

- What are the different stressors (where, when, how)?
- What do I think and feel in response to each of the stressors?

➔ **To help me, 'I can think about my feelings and feel my thoughts'**

- What do the other people involved think and feel?

- **Analysing the stressors**

Secondly, it is necessary to call on one's **analytical cognitive functions** (the second A of **AADA**).

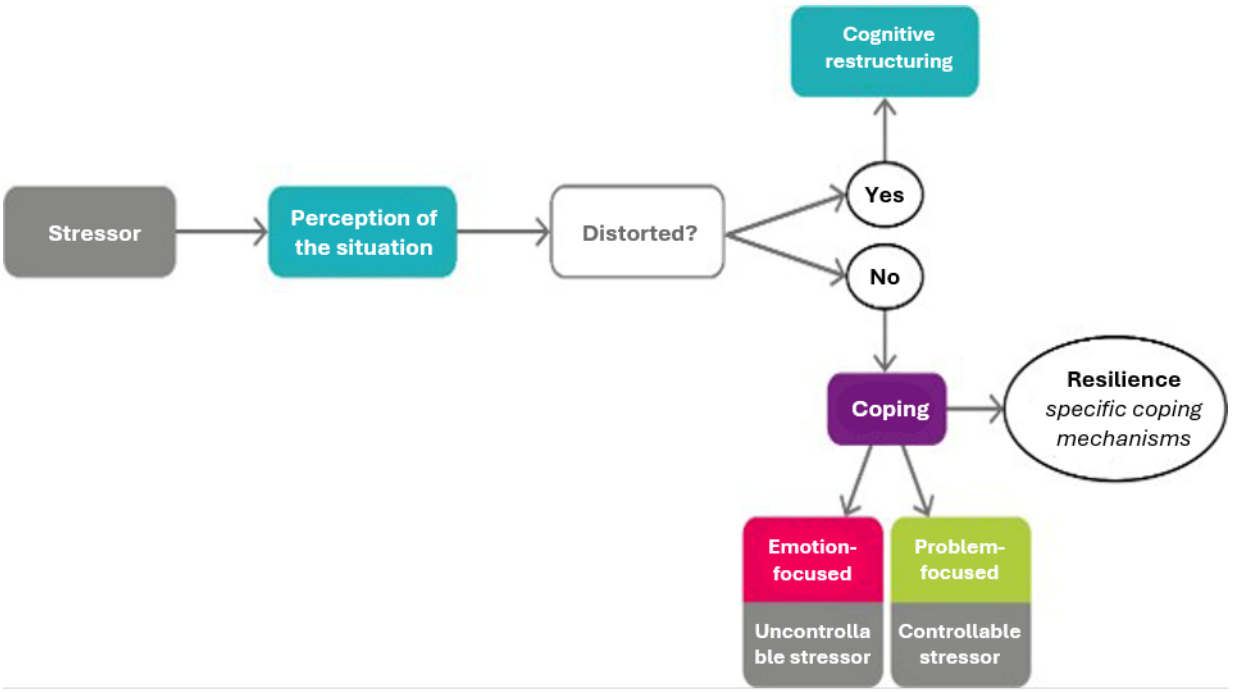
When faced with a stressful situation, it is necessary to break this down into several parts in order to be able to distinguish the controllable aspects of the situation from the uncontrollable ones.

***Example**: I have an exam next week. I will be able to revise for it, prepare the necessary material, plan to arrive early and go to bed early the night before the exam (controllable). On the other hand, I will not be able to decide the subject on which I will be questioned or the person who will mark my paper (uncontrollable).*

In general, problem-solving strategies are often effective for the controllable aspects of the stressor (those in relation to which action can be taken). Strategies focused on the emotional experience are particularly useful for dealing with the uncontrollable dimensions of the stressor (in relation to which action is not possible). It should be noted that, most often, stressful situations involve both controllable and uncontrollable aspects, and therefore require the use of both problem-focused and emotional experience-focused strategies. It is recommended that the strategy that is best suited to each dimension of the stressful situation be found and used. A mismatch between the analysis of the situation and the strategy used can be an additional source of stress.

To deal with the controllable aspects of stressors, it is then possible to draw on the problem-solving strategies set out in the chapter describing cognitive PSS C2.3. As a reminder, the three main problem-solving strategies presented are:
Strategy 1 – The problem-solving technique to deal with everyday problems that can be solved alone;
Strategy 2 – Knowing how to ask for help to deal with problems that cannot be solved alone and that need to be solved by someone else more competent than oneself;
Strategy 3 – Knowing how to call on emergency professionals to deal with dangerous situations.

Figure E2.3: Summary of effective problem-focused strategies for addressing stressors



Managing one's stress effectively generates numerous benefits:

- **it strengthens emotional balance, wellbeing and the ability to achieve personal goals:** the optimal regulation of stress in day-to-day life and in crisis situations promotes **psychological homeostasis** and has a direct effect on the state of wellbeing and the capacity for action, thus impacting mental health, physical health, the quality of relationships, and academic and professional success.
Conversely, unregulated stress becomes ingrained in life and habits and can quickly become chronic. It has detrimental effects, both psychologically and physically. In the medium and long term, unregulated stress can lead to a state of exhaustion (burn-out), anxiety disorders, behavioural disorders and depressive states. It can lead to the use of psychoactive substances and result in addictions. Therefore, these are considered to be a quick and passive (but ineffective) way to relieve this state of internal tension. In a state of chronic stress, it becomes increasingly difficult to cope with stressors and to put an end to problematic situations because the person is no longer in full possession of their resources: it is a dangerous spiral that impacts wellbeing, health and relationships.

- **it improves relational quality and child development (due to the stress management of adults in educational positions):** chronic stress in adults in educational positions has negative consequences on educational practices, the quality of interactions, the educational climate and child development [44]. Through more effective stress management strategies, adults in educational positions can create educational environments that are more favourable to the learning and development of children and young people.

Managing one's stress effectively requires several conditions:

- **mastery of the experiential acceptance mechanism**: in order to identify and regulate one's state of stress, it is necessary to accept and feel one's internal experience, even when it is perceived as unpleasant or even painful (and therefore to mobilise **the cognitive defusion** mechanism, *see cognitive PSS C1.1*).

- **a certain neuropsychological development and language skills:** just like the capacities for self-control, cognitive regulation (*see cognitive PSS C2.2*) and emotional regulation (*see emotional PSS E2.2*), children are not born with innate capacities for stress management. The stress

regulation mechanism, which involves many areas of the brain (including the amygdala and thalamus), requires a certain degree of neurological development. As a child grows, their brain becomes better able to regulate stress and to activate the necessary cognitive processes. Thus, children and young people gradually acquire these regulatory capacities through **natural neurological development** (including the growth of the brain, prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex), the **development of language skills** and through **learning** (by experience, observation, practice, etc.).

- **adults who show empathy and respond to the child's physiological and psychological needs** *(see social PSS S1.2)***:** children are born with great neuropsychological immaturity and are totally dependent on adults to meet their physical and psychological needs. The adult must be able to perceive and understand the internal experiences lived by the child in order to be able to provide responses that can best meet their (psychological and physiological) needs. This primordial **hetero-regulation** based on the adult's empathy allows the child to develop, in the long term, their own capacities for **emotional and behavioural self-regulation**.

- adults exhibiting good stress management: the development of this skill depends largely on how adults in educational positions embrace, perceive and manage their own stress.

Key takeaways (E2.3)

Conceptual definition: "**Managing one's stress** is the ability to reduce one's own mind-body stress reactions so as not to become destabilised and to have all one's resources available to function fully and pursue one's own objectives. On a day-to-day basis, this skill requires mastering and knowing how to use different effective stress management techniques" [1].

Operational definition: Managing one's stress involves several types of knowledge and practical skills:

1. Knowing what stress is. Stress is a psychological and physiological response resulting from exposure to an internal or external stressor; it occurs when demands (stressors) exceed an individual's perception of their ability to cope. When faced with particularly difficult circumstances, such as traumatic events or challenges threatening out basic needs for subsistence or security, intense stress is a natural reaction of the body.
2. Knowing effective stress management (or coping) strategies, i.e. strategies that have beneficial effects on (psychological and physiological) stress reactions, and no negative effect on oneself or others. They are generally grouped into two main categories: problem-focused strategies (which target stressors) and emotional experience-focused strategies (which target the emotional reaction).
3. Reducing one's stress reactions using effective emotional experience-focused strategies: Accepting and listening to the emotional experience & emotional self-support & verbal expression of unpleasant emotions (emotional strategies), full attention (cognitive strategies), relaxation & breathing exercises & sensory relaxation activities & physical activity exercises (mind-body strategies), and social support (social strategies).
4. Addressing stressors using effective, problem-focused strategies: cognitive reappraisal of the stressful situation (cognitive strategies), problem-solving, and distinguishing controllable and uncontrollable aspects of the stressful situation (behavioural and environmental strategies).

Key takeaways (E2.3 *continued*)

<u>Main effects:</u> Managing one's stress has many effects on:

- **Emotional balance, wellbeing and the ability to achieve personal goals:** the optimal regulation of stress in day-to-day life and in crisis situations promotes psychological balance, has a direct effect on the state of wellbeing and the capacity for action, and impacts mental health, physical health, the quality of relationships, and academic and professional success. Conversely, unregulated stress has detrimental effects, both psychologically and physically. It can lead to a state of exhaustion (burn-out), anxiety disorders, behavioural disorders and depressive states. It can lead to the use of psychoactive substances and result in addictions.
- **Relational quality and child development**: chronic stress in adults in educational positions has negative consequences on educational practices, the quality of interactions, the educational climate and child development. Through more effective stress management strategies, adults in educational positions can create educational environments that are more favourable to the learning and development of children and young people.

<u>Main prerequisites:</u> Managing one's stress requires:

- **Experiential acceptance (and cognitive defusion):** in order to identify and regulate one's state of stress, it is necessary to accept and feel one's internal experience, even when it is perceived as unpleasant or even painful; this requires cognitive defusion (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*).
- **A certain degree of neuropsychological development and language skills:** children are not born with innate stress management abilities. The stress regulation mechanism involves many areas of the brain (including the amygdala and thalamus) and requires a certain degree of neurological development. Thus, children and young people gradually acquire these regulatory capacities through natural neurological development, the development of language skills and through learning.
- **Adults who show empathy and respond to the child's physiological and psychological needs** *(see social PSS S1.2)***:** children are born with great neuro[45]psychological immaturity and are totally dependent on adults to meet their physical and psychological needs. The adult must be able to perceive and understand the internal experiences lived by the child in order to be able to provide responses that can best meet their (psychological and physiological) needs. This primordial hetero-regulation based on the adult's empathy allows the child to develop, in the long term, their own capacities for emotional and behavioural self-regulation.
- **Adults exhibiting good stress management:** the development of this skill depends largely on how adults in educational positions embrace, perceive and manage their own stress.

Examples of activities to develop the PSS: Managing one's stress (E2.3)

Adapting the type of social support to your needs

(Extract from the Manuel de gestion du stress avec le CBSM (Cognitive Behavioral Stress Management), Aurélie Gauchet)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Managing stress (E2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ 1. Knowing what stress is (in everyday life and in adverse situations
☒ 2. Knowing effective stress management (or coping) strategies
☐ 3. Reducing one's stress reactions using effective emotional experience-focused strategies
☐ 4. Addressing stressors using effective, problem-focused strategies

Format:

☒ Individual
☒ Group

Social support can also play a role in the EVENT -> ASSESSMENT -> EMOTION equation by mitigating or reducing the ASSESSMENT. Therefore, by reducing the subsequent emotional reaction, social support can help to mitigate physiological processes or inappropriate behaviours.
"…"

As with coping, you will get the most benefit from social support, if the type of social support is suited to your needs. However, when the type of social support someone provides you with is not suited to your needs, this can increase emotional distress.

Identifying your needs

Example 1 - A friend calls daily to see if you 'need to talk'. You feel overwhelmed by work demands, your treatment and household chores.
What is your friend offering?
What do you need?

Example 2 - You have decided to start treatment. Family members continue to send you lots of information about the choices available to you, alternative treatments and new therapies.
What are they offering?
What do you need?

Relaxation: Cardiac coherence

(Extract from the Manuel de gestion du stress avec le CBSM (Cognitive Behavioral Stress Management). Aurélie Gauchet)

Audience: ☐ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Managing stress (E2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ 1. Knowing what stress is (in everyday life and in adverse situations
☐ 2. Knowing effective stress management (or coping) strategies
☒ 3. Reducing one's stress reactions using effective emotional experience-focused strategies
☐ 4. Addressing stressors using effective, problem-focused strategies

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

Note. Clarify that participants who are not comfortable closing their eyes can keep them open

Exercise: Relaxation: Cardiac coherence

This exercise can be done in a seated or lying position.
In a seated position, make yourself comfortable in your chair, assume a relaxed position, you can let your back rest against the back of the chair or sit upright without support. Make sure your back stays straight to facilitate the passage of air to the lungs. Your feet are flat on the floor, you can place your hands on the table or on your knees… You can close your eyes if you wish…
First of all… Breathe through your nose, gently and evenly...
Still breathing through your nose, when you feel ready, take a full, deep breath… Inhale… Exhale… Inhale… Exhale…
Now, I am going to ask you to count in your head or on your fingers how many seconds it takes you to inhale and how many seconds it takes you to exhale… (Silence)
Perhaps a comfortable breathing cycle for you is a 3-second inhalation and a 4-second exhalation… Or perhaps the inhalation and exhalation are both 4 seconds… It doesn't matter; we all have a resting breathing cycle that is unique to us and that makes us feel good…
Continue for a few moments, maintaining the same duration for each inhalation and each exhalation… (Silence)…
Now, if it feels OK for you, I am going to suggest you increase the duration of your inhalation and exhalation a little… Ideally, a full, deep breathing cycle has a 5-second inhalation and a 5-second exhalation... You can try seeing if you feel comfortable with a gentle and deep 5-second inhalation and a 5-second exhalation…
Perhaps 5 seconds is too long for you; in that case, you can adjust it yourself by adopting a breathing pattern that is comfortable for you, while noting the length of each inhalation and exhalation (5 minutes) …
Now, I am going to count to three and anyone who has their eyes closed can open them again. 1, 2, 3."

Listening to music to calm down

(Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions at school] Volume 3, Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs & Santé publique France [20])

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Managing stress (E2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ 1. Knowing what stress is (in everyday life and in adverse situations)
☒ 2. Knowing effective stress management (or coping) strategies
☐ 3. Reducing one's stress reactions using effective emotional experience-focused strategies
☐ 4. Addressing stressors using effective, problem-focused strategies

Format:

☐ Individual
☐ Group

Equipment: Excerpts of music and associated pictograms, labels representing the pupils

An activity to learn how to regulate your stress -1

Listening to music to calm down

Level: Age 3-5 years

Learning area: taking action, expressing oneself and understanding through artistic activities

Specific objective: to try an effective strategy for calming down independently: listening to music

Links can be made with the skills: 'self-knowledge', 'identifying one's *emotions' and 'regulating one's emotions'*

Duration: two thirty-minute sessions, the first integrated into a motor skills session, the second into a music education session

Formats: as a whole class, in small groups or in one-on-one sessions to support certain pupils in experiencing and expressing their feelings

Prerequisites: knowing where the chest and heart are, experience of the sensations of faster or slower breathing, and of sensations associated with a faster or slower heartbeat

Location: motor skills room, then the classroom

Equipment: excerpts of music and associated pictograms, labels representing the pupils (first names for example or any other representation used in the class)

Suggested activity plan (part 1)

1 - Set-up phase

- Give a reminder of, or have the pupils recall, the work previously done, particularly regarding managing emotions or breathing ('attention strengthening' activities).
- Present the objectives of the activity to the pupils: we are going to observe and feel how our body reacts when we do physical activity in order to learn how to calm ourselves down.

2 - Implementation

Step 1: The intention is to experience the body's reactions during physical activity.

During a motor skills session, guide the pupils in becoming aware of variations in their breathing pattern and heartbeat:

- Before the activity, "Place your hands on your chest, how does it move when you breathe, does it rise quickly or slowly, do you feel calm or restless? Next, place your hands over your heart; can you feel it beating? Perhaps it is difficult to feel, perhaps it beats slowly or quite fast?"

  Note that links can be made with the 'strengthening one's attention to breathing' activity for ages 3-5 years (Kit volume 2 pg. 25).

- The pupils do the planned physical activity during the motor skills session (choose an activity where the pupils have to move a lot).

- **After the activity** "Let's stop: how are you feeling? Place your hands on your chest, compare your breathing now with your breathing before the activity. Place your hands over your heart, can you feel it beating? What is different from before the activity?" Using from the pupils' observations and remarks as a starting point, point out that, during physical activity, breathing is faster and harder, and that one feels one's heart beating faster and harder.

  Other bodily changes may emerge from the discussion: heat, perspiration.

  You can explain to the pupils that these changes are important in how the muscles work during exertion.

- **Ten minutes after the activity** (or upon returning to the classroom): "What is your heart doing now? Your breathing?" Arrive at the idea that their body has managed to modify heart activity and breathing by itself because it is at rest again.

A roly-poly toy or an image of one can be used: activity = the roly-poly becomes unbalanced when we give it movement/end of the activity = the roly-poly gently returns to equilibrium

Step 2: The intention is to link the body's reactions during physical activity with the body's reactions in stressful situations.

- "Do you know any situations, other than physical activity, that change the activity of our heart (it beats faster and harder), the activity of our breathing (we breathe faster and harder)?" The teacher can guide the pupils by discussing everyday situations that evoke fear.

- "When we are afraid of something, or when something makes us feel stressed, the body reacts in the same way as during physical activity, even when this fear or stress does not cause us to move. It is a reflex; we cannot prevent it. However, we can help our body to calm down and relax."

A roly-poly toy or the image of a roly-poly toy can be used again: fear situation (stress) = the roly-poly is unbalanced/we help it to calm down = the roly-poly toy slowly returns to equilibrium.

Share with the pupils the idea that the body can regain its balance and calm down after an activity by itself, but that it can be important to help it by stopping.

Note: the time interval must be chosen based on the age of the pupils, so that the memories of the first time can be mobilised for the second time. Otherwise, use media that enable memory recovery.

Proposed activity plan (Part 2)

1 - Set-up phase

- Give a reminder of, or have the pupils recall, the work previously done on bodily changes in relation to a physical activity and then stress.
- Present the objectives of the activity to the pupils: we are going to listen to some different pieces of music together, to feel what happens in our body so that we can then choose the one we would like to listen to again when we are scared or stressed to soothe ourselves, to calm down. (It is possible to link this to the sheets on 'Solving problems constructively' and 'Resolving conflicts constructively' in this volume 3: calming down is a first step before seeking a solution that is favourable to all.)

2 - Implementation

The intention is to listen to music and to identify the feelings that music evokes within oneself.

- The teacher chooses different musical excerpts: song, rhythmic music, classical music, film score, etc.
- Sit down in a quiet space to listen. We can close our eyes so we can listen better.
- For each extract,
    - before listening, show and explain the associated pictogram,
    - while listening, the pupils focus their attention on what is happening in their bodies, on what they are feeling;
    - after listening, ask the pupils what they felt, whether this music soothes them, makes them happy or something else. Embrace the diversity of feelings without judgement. Each pupil chooses the music that most helps them to find calm, joy, etc. They will then associate the pictogram with the excerpt(s) that best help them to calm down and experience pleasant emotions.

3 - Review of the activity

- Ask the pupils what the activity has given them and what they have learned: to better understand their bodies and to use music to calm themselves down.

- Establish the importance of understanding that the body is sensitive to what we feel, especially when we are afraid, and that to calm it, we can listen to a piece of music that makes us feel good.

Other formats

To support the transfer to day-to-day life

It is possible to extend the activity and to support autonomy and the transfer into daily life.

- Identify recurring 'stressful' moments and then ask the class to choose a piece of music to listen to again. The choice can be made after a discussion by listening to everyone's needs and collectively deciding to satisfy either one's own needs or the needs of others.

Situations that can generate stress
I don't understand the work I have to do. I can't do the work the teacher is asking me to do. It's very noisy in the canteen. I'm never allowed to have the bike at break time. In my class, there is one pupil who shouts a lot. In the morning, I'm scared when dad and/or mum leave me at school. I have to part with my cuddly toy and put it in the cuddly toy box.

- Invite each pupil to ask to listen to the music that soothes them whenever they feel the need, and then choose how and when their request can be fulfilled (immediately, at the end of the current activity, other/with the whole class, alone, etc.).
- Give other suggestions to facilitate calming down in a stressful situation: looking at photos, looking at an album, lying down and listening to one's breathing, etc.
- Identify a 'calm down' space in the classroom. Thus, each pupil, independently and after having asked to do so, can go there when they feel the need. Depending on the equipment available, it may be relevant to provide the possibility of listening to the pieces of music again.

Printable resources

Excerpts of music and associated pictograms

Engaging, energising music

Pata pata, Miriam Makeba, 1967



Happy, Pharrell Williams, 2013



Summer, Joe Hisaishi, 1999, Kikujiro



Hakuna Matata, Elton John, Tim Rice, The Lion King, 1994



The Carnival of the Animals, Aviary, Camille Saint-Saëns, 1886



The Bare Necessities, Terry Gilkison, The Jungle Book, 1967

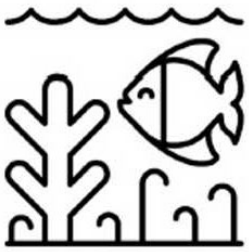


Mother Goose, Little Ugly Girl, Empress of the Pagodas. Maurice Ravel, 1911



Soothing classical music

Carnival of the Animals, Aquarium, Camille Saint-Saëns, 1886



Clarinet Concerto in A major K622. Il Adagio, Wolfgang A. Mozart, 1791



Clair de lune, Claude Debussy, 1890



Gymnopédie, Erik Satie, 1888



Piano Concerto No. 21, *Andante,* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1785



Mother Goose, the Fairy Garden, Maurice Ravel, 1911.



Brainstorming session on 'stress'

('Le Voyage des TOIMOINOUS, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Ireps Pays de la Loire Psychosocial Skills Schoolbag)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Managing stress (E2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ 1. Knowing what stress is (in everyday life and in adverse situations)
☒ 2. Knowing effective stress management (or coping) strategies
☐ 3. Reducing one's stress reactions using effective emotional experience-focused strategies
☐ 4. Addressing stressors using effective, problem-focused strategies

Format:

☐ Individual
☐ Group

Equipment:

'Brainstorm'

Source: Techniques d'animation en éducation pour la santé [Facilitation Techniques in Health Education]. CRES Languedoc-Roussillon, 2009



Duration

The exercise ends when the participants run out of ideas.

Equipment

- ✓ A support (a whiteboard or a flip chart) on which the facilitator can note down the ideas suggested so that they remain visible to the participants.

Reminder of the objectives

- → to list the various sources of stress,
- → to notice how different the sources of stress can be,
- → to list the strategies that the children use to regulate their stress.

Outline and instructions

The facilitator introduces the topic to be discussed: *"Why do we get stressed? What makes us stressed? What do you do to manage stress?"*

The facilitator must refrain from mentioning, even as an example, any idea they might expect, any outline of a solution or any idea of what might be achieved.

The facilitator sets out the rules: speak spontaneously and concisely, do not express judgements on the ideas put forward by the participants: there are no stupid ideas...

The facilitator notes down all the ideas expressed on the board. If necessary, rephrase the ideas, ask for clarification or question the participants. If participation weakens, do not hesitate to build upon the ideas already formulated.

When the round of ideas has been completed, the facilitator suggests grouping the ideas put forward into broad families or categories (this step can be carried out by the facilitator or by the group). Colour codes can be used to make ideas easier to see.

Finally, summarise based on the groupings made, validating all the ideas. The summary can be supplemented with additional information in response to requests from the group or to complement the ideas.

It is possible to carry out this exercise in co-facilitation format. One person is responsible for taking notes and another focuses on the ideas put forward.

Strengths

- → A quick and easy technique to organise.
- → Increases the creative capacity of a group.
- → Improves team spirit and mobilisation around a common topic.
- → Everyone can take ownership of the results.
- → Can be used for decision-making.

Points to be aware of

Poor facilitation can lead participants to hesitate to express themselves freely (without fear, without judgement, etc.). The facilitator must not let their personal opinion show and must not infer the responses.

Source: based on the document created by the Languedoc-Roussillon CRES, *Techniques d'animation en éducation pour la santé* [Facilitation Techniques in Health Education], January 2009

Progressive muscle relaxation

('Le Voyage des TOIMOINOUS, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Ireps Pays de la Loire Psychosocial Skills Schoolbag)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Managing stress (E2.3)

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ 1. Knowing what stress is (in everyday life and in adverse situations)
☐ 2. Knowing effective stress management (or coping) strategies
☒ 3. Reducing one's stress reactions using effective emotional experience-focused strategies
☐ 4. Addressing stressors using effective, problem-focused strategies

Format:
☐ Individual
☐ Group

Equipment:

Progressive relaxation



Duration
5 minutes

Equipment

- ✓ A solely oral relaxation method
- ✓ Floor mats for lying on, or chairs, sitting with your back straight and well supported against the backrest, both feet flat on the floor
- ✓ Gentle music to promote relaxation (optional)

Reminder of the objectives

- → to reduce stress,
- → to regain a sensation of wellbeing.

Outline and instructions

Explain to the children that you are going to introduce them to a new body-based (relaxation) method that can be very effective in helping them cope with stress.

Introduce progressive muscle relaxation: this involves contracting each muscle in your body, then releasing them, one by one. Sometimes, when we experience stress, our muscles tense up and become painful. Progressive muscle relaxation can help us to release and soothe our muscles, and thus to relax.

Tell the children that during this exercise they will be guided, step-by-step, but that when they want to try this technique on their own, they simply need to contract their muscles silently and calmly.

Before starting, you can ask the children to think for a few moments about how they feel...

You can play relaxing music: classical, jazz, instrumental, etc.

Read out the following progressive muscle relaxation method.

Once the exercise is finished, ask the children what they thought of it:

"Do they feel more relaxed?

Can they see themselves doing this exercise on their own when they feel stressed?

Instructions:

- Clench your right fist: keep it clenched, keep going, now release...
- Clench your left fist: keep it clenched, keep going, now release...
- Tense your right arm: keep it tensed, keep going, now release...
- Tense your left arm: keep it tensed, keep going, now release...
- Tense your right foot: keep it tensed, keep going, now release...
- Tense your left foot: keep it tensed, keep going, now release...
- Tense your right leg: keep it tensed, keep going, now release...
- Tense your left leg: keep it tensed, keep going, now release...
- Tense your stomach muscles: keep them tensed, keep going, now release...
- Tense your shoulders: keep them tensed, keep going, now release...
- Tense your face: keep it tense, keep going, now release...
- Now, hold your breath and tense all the muscles in your body, your arms, your legs, your face, your toes, your fists...
- Tense your stomach and your shoulders...
- All your muscles are tensed: keep them tensed, keep going...
- Now, exhale slowly and relax, imagining that you are completely floppy and there is no tension anywhere...

Deep breathing

('Le Voyage des TOIMOINOUS, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA – inspired by the Ireps Pays de la Loire Psychosocial Skills Schoolbag)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

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☐ 4. Addressing stressors using effective, problem-focused strategies

Format:
☒ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment:

Deep breathing

Source: *Ateliers PSS-Enfants Mindful [PSS Workshops-Children Mindful].* Béatrice Lamboy et al., AFEPS, 2017

TOOLS

Duration

Variable depending on the number of participants. 15 minutes.

Equipment

- ✓ Floor mats and/or chairs
- ✓ A small object to place on the stomach (it is also possible to use your hand to 'feel' the movements of the stomach)
- ✓ The quietest possible environment
- ✓ Possible alternative: gentle background music (discreet)

Reminder of the objectives

- → to work on regulating emotions using a simple breathing exercise,
- → to learn to have control over certain physical manifestations of stress (increased breathing and heart rate, etc.),
- → to bring one's body back to a state of calm.

Outline and instructions

Explain to the children that:

There are some body exercises that are very effective in helping you cope with stress: this is the principle of relaxation.

Everyone is capable of doing them: there are very simple techniques which, when used regularly, can become a good ally in difficult day-to-day situations.

These exercises can be done (almost) anywhere: at home, at school, on the bus or in the car... whenever you need them!

Introduce 'belly breathing':

This is way of breathing that is both deep and slow. This is how babies breathe. We lose the habit of breathing like this as we grow up.

Direct your breathing towards your belly rather than your chest: your chest should not rise! Only the belly inflates and deflates like a balloon.

We always inhale (bring air in) through the nose, and we always exhale (let air out) through the mouth, as if we were blowing through a straw.

When we are in a state of stress or intense emotion, our breathing speeds up, our heart rate increases and our body temperature rises. Slowing down and controlling your breathing will actually help to lower the tension and restore a state of calm.

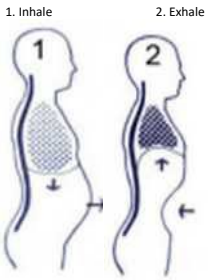

Diagram taken from: The *CPS-Enfants Mindful©* workshops (Béatrice Lamboy et al., AFEPS 2017)

Simulation:

The children can lie down on floor mats (easier for starting the breathing exercises) or sit upright on a chair with feet flat on the floor. They can close their eyes or not, but they must remain silent.

Take a few minutes of quiet time for everyone to reflect on 'how am I feeling?' This step allows us to compare the before and after of the exercise.

If the children are lying down: place a small, light object (preferably something flat: a piece of paper, a sponge, a water bottle lid, a domino, etc.) on the navel of each participant. This will make it easier to visualise the movements of the rising belly.

At the signal, the children should breathe in slowly through their *nose* while the facilitator counts to 5 (the shoulders and chest remain still, only the belly inflates like a balloon and rises!). Next, they should breathe out slowly through their mouth, while the facilitator counts to 5 again (the stomach presses inwards, the navel draws in as if it wants to touch the spine).

This exercise should be repeated 5 times. Then, when the children are able to, let them do it on their own, counting in their heads.

Example: ***"Let's start!***

Inhale...2...,3...,4...5 Exhale...2...3...4...5

Inhale...2...3...4...5 Exhale...2...3...4...5"

Diagram taken from: *CPS-Enfants Mindful©* workshops (Béatrice Lamboy et al., AFEPS 2017)

Warning: do not 'force' your breathing or make it too slow: this could make you feel dizzy! You must take it calmly and allow time between each breath, there is no rush!

At the end of the exercise, ask the children how they feel: "*Did you enjoy the exercise? Was it pleasant? Unpleasant? Easy? (…)*"

Do you feel more relaxed or at ease than before? Do you think it might be useful to do this again yourself at other times?"

Strengths

It allows the children to experience a simple stress management strategy/technique in their own body.

Once mastered, the exercise can be done in almost any circumstance and at any age or stage of life.

In addition to being beneficial for stress management, this exercise optimises the child's brain development and increases their concentration skills.

Points to be aware of

It may take some time to get to grips with the technique: not all children will necessarily succeed on the first try. This does not matter. It may be beneficial to repeat the exercise regularly, over different sessions for example, until each child has mastered it satisfactorily.

Care must be taken as regards the quality of the breathing: if it is not done correctly, its effect will be less. Nevertheless, focusing on one's breathing and the different sensations associated with it (cool air entering the nostrils, warm air gliding out between the lips, relaxed body, etc.) is already a beneficial exercise for refocusing on oneself and beginning to relax.

General social skill 2

RESOLVING RELATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

RESOLVING RELATIONAL DIFFICULTIES (S2)

"**Knowing how to resolve (relational) difficulties** by mobilising social skills is the ability to resolve everyday problematic situations by using favourable relational behaviours. It requires (…) being able to mobilise the capacity for assertiveness and refusal, and knowing how to resolve conflicts constructively" (Santé publique France, 2022, pg. 41).

This second general social PSS (S2) encompasses 2 specific social PSS. The development of each specific PSS relies on several psychological knowledge items and practical skills:

- Specific social PSS 2.1: in order to stand up for oneself (and resist social pressure) by being assertive and refusing (S2.1), **the core psychological knowledge and practical skills are:**

1. Knowing what social influence and social pressure are;
2. Communicating assertively;
3. Refusing assertively;
4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism.

- Specific social PSS 2.2: in order to resolve conflicts constructively (S2.2), **the core psychological knowledge and practical skills are:**

1. Calming down, observing and analysing a conflict situation;
2. Using a support strategy to resolve a type-1 conflict (=1 person has unmet needs);
3. Using a negotiation strategy to resolve a type-2 conflict (=2 people have conflicting needs)

Standing up for oneself (and resisting social pressure) through assertiveness and refusal (S2.1)

Assertiveness refers to the ability, within a relationship, to express and command respect for who one is (particularly one's **inner self** and **subject self**), in a manner that is calm and respectful towards the other person. "Assertiveness skills (refer) to the ability to act according to one's own interests and to have one's rights respected without nevertheless infringing on those of others" [46] (pg. 17). "Assertiveness (implies) a behavioural mode of communication (…), it is the effective, sincere and direct expression of what one thinks, what one wants and what one feels without excessive anxiety, while respecting what others think, want and feel, and without fearing confrontation, with the aim of a quality relationship in line with one's values" [45](16).

In light of this definition of self-assertion and based on the dual purpose of communication (informative and psychological, *see social PSS S1.1*), **assertive communication** comprises two aspects:

- **a clear message** that expresses one's needs, values, rights, thoughts, emotions and feelings;
- **the acceptance of both the other and oneself** within the framework of a relationship based on mutual respect and on the recognition of each person's specific nature and subjectivity.

In order to communicate assertively and resist social pressure, it is necessary to understand how social influence and pressure work, to communicate assertively and to know how to refuse assertively; it is also important to know how to express and receive constructive criticism.

1. Knowing what social influence is and resisting social pressure

Social influence is defined as "any change in an individual's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors caused by other people, who may be actually present or whose presence is imagined, expected, or only implied." (American Psychological Association, APA Dictionary of Psychology). It is present in all our relationships, whether on an individual or collective level. Thus, our behaviours, and our way of thinking and functioning are influenced, directly or indirectly, by many people (parents, teachers, educators, friends, peers, public figures, etc.). This social influence is normal; it promotes social integration; it strengthens the sense of belonging (House, 2018 in Lamboy, 2021 [47]) and therefore satisfies the need for social affiliation, which is an essential psychological need.

Thus, social influence highlights the impact of others on oneself. These changes brought about by others are most often subconscious. They can be produced by one or more people or by groups; by people of the same age or belonging to the same social group (this is called **peer influence**) or by different groups; be the result of actual and personal interactions (this is called **direct social influence**) or be generated in the absence of interpersonal relationships via media (mass media, social media, etc.) and public figures (celebrities, influencers, experts, journalists, politicians, etc.) (this is called **indirect social influence**).

The notion of social influence highlights the process of change brought about by (direct or indirect)

social interactions, but does not allow us to qualify the nature of this change [48]. Indeed, social influence can bring about changes that are favourable
to the development of the person (referred to as adaptive changes through processes of **socialisation**) or unfavourable to the person (referred to as maladaptive changes through mechanisms of **social pressure**) [48]. Unlike processes of **socialisation** that promote the transmission of knowledge and skills, **social pressure** has negative connotations because it produces detrimental effects on the person who experiences it. As it is opposed to the needs and values of the person, social pressure often requires the use of proactive influence strategies based on coercion, persuasion and/or manipulation [48].

Thus, in (direct or indirect) social interactions, when the needs, values and goals of the other (or the group) go against ones own, it is necessary to be able to extract oneself from the process of influence and social pressure.

In order to be able to resist social pressure, three mental and behavioural actions are necessary:

1. **becoming aware of the current process of social pressure** (direct and/or indirect);
2. **becoming aware of one's emotional and relational needs** (need for belonging, need for recognition and need for love) which are at play in the relationship and which support social influence and pressure; contemplating how to respond to these differently while taking into consideration all of one's psychological needs *(see cognitive PSS C1.1)*;
3. **implementing assertive communication** to resist social pressure and command respect, while maintaining a quality relationship.

In order to become more aware of the processes of social pressure, it is necessary to understand these better. Next, it is a matter of being able to identify them in a situation when they appear. The two tables below set out the main techniques of social pressure during social interactions (**direct pressure**) and the sources of social pressure in the absence of interpersonal relationships (**indirect pressure**).

Table S2.1 (1): Examples of direct social pressure techniques

Direct social pressure techniques	**Illustrations**
Teasing and mockery	*At school, a group of children regularly tease and jostle a child who does not dress in branded clothes. This may make them want to submit to the will of the group and change their way of dressing.*
Denigration	*Some children tell another child that they are rubbish at football and that they no longer want them on their team. This might make them want to quit football.*
Threats	*A child discovers that a big kid has broken a window, but that child threatens to hit them if they tell anyone. The child might not dare to tell this to an adult.*
Blackmail	*A girl wants her friend's new toy. She tells her that if she doesn't give it to her, she will tell the secret she had confided in her.*
Flattery	*A child tells another child in the class that they are their best friend and asks them to give them 10 euros. This might encourage them to give it to them.*

Table S2.1 (2): Examples of sources of indirect social pressure

Indirect social pressure	**Illustrations**
Films/Series	*If we see people drinking alcohol in a popular TV series, we may be inclined to imitate that behaviour.*
Radio/TV	*If a presenter says he was a dunce at school and became famous, one can imagine doing the same.*

Advertising	*The aim of advertising is to create desire and to make people believe that the products sold will provide access to the desired wellbeing and happiness (and meet basic psychological needs). For example, if we see a lovely, happy family consuming sugary drinks, we may want to copy this behaviour (and subconsciously hope to achieve/buy this happiness and seek to meet emotional and relational needs).*
Role model	*If the older kids in the neighbourhood often fight, the younger kids will want to copy their behaviour.*
Popular person	*If the most popular girl in the class dresses in crop tops (even though it is not allowed at school), the other girls may want to do the same.*
Group belonging *(majority influence)*	*If all your friends watch pornographic films, you may be inclined to do the same (even if initially you are not particularly interested).*
Public figure	*If a politician swears, young people may feel entitled to speak using vulgar language.*
Celebrity	*If a celebrity who is popular among young people exhibits aggressive behaviour, young people may tend to imitate that same behaviour.*

2. Communicating assertively

Assertiveness is defined as "the ability to confidently express one's opinions or needs without being aggressive, dominant or unduly submissive to others" [49]. **Communicating assertively** contrasts with two other commonly used communication styles:

- **communicating in an inhibited or passive way**: not being able to express one's needs, values, thoughts, emotions or feelings (especially when these are contrary to those of one's interlocutor);
- **communicating aggressively**: expressing one's needs, values, thoughts, emotions or feelings in a brutal way (in substance and/or form) by resorting to physical and/or psychological force, without respecting the other person and to the detriment of the relationship.

"Just like adults, children and adolescents can behave differently depending on the situation or context (…) In the different relational situations we encounter, there are usually three ways to behave. The inhibited subject does not dare to express their needs: they give all the space to the other and do not command respect (…). The behaviour of an aggressive subject consists of imposing oneself in the relationship with the other in order to assert one's point of view without regard for that of the other, even if this means using force or cunning to achieve their ends (...). In contrast, an assertive subject will be able to assert their rights and their point of view in mutual respect for themselves and the other person (…) This ideal position in the relationship is not innate, it is something that is worked on" [50].

Table S2.1 (3): Characteristics of assertive communication compared with passive and aggressive methods (inspired by the table in Bricout and Chaperon, 2020, pg. 171 [50])

Type of communication	Type of relationship	Self-respect (one's needs and values)	Respect for the other (values and needs of the other)
Assertive communication	balanced	yes	yes
Passive communication	dominated/dominant	no	yes
Aggressive communication	dominant/dominated	yes	no

Communicating assertively is neither innate nor easy, especially in situations of disagreement and/or relational difficulties. It is necessary to become aware of the process of social influence or pressure, to be able to identify one's intentions in a communication situation, and finally to practice in order to acquire different verbal and non-verbal behaviours that can be used as appropriate, based on one's preferences and the context.

Assertive communication is based first and foremost on effective and empathetic communication *(see social PSS S1.1 and S1.2)*; it then requires that specific relational behaviours and intentions be implemented in order to make one's needs, values, rights, thoughts and emotions known and respected.

Table CS6 (4): The main verbal and non-verbal behaviours and relational intentions of assertive communication [50]

Verbal behaviours	- **expressing one's point of view, feelings, needs and values precisely** (using an 'I' message if possible, *see emotional PSS E2.1*) - **formulating requests in a simple**, affirmative, short and specific **manner** *(see social PSS S1.1)* - **repeating** one's remarks and requests, if the other person does not listen to you - **clarifying** any requests that are unclear and/or awkward
Non-verbal behaviours	- **keeping calm** (being silent for a moment before speaking can help in keeping calm) - **listening to** the other person (empathetically) - **pausing in silence** to allow the message to be understood - maintaining **a frank** and direct **gaze** - adopting **a relaxed posture** - **using a clear voice** that is sufficiently loud, and talking neither too fast or too slow - using **an open** and smiling **facial expression** - keeping **a satisfactory interpersonal distance** (approximately one arm's length)
Relational intentions	- **commanding respect for one's psychological self** (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*) - **not justifying oneself** (in what one is, thinks or feels) - **preserving the relationship** - **avoiding conflict** - **seeking a compromise** (if there is disagreement with the other)

3. Refusing assertively

Refusing assertively first requires the use of effective, empathetic *(see social PSS S1.1 and S1.2)* **and assertive** communication *(see above).* **Next, this mode of communication entails implementing specific behaviours in order to oppose the demands and intentions of the other that are not in agreement with oneself.**

Table CS6 (5): The main verbal and non-verbal behaviours and relational intentions for assertive refusal [45, 47, 50]

Verbal behaviours	- **expressing one's disagreement in different ways depending on the interlocutor and context:** - saying no resolutely *(e.g., no, I don't want this drink)* - giving a reason *(e.g., no, I've already had enough to drink)* - finding a (true) excuse *(e.g., no, my parents don't let me drink alcohol)* - leaving the situation in order to avoid it *(Ex. no, I'm going to get my bus)* - suggesting doing something else *(e.g., no, come on, let's go somewhere else instead)* - making a joke *(Ex. no, you want to see me drunk?!)*
Non-verbal behaviours	- **clear in terms of information**: know exactly what you want to refuse (and keep it in mind during the conversation) - **clear on a psychological level**: be certain of one's rights to refuse - **expressing oneself frankly and directly** (without 'beating around the bush') - **insisting/persisting ('broken record'),** if the other does not accept - **maintaining your position** if the other insists - **keeping calm** (being silent for a moment before speaking can help in keeping calm) - **taking the other person's emotions into account**
Relational intentions	- **commanding respect for one's psychological self** (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*) - **taking care of oneself** - **protecting oneself** - **preserving the relationship**

4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism

A **constructive comment**, **negative feedback** or "**(constructive) criticism** is a remark that expresses disagreement with one of our behaviours, attitudes or thoughts. (...) The aim of (constructive) criticism is to modify a behaviour that we do not find suitable. The goal is not to hurt/provoke" [46] (pg. 204). Thus, unlike judgements, offenses or insults, constructive criticism fulfils the criteria of assertive and affirmative communication: it allows us to express our needs, values, rights, thoughts, emotions and feelings while respecting the other person in terms of their specific nature, subjectivity and rights, and also to maintain a quality relationship. It implies respect for oneself as well as for the other within a balanced relationship (and not a dominant/dominated one, see table S2.1(1) above). Within the framework of this mutual respect, constructive criticism aims to produce effective change in the other (or in oneself).

Thus, several prerequisites are essential for formulating or receiving constructive criticism [45]:

- checking the relational intention that underlies the criticism and ensuring that it does not aim to hurt, harm, take revenge, destabilise, belittle or dominate the other; thus, value judgements, general criticisms of the person and attacks that are not constructive criticism should be avoided;

- ensuring that the criticism refers to concrete and specific facts that pose a problem (and can be changed) and that it does not correspond to a vague, abstract and general criticism (using for example terms like 'always', 'never', etc.)

- ensuring the criticism is accurate by questioning its grounds; is it a 'true criticism' (based on tangible, precise and explainable facts) or a 'false criticism' (that does not refer to any concrete fact)?

- **In the case of non-constructive criticism (so-called false and/or manipulative criticism)**, the relational intention is not to solve a problem, but rather to harm the other person. The criticism remains vague, general and difficult to understand. The sender cannot/will not clarify the alleged facts. As it is based on a (dominant/dominated, see table S2.1(1) above) relational pattern, this type of exchange cannot lead to dispute resolution or consensus. This type of criticism and relationship can have detrimental consequences for the person being criticised: unease, shame, guilt, despair, anger, loss of self-esteem, etc. Consequently, it is important to be able to identify these relational situations in order to be able to extricate oneself from them [45, 46].

  Firstly, therefore, it is necessary to assess whether we are indeed within the framework of constructive criticism. For this, it is important [45] to:

  - clarify the facts: *for example: "What exactly are you accusing me of? What exactly do you expect from me? What do you really want me to do? Can you explain it to me precisely?, etc."*

  - make the implicit explicit: unconstructive criticism is often expressed through non-verbal (implicit) behaviour; it is therefore necessary to ask the person to formulate their criticism in (explicit) words, without attempting to interpret what is being conveyed implicitly oneself, which could be held against us, *for example: when faced with a: "Thank you for your help," said in a tone of discontent, we could ask: "What exactly do you want to tell me?"*

  Secondly, if, due to these clarifications, we become aware that we are in the context of non-constructive (false and/or manipulative) criticism, it is important to implement protective relational behaviours while maintaining effective, empathetic and assertive communication [45, 46]:

  - refuse firmly (see above);
  - calmly and factually re-establish the truth (in the case of unfounded criticism) and repeat it, if the other person insists: *for example: "What you're telling me isn't correct, I didn't take your pen... no, I assure you that it wasn't me who took your pen..."*
  - cut the discussion short: *for example: "I suggest we talk about it again later with a clear head. /*

I'm sorry that you are insisting so much. / I'm sorry that you don't believe me. / It seems best to end this discussion. / I think we'll leave it at that. / I ask you to leave me alone."

- **<u>In the case of constructive criticism,</u>** the relational intention is to resolve a problem while maintaining the relational bond. It is therefore necessary to use effective, empathetic *(see social PSS S1.1 and S1.2) and assertive (see above)* communication.

  Next, **expressing constructive criticism** involves implementing specific behaviours in order to bring about change in the other person while maintaining a quality relationship.

Table CS6 (6): The main verbal and non-verbal behaviours and relational intentions for expressing constructive criticism [45, 47, 50]

Verbal behaviours	- **expressing the facts that are problematic** *(e.g. You took my felt pens without asking me)* - **expressing one's emotions and feelings of unease** *(e.g. I don't like people touching my things, I don't feel respected, etc.)* - **and possibly the negative consequences for oneself** *(e.g. I don't know where my felt pens are; I can't find them when I need them, etc.)* - **asking the other person to change their behaviour, by proposing (or seeking together with the other person) an alternative solution** *(e.g. I'm happy to lend you my felt pens, but before you borrow them, I want you to ask my permission… if I'm not there, at least leave me a note, etc.)*
Non-verbal behaviours	- **defining one's objective** (and keeping it in mind throughout the exchange) *(E.g., Asking before borrowing my things)* - **identifying the specific facts** that are problematic *(E.g., Took my markers without asking me)* - **only making one criticism** at a time - **having enough time** to allow high-quality communication - **conversing without witnesses**, if possible
Relational intentions	**- resolving a disagreement** **- solving a problem** **- helping the other person improve** **- maintaining the relationship**

Receiving constructive criticism is not easy, even if it is well-founded and the other person's relational intention is good. This involves acknowledging the alleged facts and the associated unpleasant emotions (in the other person and in oneself). Seeking to improve and to maintain a good quality relationship are constructive goals that can help us accept this type of exchange and benefit from it.

Table CS6 (7): The main verbal and non-verbal behaviours and relational intentions for receiving constructive criticism [45, 46, 50]

Verbal behaviours	- **recognising the problematic facts (acknowledging 'one's wrongdoings')** *(E.g., Yes, it's true, I took your felt pens without asking you)* - **recognising the experience of the other** and communicating empathetically (see social PSS S1.2) *(E.g., I understand that you're angry when you get to your desk and can't find your felt pen case)* - **explaining one's behaviour, one's intention** *(E.g., I was supposed to finish my drawing by this afternoon but I had left my felt pens at home; you weren't there…)* **but do not make things up if there is no valid explanation** - **apologising** - **expressing one's choice to change or not** - **formulating solutions** to solve the problem
Non-verbal behaviours	- **listening to the other person** (their message, their emotions, etc.) - **acknowledging the alleged facts** - **choosing to modify or maintain one's behaviour**
Relational intentions	- **resolving a disagreement** - **solving a problem** - **wanting to improve** - **preserving the relationship**

Standing up for oneself through assertive communication, refusal and constructive criticism generates two main beneficial effects:

- **self-respect (of one's needs, feelings and values)**: while social pressure can lead us to accept things that do not suit us, assertive communication, refusal and constructive criticism allow us to command respect for our values and fundamental needs (psychological or physical) within social interactions;

- **high-quality relationships:** 'assertive communication' allows one to command respect while also respecting the other, which allows one to build constructive and respectful relationships. It is in opposition to 'aggressive communication', which in the short term may allow one to impose oneself through fear and domination, but which in the long term deteriorates the quality of the relationship and self-image. It also differs from 'passive communication' which does not allow one to be respected or command respect and which leaves the other the possibility of dominating, mistreating or manipulating us, which in turn leads to a maladapted relationship and an attack on self-esteem and wellbeing.

Standing up for oneself through assertive communication, refusal and constructive criticism requires four conditions:

- **recognising and knowing one's needs, values and feelings, and giving oneself the right to assert these:** in order to be able to stand up for oneself, first it is necessary to know oneself well, to understand the different dimensions of oneself (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*), to recognise and perceive one's fundamental needs, and to define one's values and personal goals (*see cognitive PSS C1.3*). It is important that this self-knowledge is associated with sufficient self-esteem so as not to allow oneself to crushed by the other (see cognitive PSS C1.5). This requires recognising one's own worth ('I have value, what I feel has value, what I want has value') and allowing oneself to assert one's interests, needs, feelings and values. When interacting, it is also necessary to be able to tolerate contradiction, emotions and unpleasant remarks from the other person; standing up for oneself implies taking the risk of upsetting the other person.

- **becoming aware of and overcoming one's apprehensions**: by asserting oneself, one may feel as if one is opposing the other, which can generate fears as well as associated automatic thoughts. These apprehensions may be related to self-image: 'What will people think of me? They will think I am impolite, selfish, authoritarian, etc.', to the dissatisfaction caused to the other person 'It will bother them, they won't be happy, etc.', to affective bonds and needs 'She won't appreciate me anymore, I will be rejected, I will end up all alone, etc.' It is important to be able to identify these automatic thoughts and the associated emotions, and to become aware of any internal conflicts generated by self-assertion. These realisations, along with work on one's rights to assert who one is and to command respect at the same time as respecting the other, will lead to no longer needing to systematically seek the approval of the other in the relationship.

- **knowing and recognising the needs, values and feelings of the other and communicating empathetically:** assertive communication is linked to empathetic communication (*see social PSS S1.2*). Assertiveness entails recognising one's own value as well as that of the other in order not to fall into a dominant/dominated relationship (of the 'aggressive communication' type). It requires recognising and perceiving the specific viewpoints and feelings of each individual; it therefore presupposes the acceptance of diversity and the development of empathetic capacities.

- **communicating effectively:** assertive communication is built on the basis of effective and positive communication; it requires avoiding all obstacles to communication, whether verbal, non-verbal or intentional (see social PSS S1.1).

Key takeaways (S2.1)

Conceptual definition: **"The ability to be assertive** involves knowing how to express one's emotions, needs and ideas appropriately (with confidence, precision and respect) and without stepping aside for others through passivity or social withdrawal, and without imposing one's point of view and rights through aggression). **The ability to refuse** requires knowing how to 'say no' assertively to someone or something that goes against one's needs, desires, values, rights, etc" [1].

Operational definition: Standing up for oneself (and resisting social pressure) by being assertive and refusing involves several knowledge items and practical skills:

1. Understanding social influence and how to resist social pressure: Social influence, which corresponds to any change in oneself caused by another, is a natural phenomenon. Present in all relationships, it allows one to construct oneself in interaction with the other and groups (one's family, educators, relatives, people from one's environment, culture, country, etc.); it promotes social integration, strengthens the sense of belonging and satisfies the fundamental need for social affiliation. When social influence causes changes that are unfavourable for oneself and that go against one's needs and values, this is called social pressure. In order to maintain one's balance and wellbeing, it is necessary to become aware of these social pressure strategies, which often rely on coercion, persuasion and/or manipulation, and to be able to resist them through assertive communication.

2. Communicating assertively: assertive communication entails expressing one's rights, values, needs and feelings while respecting the other person and the relationship. It is opposed to aggressive communication (which seeks to impose one's rights, needs, values and feelings using physical and/or psychological force at the expense of the other and the relationship) and passive (or inhibited) communication (in which one's own rights, needs, values and feelings are not expressed). This balanced communication (which differs from a dominant/dominated relationship) aims to command respect while respecting the other person and the relationship; it requires the use of specific verbal and non-verbal behaviours ('I' message, simple, factual and precise requests, calmness, listening, openness, etc.)

3. Knowing how to refuse assertively: this entails opposing the demands of the other person (which go against one's needs, values and feelings) by using assertive communication. In order to protect oneself and to command respect while also respecting the other and the relationship, it is necessary to express disagreement clearly, frankly and directly at the same time as remaining calm and listening to the other. Different ways of saying 'no' can be used depending on one's interlocutor and the context.

4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism: constructive criticism takes the form of remarks that aim to change a behaviour, a statement or an attitude that does not suit us. Unlike judgements, hurtful remarks or insults, constructive criticism uses assertive communication and allows one to express one's needs, values, rights and feelings while respecting the other person. It requires the ability to express or receive problematic facts

using specific verbal and non-verbal behaviours (a clear description of the problematic behaviour, clear expression of the associated emotion, proposal of alternatives, apologies, one criticism at a time, calmness, listening, etc.). The goal is to improve the situation and not to dominate and/or belittle the other.

Main effects: Standing up for oneself (and resisting social pressure) by being assertive and refusing generates two main effects:

- self-respect (of one's needs, feelings and values): while social pressure leads us to accept things that do not suit us, assertive communication, refusal and constructive criticism allow us to command respect for our values and fundamental needs (psychological or physical) within social interactions;

- high-quality relationships: assertive communication (as opposed to aggressive or passive communication) allows one to command respect while respecting the other. This allows one to build constructive and respectful relationships that promote self-esteem and wellbeing.

Main conditions: standing up for oneself (and resisting social pressure) by being assertive and refusing involves four main conditions:

- recognising and knowing one's needs, values and feelings, and giving oneself the right to assert these: in order to be able to stand up for oneself, first it is necessary to know oneself well, to understand the different dimensions of oneself (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*), to recognise and perceive one's fundamental needs, to define one's values and personal goals (*see cognitive PSS C1.3*) and to have sufficient self-esteem *(see cognitive PSS C1.5)* to allow oneself to assert these in front of others. When interacting, it is also necessary to be able to tolerate contradiction, emotions and unpleasant remarks; standing up for oneself implies taking the risk of upsetting the other person.

- becoming aware of and overcoming one's apprehensions: by asserting oneself, one may feel as if one is opposing the other, which can generate automatic unpleasant thoughts and apprehension. It is important to identify these automatic thoughts, the associated emotions and any internal conflicts generated by self-assertion. These realisations, along with work on one's rights to assert who one is and to command respect at the same time as respecting the other, will lead to no longer needing to systematically seek the approval of the other in the relationship.

- knowing and recognising the needs, values and feelings of the other and communicating empathetically: assertiveness entails recognising one's own value as well as that of the other in order not to fall into a dominant/dominated relationship. It requires recognising and perceiving the specific viewpoints and feelings of each individual; it therefore presupposes the acceptance of diversity and the development of empathetic capacities.

- communicating effectively: assertive communication is built on the basis of effective and positive communication; it requires avoiding all obstacles to communication, whether verbal, non-verbal or intentional (see social PSS S1.1).

Examples of activities to develop the PSS
Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure by being assertive and refusing (S3.1)

Formulating assertive sentences and listening effectively

(Lamboy et al., 2021, pg. 154 [47])

Audience: ☐ Children
☐ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure by being assertive and refusing

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ 1. Understanding social influence and resisting social pressure
☒ 2. Communicating assertively
☒ 3. Knowing how to refuse assertively
☐4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism

Format:
☒ Individual
☐ Group

Equipment:

Formulating assertive sentences and listening effectively

Read the scenarios below and think about the communication style used in each case. Next, answer the questions listed after each scenario.

Scenario 1: "I have trouble saying no to friends and family when they ask me for favours. I don't want to seem insensitive. I feel torn because I always put the needs of others before my own."

==> How can you refuse a request from other people assertively and confidently?

==> How do you react when others refuse your requests for help?

Scenario 2: "I was supposed to go out with a friend. At the last minute she called and cancelled. This happens regularly. I'd like to let her know that this annoys me."

==> How would you criticise this behaviour in an assertive way while still letting the person know that you value their friendship?

Scenario 3: Think of a situation that happened this week that led to a form of non-assertive communication?

=> Can you formulate a more assertive alternative response? How could you communicate it to its recipient?

=> How did it go? How did you feel afterwards?

Practice identifying these different interpersonal styles

(Lamboy et al., 2021, pg.154 [2])

Audience: ☐ Children
☐ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure by being assertive and refusing

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ 1. Understanding social influence and resisting social pressure
☒ 2. Communicating assertively
☐ 3. Knowing how to refuse assertively
☐ 4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Refer to the theoretical section for a description of the communication methods.

Equipment: Whiteboard or flip chart

Exercise: 'Practice identifying these different interpersonal styles'

Scenario:
You return a faulty microwave during the shop's busiest hours.
The seller asks if you have dropped it, operated it with metal objects inside or if your home has been subject to electrical problems.

- You complain in a loud voice, with an accusatory/blaming attitude. (aggressive)
- You are intimidated by the seller; you are unsure of your rights and you decide to keep the faulty microwave. (passive)
- You give the impression of calmly accepting the salesperson's remarks, but you speak ill of them to other customers or go to see the shop manager. (passive/aggressive)
- You calmly express your wish to exchange the product and you stand by your decision. (assertive)

Discussion:

What behaviour helped you identify the interpersonal style?
Can you describe people who behave this way?
How would you feel if you acted that way?

You can see, based on the advantages and disadvantages, that assertive communication is the most efficient style of interpersonal communication. In this exercise, practice replacing each type of interpersonal communication with alternative assertive responses.

Aggressive: You bought a defective good, on a Saturday afternoon, when the shop is full of people, you go and complain loudly to the salesperson and call them a liar.
Alternative assertive response .....

Passive: You are waiting in a queue and you are in a hurry. Someone pushes in front of you and takes your place. You do nothing.
Alternative assertive response .....

Passive-Aggressive: Someone asks you to lend them money. You are uncomfortable with this request, but reluctantly you agree to give them the money the next day. The next day comes and you forget to bring the money with you.
Alternative assertive response .....

Identify your personal barriers to assertive behaviour by answering the following questions:

1. Do you recognise yourself in the common obstacles to assertive behaviour?
2. What are the reasons for not having an assertive attitude?
3. When do you behave in a non-assertive way?
4. With whom do you behave in a non-assertive way?
5. What are the advantages of non-assertive behaviour?
6. In what types of situations, or with what kinds of people, is it advisable to have a non-assertive attitude?

Standing up for oneself clearly, respectfully and firmly

(Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions at school] Volume 2, Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs & Santé publique France [36])

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure by being assertive and refusing

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ 1. Understanding social influence and resisting social pressure
☐ 2. Communicating assertively
☒ 3. Knowing how to refuse assertively
☐ 4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Cards depicting everyday situations

An activity to learn how to assert oneself through consent and refusal - 3

Asserting oneself clearly, respectfully and firmly

Levels: ages 6 to 11.

Objective: to know how to clearly express a refusal.

Duration: 45 minutes.

Format: whole class and groups.

Equipment: cards describing everyday situations.

Suggested activity plan

1 - Set-up phase

- Give a reminder of, or have the pupils recall, what was done previously.
- Explain the objectives of the activity to the pupils: to learn how to express themselves clearly in order to be understood properly.

2 - Implementation

Step 1: as a whole class, ask the pupils: "Have you ever disagreed with someone, but didn't dare tell them?" Have the pupils share their feelings with one another and ask them to recount situations where this has happened to them (recount situations in which they managed to say they disagreed, and situations where they did not manage to do so). Do not pass judgement; this activity should simply facilitate the sharing of different emotions and experiences. "What makes it difficult to say no sometimes?" The answers might be: "I'm afraid of the consequences, I'm afraid of hurting them, I'm afraid of no longer being their friend, I don't know how to say it nicely, etc."

Bring out the importance of knowing how to say no in order to set boundaries and protect oneself. Saying no does not mean disrespecting a person, but is essential for preserving one's integrity. "In your opinion, what makes it important to say no? Is it possible to say no respectfully? Is it a good relationship if we don't respect the other person, if we don't accept the other person's 'no'?"

Explain that the session will help us to learn to say when we disagree, and therefore to maintain and build healthy, respectful relationships.

Step 2: put the pupils into small groups. Give each group a card describing everyday situations.

Ask the pupils to discuss the best way to respond to each scenario, using the skill of saying no. Encourage them to share their ideas and to listen to those of others.

Get each group to make a poster and ask the pupils to write down or draw the different ways they have come up with to say no.

Ask each group to present their poster to the whole class.

Step 3 (on the same day or during a subsequent session): as a whole class, ask the pupils to perform one of the situations from the cards and to act out their refusal using the assertiveness strategies mentioned previously.

If the role play phase takes place during a separate session, ask the pupils what they thought, felt and decided when they were told no and when they said no. At the end of the role play, ask them what factors make a disrespectful person effective (in verbal and non-verbal language).

3 - Review of the activity

Bring out that, in order to say no assertively, one must express one's refusal clearly, respectfully and firmly. Also emphasise that it is possible to get support from the group or an adult when you have trouble making yourself heard or if the other person refuses to listen to you. A written record can be created from the posters and discussions:

- speak in a firm and confident tone (to show what you want);
- be clear and direct (without using long sentences that can be misleading),
- possibly explain why (so that the other person understands the reasons and accepts the refusal);
- use 'I' (to emphasise one's own feelings and needs rather than blaming the other person);
- respect the other person;
- propose an alternative (to show that you are open to discussion and finding common ground).

Other formats

Adapt the everyday situations to the age of the pupils.

Printable resources

Sample ‘everyday situation ‘cards:

In class, you have just finished your geography assessment. Another pupil tries to take your exercise book, saying: "Give me your exercise book so I can copy your answers, I'll give it back to you in a sec." How can you express your refusal to them in a firm yet respectful way?	It's cold today. Your best friend has left her hat and scarf at home again and asks you: "Please can I have yours?" How can you express your refusal to her in a firm yet respectful way?
At home, you are doing your homework in peace and quiet. Your little brother asks if he can listen to music and play next to you. How can you express your refusal to him in a firm yet respectful way?	Pupils from another class want to go in front of you in the queue for the canteen. How can you express your refusal to them in a firm yet respectful way?
Each pupil must think of an idea for a fine arts project. You've come up with your idea. In a conversation with a classmate, you tell him about your idea. He thinks it's great and wants to use it too. How can you express your refusal to him in a firm yet respectful way?	You are playing with a ball in the playground. The ball, thrown too hard and in the wrong direction, lands in the street. A pupil asks you to go and get it. How can you express your refusal to them in a firm yet respectful way?
A good friend doesn't want you to have lunch with any friends apart from her and tells you that she won't want to be your friend anymore if you do. How can you express your refusal to her in a firm yet respectful way?	In science class, you have to make a diagram in pairs to show what you have understood. The pupil who is working with you wants to do everything and doesn't take your ideas into account. How can you express your refusal to them in a firm yet respectful way?
You and two friends are trying to decide what to do in the playground. The first one suggests playing ‘it’, but your other friend has their leg in a cast and can't play ‘it’. How can you express your refusal in a firm yet respectful way?	

I resist pressure (Group exercise)

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure by being assertive and refusing

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ 1. Understanding social influence and resisting social pressure
☐ 2. Communicating assertively
☒ 3. Knowing how to refuse assertively
☐ 4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment:

Each person presents a common means of exerting pressure that is used, as well as suggestions for resisting it. Give examples of means of exerting pressure to illustrate:

- MINIMISING/NORMALISING: In your scenario, one character will put pressure on the other by trying to minimise. They should say: "Come on, it's not a big deal, it's not a problem..."
- IDEALISING: In your scenario, one character will put pressure on the other by seeking to idealise. They should say: "Yes, it's great, it's really good..."
- EXCLUDING: In your scenario, one character will put pressure on the other by seeking to exclude the other if they do not accept. They should say: "If you don't accept, you won't be part of our group anymore..."
- THREATENING: In your scenario, one character will put pressure on the other by threatening them. They should say: "You're going to find yourself in trouble..."
- PUTTING DOWN: In your scenario, one character will put pressure on the other by trying to put them down. They should say: "You're really so rubbish..."

Next, give examples of ways to resist:

- PRESENTING ARGUMENTS

Responding to the different types of pressure:

- SHIFTING THE BLAME
- ADDRESSING THE PRESSURE ITSELF
- SETTING YOUR LIMITS
- SAYING 'NO' firmly, but not aggressively.

Then, in groups, the pupils are invited to act out the scenarios. If the pupils are struggling, share some suggestions with them.

Realisation/Analysis
After each sketch, each character expresses how they feel after having experienced that situation.
The audience is invited to identify the type of pressure involved, as well as the method for resisting pressure.

Expansion/Synthesis/Generalisation
- "Do you ever experience this type of situation? What are your thoughts on it?" - "Is it easy to resist?" - "What can we learn from this work we've done together?"

Sample scenarios:

1. You are home alone. You are not allowed to go out. A friend comes to pick you up and insists on going to the supermarket with you. They minimise the fact that you are not allowed and what you risk by disobeying your parents.

To resist the pressure, here are some strategies to consider: **Present arguments**: "Imagine you were me!" / "I promised my parents!" **Shift the blame**: "Why do I absolutely have to come with you? **Saying No!** firmly, but not aggressively.

2. You are home alone. You are not allowed to go out. A friend comes to pick you up and insists on going to the supermarket with you. They threaten to stop being your friend.

To resist the pressure, here are some strategies to consider:
Present arguments: "Just because we're friends doesn't mean I absolutely have to do what you want!
Address their approach: "You saw how you threatened me..."

3. A friend suggests you watch a horror film while you are alone with him at his house. You don't like that kind of film at all…

He insists by idealising, saying that it's going to be really awesome.
To resist the pressure, here are some strategies to consider:
Saying No! Firmly, but not aggressively.
Set your limits: Say what you feel about this kind of film: fear while watching, awkward and afterwards…

4. "You are on holiday. You find yourself alone with children who are older than you. They want to force you to drink alcohol, for example". They persist by putting you down. They tell you that you suck, that you're a kid…

To resist the pressure, here are some strategies to consider:
Present arguments by saying that you don't see it as that you suck, but rather that you know what you want.
Saying No! Firmly, but not aggressively.

5. "You are on holiday. You find yourself alone with children who are older than you. They want to force you to drink alcohol, for example". They insist and try to exclude you. They say you that you can't hang out with them anymore.

To resist the pressure, here are some strategies to consider:
Present arguments by saying that for you that's not what's important for having a good time together!
Saying No! Firmly, but not aggressively.

Dare to say no

(TEAL, Tous Épanouis à l'École [Everyone Thriving at School] Programme by Floriane Boyer and Rebecca Shankland)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure by being assertive and refusing

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ 1. Understanding social influence and resisting social pressure
☐ 2. Communicating assertively
☒ 3. Knowing how to refuse assertively
☐ 4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Cards with everyday scenarios

Activity 1: Dare to say no

SOCIAL SKILL → Assertiveness and refusal

Instructions

During an interactive discussion, the facilitator explains to the pupils the importance of knowing how to say no in order to respect their boundaries and protect themselves; it is emphasised that saying no does not equate to disrespecting the other person, but rather it is about preserving one's integrity.

Equipment

'I stand up for myself' worksheet

In small groups:
Next, ask the pupils to get into small groups. Give out the cards that have the everyday scenarios written on them (see Activity Resource). Ask the pupils to discuss in their groups the best way to respond to each scenario, using the skill of saying no. Encourage them to share their ideas and to listen to those of others. Then, ask them to perform one of the situations from the cards and to act out their refusal using the assertiveness strategies mentioned previously.

Whole class:
Back as a whole class, ask each group to present the different ways they have found to say no. Invite them to explain their stance for saying no and to reproduce it for the whole class so that everyone can try it.

Situations

Elisa discovers that someone has drawn a portrait that mocks her and put it up in the hallway. She suspects Anthony, who has done this before. Elisa feels the need to talk to Anthony. She wants to understand why he did that and explain to him how it affects her so that he does not do it again.

Each break time, Lisa plays with a group of friends. Mark is always the one who chooses the game, without ever taking into account the opinions of the others. Lisa would like to play something different this time and would like Mark to let others make suggestions.

Kevin regularly makes fun of Anthony and takes part of his snack, under the pretext that it is 'the price for being his friend'. Anthony would like to make Kevin understand that he needs to stop.

Juliette tries to join a skipping game organised by a group of pupils. Leah tells Juliette that she cannot play because she 'doesn't know how to jump properly'. Juliette feels excluded, but knows she has just as much right to play as the others. She then decides to assert herself and asks to be included in the game.

Max likes to play prisonball during break time. However, some pupils, in particular Hugo, play in a very rough manner and throw the ball very hard. Max was hit painfully several times and the others laughed at him when they saw that he was in pain. He would like to ask Hugo and the other pupils to throw less hard so that the game is fun for everyone.

Since the beginning of the year, Matthew has been sitting at a specific table in the canteen with his friends. But recently, a gang of final-year pupils, led by Alex, decided to take over this table. He approaches Matthew and his friends and asks them to go somewhere else even though they are already sitting down. Matthew wants to talk to Alex to find a solution.

Debriefing

- How did you feel when you said 'no' to someone?
- How did you feel when the person accepted your 'no'?
- What could you do if someone kept asking you for something after you had said 'no'?
- What is important for saying 'no' effectively?

The facilitator can use the Activity Resources sheet: 'I assert myself clearly, respectfully and firmly' to guide the pupils in their thinking.

At the end of the session, they give this sheet out to the pupils to remind them of the key aspects of standing up for themselves.

Activity 2: Dare to say no!

I stand up for myself



Look in the eyes:
Look the person in the eyes. This shows that you are confident and that you are listening.



Keep your back straight:
Imagine that you have an invisible rope pulling the top of your head towards the sky. It allows you to stand tall and proud.



Relaxed shoulders:
Keep them relaxed like clouds and slightly back. This gives the impression that you are calm and confident.



Feet firmly planted on the ground:
Imagine that your feet have roots that go deep into the earth. This helps you to feel stable and solid.



Calm breathing:
Take deep breaths into your belly. This helps you calm down and think before you speak.



Speak clearly:
Take your time to say each word clearly.

Social influences and pressures

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure by being assertive and refusing

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ 1. Understanding social influence and resisting social pressure
☐ 2. Communicating assertively
☐ 3. Knowing how to refuse assertively
☐ 4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment:

Instructions

Make groups of approximately 6 children/young people.

Step 1 - Give the groups the following instructions:
"You are a group of young people. You must encourage one of you to do something that is not allowed by the school, family or society (for example: smoking, stealing, insulting, dressing as…, bullying someone, etc.).
In each group, one of you will have to resist the pressure from your group. Imagine whatever situation you want. You can use fictitious first names."

Phase 2 - Each group takes some time to prepare the sketch, then performs it in front of the others
For each presentation, the facilitator observes the group and its strategies for holding the ensuing discussion. They take care to congratulate each group in turn on their presentation. Then, they begin by questioning the young person who had to resist the group alone:

"- *How did you feel when the others tried to convince you?*
- *Was it easy or difficult to refuse to do what they wanted you to do?*
- *How did you resist? Did you find a particular strategy that helped you?"*
OR
"- *What made you give in?"*

Then, the facilitator asks the rest of the group:

"- *What strategies did you observe within the group to get the person to give in?*" Next, the facilitator leads a discussion with the group about peer pressure:

"- *What do you find most difficult in this type of situation: the risk of being rejected or the risk of being caught out?"*

To take this further, during future sessions you can offer the group one of the following group discussion topics:

- My friends tried to push me into to do something I didn't want to do.
- I changed to please a person/group and I didn't like the person I had become.
- I had difficulty saying 'No', but I said it.

Talking circle theme: I had difficulty saying no, but I said it

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type: ☐ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure by being assertive and refusing

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ 1. Understanding social influence and resisting social pressure
☐ 2. Communicating assertively
☒ 3. Knowing how to refuse assertively
☐ 4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment:

The facilitator explains that the members of the group and they themselves are going to take some time for reflection and personal expression. This will allow them to get to know themselves and others better. Today, they will do this by sharing a personal experience on the following theme: *I had difficulty saying no, but I said it.*
Once they have thought of an experience they have had on the theme, the participants are asked to identify, for themselves, the feelings they experienced, the thoughts that went through their minds, and the behaviours they adopted during that experience.
Next, the facilitator invites the participants who wish to do so to share their experience with the rest of the group. Once a participant has finished, if they have not expressed their feelings, thoughts and behaviours, the facilitator helps them to identify these: - *"If I have understood your story/experience correctly, you told us that once… Is that right?* The facilitator allows the person to complete, correct, or validate their reformulation. - *How did you feel at that moment? Did you say anything in particular to yourself at that moment? – How did you react?*
The facilitator and participants do not seek to analyse the experience of the person speaking, by making hypotheses about the causes of that person's feelings/behaviour. Similarly, the participants pass no judgement on the experiences recounted by others.
Each participant who recounts an experience is systematically reformulated so that they feel heard, understood and accepted. Then, the presenter thanks them warmly. Thanking each person for sharing their experience, which benefits the entire group, is essential. This reformulation phase done by the facilitator can be taken over, in turn, by one of the other participants, if they are sufficiently familiar with reformulation techniques.
During the session, the facilitator ensures that any participant who wishes to do so can recount **one** experience on the proposed theme (but not several experiences as this might prevent all those who wish to express themselves from doing so), be reformulated and thanked. The facilitator is also invited to share an experience on the same theme, which helps to promote mutual acquaintance and a bond of trust between the adult in the position of educator and the young people. If the participants are having trouble getting started, the facilitator can also begin by sharing their own experience on the theme.
The sharing of experiences by the participants is followed by a phase during which the facilitator asks the participants to make connections between the experiences/stories: have they identified any common points between these experiences? Any differences? This phase does not lead to a 'universal truth' for the session theme. It is more about observing the trends seen in the different experiences that the participants chose to share that day, in terms of their feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

Agree, disagree

(Agir à fond les CPS : le programme en pratique 6e [In depth work on PSS: curriculum in practice age 11]; Promotion Santé Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and Association Addiction France)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure by being assertive and refusing

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ 1. Understanding social influence and resisting social pressure
☐ 2. Communicating assertively
☐ 3. Knowing how to refuse assertively
☐ 4. Knowing how to give and receive constructive criticism

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment:

AGREE/DISAGREE

Age 11 : SESSION No. 6

FACILITATING THE SESSION

WELCOMING THE GROUP AND STARTING UP THE WORKSHOP - 10 mins

Welcoming the children, set-up

A quick introductory activity to the workshop: short and without debriefing

PHASE 1: INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES - 2 mins

Presentation of today's activity:
Today, we're going to hold a vote with your feet moving debate
Reminder of the group's operating principles (common charter displayed).

Statement of objectives:
"This activity will allow us to position ourselves in relation to statements, to give the reasons for our choices and to listen to the opinions of others."

PHASE 2: ACTIVITY FACILITATION - 20 mins

This activity is done while moving. If it is felt that it is difficult for the pupils to remain standing during the discussions, it can be suggested that they sit on the floor or that chairs be put on either side of the line.

Read out the instructions
(to be reformulated by the young people to check their understanding)
"Your teacher and I are going to read out some sentences.
*If you agree with the statement, you will come and stand on this side of the line (indicate the **'AGREE' side**).*
*If you do not agree with the sentence, you will come to this side of the line (indicate the **'DISAGREE' side**).*

The further you are from the line, the more strongly you agree or disagree with the proposed statement. You cannot position yourself 'straddling' the line.

Next, each person will be invited to explain the reasons for their choice.
If an argument changes your point of view, you can switch sides and explain the reasons for this change."

Activity implementation:
(facilitation and observation of group dynamics)
Suggested statements can be found on the Padlet. It could also be suggested that the young people write their own proposals on pieces of paper, anonymously or not.

PHASE 3: AWARENESS AND GENERALISATION - 15 mins

Depending on the discussions that have taken place, you will not address all of these questions. They are presented here to help guide the awareness exercise somewhat.

Awareness of the emotional experience:
"How did you find this activity? Was it easy for you to position yourself in relation to the statements?"
Invite several children to explain why, seeking to highlight the differences.
Other formulations or repeat prompts: *"What made it sometimes easy and sometimes more difficult to position yourself?"*

Awareness of the cognitive experience:
"What did you use to form your opinion?"
Here, relying on values, knowledge, one's conception of the statement (opinion), experiences, group influence, etc. may emerge.

"In your opinion, how is an opinion (what you think about a particular subject) formed? What influences our opinions?"
Here, we can reuse examples from the line game and discuss what may have influenced a particular opinion: is it what our family thinks, our friends, the influencer or YouTuber we follow, social norms, etc. We can discuss the information, the diversity of the sources.
"Was it relatively easy or difficult to explain your point of view? What can help in presenting one's arguments?

S6

Age 11

SESSION No.6: AGREE/DISAGREE

Was it easy to listen to the other person's opinion? And when this opinion is very different from our own, does it ever happen that it makes us change our minds?

"Do you have the impression that the opinions were often the same or often different? What can we make of this?"

"How does it feel to be the only one who thinks a certain way?"

Try to gather different opinions because, for some, it can be quite straightforward, even pleasant or rewarding, while for others it may be awkward and lead them to follow the group's opinion rather than stand out.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches.

Recall that there is no right or wrong answer.

Generalisation and transfer of skills to other everyday contexts:

Now, ask as to the usefulness in everyday life of the main ideas raised, particularly as regards the rich diversity of viewpoints.

For example:

"What is the point of us knowing how to listen to opinions that are very different from our own?

What is the point of knowing how to explain our points of view and when is this useful?

And what is the point of debating? Is it always needed?

What is the point of understanding what influences our opinions?

Do we have the right to have a different opinion from others? Why is it useful that multiple points of view and opinions are expressed?"

S6

PHASE 4: CONCLUSION - 5 mins

Give the group a quick conclusion, based on the different topics that were most discussed. This conclusion summarises, in 2 or 3 sentences, the key points of what was observed and understood by the children with the generalisation.

"In this activity, we shared our points of view/opinions, we presented our arguments and listened to the arguments of others. We thought that ... (Use the groups' wording) *and*... (Use the group's wording) *and* ... (Use the group's wording)... "

INDIVIDUAL APPROPRIATION AND EXIT FROM THE WORKSHOP - 5 mins

"Before saying 'Goodbye' to one another, we are going to suggest that you take a little time to write down what you want to take with you from this session, what is important to you and what you want to remember because you think it could help you in certain situations.

For this, I am giving out..." (give out the tool intended for individual appropriation at the end of the session) and explain the instructions for this tool.

Once this individual appropriation period is over, distribute the ***'Agree/Disagree'*** cards to the class, so that the adults can organise more debates with the young people

This session is the last one of the year and of the programme. Take the time to say goodbye to the young people and to explain to them, for example, that their form tutor will carry out a review with them in a few weeks.

POINTS TO BE AWARE OF FOR THIS SESSION !!

- Remind them to speak in their own name by saying 'I', that we respect different points of view, but that this does not necessarily mean that we agree
- Pay attention to the distribution of speaking time. Before moving on to the next question, invite the children who have not yet spoken to do so if they wish. If a child quickly takes over speaking, ask them to hold onto their thought and to let the others have a bit more time to think
- If the opinions differ greatly: acknowledge these differences, facilitate the exchange of arguments. If necessary, provide a talking stick
- For children with special educational needs, think about the adaptations needed in advance of the workshop.



Age 11

AGREE/DISAGREE : SESSION No. 6

SUPPORTING THIS PSS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Organise debates of ideas through the activities offered in your subjects. Invite the children to imagine the opinion of a person or character based on their life context and the situations presented in the documents. Identify the sources of influence based on the opinions and views of the characters.

Offer activities to analyse the media and influencers.

MY IDEAS FOR INTEGRATING DEVELOPING THIS PSS INTO MY EVERYDAY LIFE

Resolving conflicts constructively (S2.2)

Interpersonal conflicts arise from a disagreement between two or more people. These disagreements between people form an integral part of any relationship; they are neither positive nor negative in themselves, rather they are intrinsic to all human interaction [26, 27, 51, 52]. Just as most behaviours are motivated by the satisfaction of physical and psychological needs, the majority of interpersonal conflicts originate from the desire to satisfy one's needs. In connection with physical needs, they can also be associated with a situation of a lack of resources (assets, money, time, etc.). Interpersonal conflicts can also arise from an opposition at the level of values, and can confront the beliefs and representations associated with what is conceived by each person as being 'good/bad' and/or 'true/false' (*see cognitive PSS C1.3 & C1.4*) [51].

Therefore, every interpersonal encounter involves people, who have their own needs, values and representations of the world, and which may be divergent or even conflicting. These interpersonal differences generate disputes at the relational level. Disagreements are therefore inherent in any relationship and cannot be avoided [26]. However, the way in which these disputes are understood and dealt with can vary greatly. How conflicts are addressed is a crucial factor in relational quality [27]. The responses provided can transform the conflict into a destructive experience of domination or a constructive interpersonal encounter that promotes growth and learning for each individual [51].

"**Constructive conflict resolution** is the ability to manage relational difficulties constructively by promoting learning and proposing a favourable outcome for all parties involved" [1]. For this, and in the same way as for the skill of 'solving problems creatively' (*see cognitive PSS C2.3*), this entails mobilising one's capacities for attention, analysis and decision-making in order to be reactive, but more inclined towards reflection and informed decision-making. This skill also involves be aware of, mastering and knowing how to use different effective conflict resolution strategies depending on the type of problem [1]. This social skill is based on the **subject Self**, that "part of ourselves over which we can exercise direct and deliberate action" (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*). It involves the four main forms of mental and behavioural actions **AADA** acronym):

1. **A**ttention to and observation of the information presented;
2. **A**nalysis of the information presented using lessons learned;
3. **D**ecision using the information present and lessons learned;
4. Verbal and/or behavioural **A**ction.

It also makes extensive use of the social skills of effective communication (s*ee social PSS S1.1*) and empathy (*see social PSS S1.2*), assertiveness (*see social PSS S2.2*) and the skill of emotional regulation (*see emotional PSS E2.2*).

Therefore, in order to resolve conflicts constructively, it is necessary to succeed in calming down, observing and analysing the conflict situation, and then, depending on the nature of the conflict, implementing the most appropriate strategy: a help strategy in the case of type 1 conflicts (one person has unmet needs in the situation) or a negotiation strategy for type 2 conflicts (two people have opposing needs).

1. Calming down, observing and analysing a conflict situation

In order to deal with a conflict constructively, it is first necessary to calm down in order to reduce the emotional intensity and avoid inappropriate behavioural reactions [26, 46]. The next step is to observe and analyse the conflict situation together with the people involved [27, 51].

- **Calming down**

In situations of conflict or disagreement, the emotions present are often intense; they risk generating impulsive behaviours (called 'acting out') that are not thought out or chosen, and which may be regretted later. The intensity of the emotions makes it impossible to understand the situation in a factual manner or to devise constructive solutions. It is therefore necessary to reduce the emotional intensity before taking any decision or action. Figuratively speaking, the aim is to manage to move from 'red' to 'orange', and if possible, to 'green' before doing or saying something. This is done by using the emotional skill: 'regulating one's unpleasant emotions' in a crisis situation (*see emotional PSS E2.2-b*). By mobilising **acceptance and emotional listening** (in order to become aware of and embrace the emotions present), and by **detaching one's attention** from the conflict situation and **redirecting it** to something neutral or pleasant, emotional intensity decreases on its own. Further, changing activities and/or environments promotes this emotional calming down. **'Time-out spaces'** can be set up and offered in living and working spaces to promote this return to calm. They can take different forms: '**relaxing space'** (promoting relaxation by means of a relaxing setting, activities and objects, such as gentle music, soft toys, poems, books, musical instruments, coloured pencils, etc.), '**emotional space'** (allowing one to express one's emotions freely and safely through movement, the voice, drawing, etc.), '**empathy space'** (where it is possible to have someone listen empathetically). This **time-out**
is necessary before attempting to resolve any conflict.

- **Observing the conflict situation, together with the people involved**

This time spent observing and describing the problem mobilises, on the one hand, the **receptive cognitive functions** of the **subject Self** (the first A of **AADA**) (*see cognitive PSS C1.1*) and on the other hand the social skills of assertive communication (*see social PSS S2.1*) and empathetic communication (*see social PSS S1.2*).

Therefore, the aim is to focus all one's attention on the conflict situation and to identify, in a factual manner, what each person is experiencing, perceiving and feeling, through the skills of (self-)observation, and assertive and empathetic communication.

***First*, each person focuses their attention** on the conflict situation in order to identify their own feelings:

- From my point of view, what is the problem in the relational situation (where, when, how)?
- What am I feeling? What are my psychological and physical needs that are being frustrated?
- Which of my values are being undermined?

***Second*, each person expresses**, in turn, their own representations and feelings they have identified previously by using I-messages (*see emotional PSS E2.1*) and assertive (not aggressive or passive) communication (*see social PSS S2.1*).

***Third,* the representations and experiences of each person are embraced and understood** through active listening comprised of understanding and empathetic reformulations (*see social PSS S1.2*). The goal is to succeed in explaining and understanding each person's perspective (without trying to work out who is right or wrong), by asking questions and reformulating:

- From their point of view, what is the problem in the relational situation (where, when, how)?
- What are they feeling? What are their unmet psychological and physical needs?
- Which of their values are being undermined?

- **Analysing the problematic situation**

After this observation and mutual understanding stage, it is necessary to call upon the **analytical cognitive functions** (the second A in **AADA**), by asking oneself:

Analysis 1: Does the disagreement actually stem from a communication problem, in other words, is it a misunderstanding?

At the end of the first phase of observation and mutual understanding, it is possible to determine whether the conflict situation stems **from a disagreement over form or a disagreement over substance**. Is this a problem of form, i.e. a misunderstanding, a communication problem and/or a misinterpretation of the situation? If so, the previous phase of observing, sharing and listening to each other's points of view should make it possible to resolve the disagreement [46].
If it is a disagreement over substance, the following steps are necessary to arrive at a constructive resolution to the conflict.

Analysis 2: Does the disagreement require the help of a third party (and the mobilisation of the PSS: 'knowing how to ask for help')?

Just like for resolving problems (*see cognitive PSS C2.3 & C2.4*), it is important to consider which **people are best suited to resolving the conflict situation**. Can the people involved in the conflict resolve the problem on their own? Where is it necessary to involve a third party? Some conflicts require the involvement of external parties, professionals or people who can facilitate conflict resolution.

This involves **knowing how to ask for help** (*see cognitive PSS C2.3 & 2.4*) in order to manage inappropriate behaviours and/or support the implementation of conflict resolution strategies (*see below*). When the people involved in a conflict seek to resolve their conflict constructively, face-to-face, with the help of a neutral third party called a 'mediator' it is called '**mediation**' [51].

Analysis 3: What is the origin of the disagreement?

It is also important to understand the nature of the conflict by identifying its origin. To do this, it is necessary **to analyse the conflict situation with regard to the people whose needs are not met [27].** Therefore, in any interpersonal conflict situation, it is essential to ask oneself: "At the origin, who felt unease? Who has unmet or even frustrated physical or psychological needs? It is thus possible to distinguish **between type-1 conflicts** in which only one person has unmet needs at the origin (which in the long term can, of course, spread to the other protagonists) and **type-2 conflicts** in which all the people have, at the origin of the dispute, unmet needs which are in opposition. These two types of conflict situations cannot be resolved constructively and effectively using the same conflict resolution strategies.

In type 1 conflicts, the person whose needs are not met is in a situation of unease or even suffering. This difficult experience can lead to problematic behaviours that can have relational repercussions (for example, a child who uses bad language because they are in a situation of failure). However, in this conflict situation, the person (whose needs are unmet) needs help, and conflict resolution strategies aim to provide it.

In type-2 conflicts, the needs or values of two (or more) people are compromised or are opposed. Everyone feels unease in relation to the same shared situation (two children fighting over the same toy, for example). The aim is then to implement a **negotiation** process in order to resolve the conflict constructively and for everyone to emerge having grown from it.

2. Using a support strategy to resolve a type-1 conflict (=one person has unmet needs in the situation)

In type-1 conflicts, only one person experiences the unease that is at the origin of the conflict situation. This unease is unique to them and is not (directly) related to the other people involved. It can stem from the frustration or non-satisfaction of physical needs (e.g. fatigue, hunger, excitement, tension, etc.) and/or psychological needs (e.g. criticism opposing the need for recognition, rejection opposing the need for belonging and affection, failure opposing the need for competence, etc.).

Depending on their age, situation and character, children or young people may not be able to clearly express what they feel. We can thus differentiate **four ways in which the unease stemming from unmet needs can be expressed:**

1. Verbalising the unease clearly and accurately (e.g., 'Pierre made fun of me at the after-school club and I'm very angry, I want to 'smash his face in'!')
2. Verbalising the unease in imprecise or inaccurate terms (e.g., 'I'm not going back to the after-school club, it's rubbish!')
3. Acting out (e.g., kicking the cat)
4. Silence (e.g. the child does not speak anymore and does not answer the question asked).

These different ways of expressing unease can have repercussions for the relationship. It is natural to be affected by the difficulties of others or to be disturbed by unpleasant verbal or behavioural manifestations (rudeness, excessive tone of voice, hitting, muteness, etc.). However, it is essential to recognise and remember that it is the person who is experiencing the unease and whose physical and/or psychological needs are not being met who is in difficulty first. Thus, in order to resolve this conflict situation constructively, it is essential not to be overwhelmed by the other person's emotions (**emotional contagion**) nor to be too affected by their behavioural manifestations. It is then necessary, if one wishes to promote problem resolution, to be able to make oneself totally available to the other and to adopt **a position of 'helper'.** The next step is to support the person in difficulty by using **the skill of empathetic communication** (*see S1.2*). After this period of active listening, based on understanding and empathetic reformulations, it is possible to offer to **support the other person in resolving their problem using the 4-step technique** *(see skill C2.3 and reminder below).*

Table C2.3 (reminder): The 4-step problem-solving technique

Mental and behavioural actions (AADA)	The 4 steps	What I do
Attention and observation of the information present	**1. I stop and observe the situation**	**I observe:** What is the problem? What am I feeling? What are my needs?
Analysis of the information presented using lessons learned	**2. I imagine, I reflect and I feel**	**I imagine and let** all the possible solutions **come to me** without censoring myself (brainstorming) **I analyse** the consequences of each solution (for myself, others and the environment); **I feel** the effect of each solution within myself.
Decision based on the information available and lessons learned	**3. I choose**	**I choose** the best solution (positive effects for me, others and the environment) based on my analysis and my internal feelings.
Verbal and/or behavioural action	**4. I implement**	**I implement** the chosen solution and observe whether it works. **I make adjustments** based on what I observe.

3. Using a negotiation strategy to resolve a type-2 conflict (=two people have conflicting needs)

In type 2 conflicts, the needs or values of two (or more) people are in opposition and/or are unmet. All the people are personally affected and feel unease in relation to the same shared situation.

- **Characteristics of the negotiation strategy**

In order to resolve the dispute constructively, it is necessary to implement a **negotiation** process. Negotiation is a conflict resolution approach in which the people involved meet face-to-face (without a third party) and work together to resolve their dispute in order to reach a constructive agreement (or consensus) that is satisfactory (or a 'win-win') for all the stakeholders [45, 51]. Thus, it differs from the common ways of reacting to disputes where people confront one another and seek their own benefit without taking into account the other, who is then considered an adversary; these methods of conflict management called 'win-lose approaches' or 'lose-lose approaches' [27, 51] are distinguished from the negotiation approach known as a 'win-win approach'. The latter thus represents "an alternative to the domination-submission behaviours so frequent among humans" [53]. Like assertive communication, conflict resolution by negotiation promotes balanced relationships and helps avoid relationships based on domination and power. By avoiding (passive and/or active) hurtful behaviours and promoting quality interactions (listening, understanding, respect for oneself and the other, joint search for solutions), negotiation offers a constructive alternative to dominant/dominated relationships and a positive outcome to disputes (win-win approach) (*see summary table below*) [27, 46, 51].

Table S2.2 (1): Characteristics of conflict resolution by negotiation (win-win approach) compared with the domination/submission method (lose/lose or lose/win approach)

Conflict resolution type	Behaviours implemented	Respect for oneself and the other (needs and values)	Type of relationship	Outcome of the dispute
Negotiation	**Constructive behaviours**: standing up for oneself (assertiveness), listening and understanding (empathy), seeking a solution	Yes	Balanced	Win-win
Domination/submission	**Aggressive-type harmful behaviours**: hitting, pushing, threatening, provoking, shouting, etc. **Passive-type harmful behaviours**: rejecting, denying, ignoring, avoiding, giving in, etc.	No (oneself or the other)	Dominated/Dominant	Lose-lose or lose-win

- **Prerequisites for implementing a negotiation strategy**

Resolving a conflict using the negotiation strategy is neither innate nor easy. This approach requires us to become aware of our usual ways of functioning as well as to learn new ways of proceeding and representing conflict situations.

Several preliminary attitudes are therefore necessary in order to implement a negotiation strategy [27, 45, 51]:

- drawing a distinction between the problem and the people: every dispute involves both substantive and relational issues. Negotiation requires maintaining a quality relationship in order to 'tackle' the problem together; "be tough on the problem but easy on the people" [45] (*pg. 165).*

The people are no longer adversaries but rather become partners seeking to resolve a common difficulty. Thus, "even when the situation is particularly tense, or even conflictual as regards the substance of the problem, these negotiators continue to be amiable by showing empathy and demonstrating their respect for the other as a person" [45] (*pg. 165).*

- reasoning in terms of needs and values: for a negotiation strategy to work, it is necessary to be able to embrace everyone's needs and values, and not to seek a sole truth. The question is no longer who is right or who is wrong. It is about identifying and recognising the needs and values of each person in the given situation. Needs and values are not always conscious and expressed; but they do lie at the origin of behaviours. It is therefore important to distinguish between behaviours (which can be problematic, unacceptable and need to be changed) and needs (which are personal, legitimate and must be respected). Everyone wants their needs and values to be heard and acknowledged. Disputes can be resolved in a profound and constructive way precisely by embracing and focusing on people's needs and motivations.
- genuinely want to find a consensual solution: for negotiation to work, beforehand, it is necessary to ensure that the stakeholders are ready to seek a solution that is satisfactory for everyone (a 'no loser' approach). Consequently, it is necessary to extricate oneself from power dynamics and relations of domination. It is no longer a question of justifying and demonstrating the 'superiority' of one's own needs and/or values, but of being able to take needs and/or values into account equally, both one's own and those of others. We therefore need to shift from 'why' to 'how', i.e. to prioritise the search for a positive solution for all. The situation must be approached with a constructive attitude and respect for oneself as well as for others (e.g. "Am I ready to hear and consider my needs and values like those of the other person? Am I ready to seek and find a solution that can satisfy the other person's needs as well as my own?).

It is also necessary to master several prior skills in order to implement a negotiation strategy [27, 45, 51]:

- calming down and being sufficiently available: a negotiation process requires sufficient attention and analytical skills; it is therefore necessary to have been able to calm down (*see point 1 above*) and to have strengthened one's full attention skills in order to be totally present in relation to oneself and the other (*see C1.3*);
- standing up for oneself by being assertive and refusing (*see S2.1*): this skill requires being able to express one's needs and values clearly and calmly; this implies having developed one's emotional and behavioural regulation skills, and knowing how to recognise one's (psychological) needs and values;
- communicating empathetically (*see S1.2*): all negotiations involve being able to listen to and understand the needs and values of the other party; it is therefore necessary to be able to perceive these, recognise these and put them into words throughout the conflict resolution process;
- thinking creatively and openly (**mental flexibility**): in order to find a constructive and consensual solution, it is necessary to approach the conflict situation in an open and creative way, so as not to remain stuck in one's own vision of the problem and one's own preconceived responses. The aim is to get away from judgements and 'ready-made' answers. The problem is considered from different angles, solutions can emerge freely and spontaneously, and the proposed options are all embraced as conceivable possibilities.

- **Implementing a negotiation process**

After having ensured that all these prerequisites have been met, a negotiation process can then be undertaken. For this, it is possible to use **the 4-step problem-solving technique adapted to interpersonal situations** *(see C2.3) [26, 27, 51].*

Table S2.2 (2): The 4-step problem-solving technique adapted to interpersonal situations

Mental and behavioural actions (AADA)	The 4 steps	What we do
Attention to and observation of the information presented	**1. We calm down, observe and analyse the conflict situation**	***See point 1 above***
Analysis of the information presented using lessons learned	**2. We imagine** and **we think and feel**	Without holding back, **everyone allows** all the solutions that would resolve the dispute satisfactorily for all stakeholders **to come to mind** **We analyse and feel** the proposed solutions and their consequences (for each person).
Decision based on the information available and lessons learned	**3. We choose**	**We choose** the most advantageous solution based on our analysis and our internal feelings.
Verbal and/or behavioural Action	**4. We implement**	**We define the chosen solution** explicitly and operationally: precise facts, deadline, quantity, condition, duration, etc. (who? does what? how?) **We implement** the chosen solution and observe whether it works. **We make adjustments** based on what we observe.

In everyday life, this negotiation strategy can also be implemented more informally in order to provide consensual solutions to deal with disputes that arise throughout the day and during interactions. For example: "Do we want to take a moment to talk and find a solution that benefits everyone?", "What can we do so that both of us are satisfied with this situation?", "Let's think of a solution that is acceptable to everyone together.", "Let's try to find solutions that meet everyone's needs."

Resolving conflicts constructively (and knowing how to ask for help) generates three main beneficial effects:

- **a reduction in power dynamics and domination, a reduction in hostility and an increase in cooperation:** resolving conflicts constructively helps to prevent the interpersonal difficulties inherent to any relationship from turning into crises and chronic problems. This skill represents an alternative to the power dynamics and domination that inevitably lead to more frustration and hostility between people. Thus, it promotes quality relationships, increases interpersonal cooperation and improves the educational climate.

- **satisfaction of emotional and relational needs:** embracing and taking into account the needs, values and specificities of each person in situations of relational difficulties strengthens the connection to oneself and to the other. This relational quality helps to meet the needs for affection, belonging and recognition, which has a considerable impact on people's wellbeing.

- **Strengthening cognitive abilities (observation, analysis, creativity, critical thinking and cognitive flexibility):** By seeking to resolve a relational difficulty in a constructive way, each person strengthens their ability for (self-)observation and analysis. We learn to become more aware of our feelings and needs, and to observe the problematic situation in which we find ourselves objectively (without judging or interpreting). In order to find the most relevant answer possible, we must mobilise our creativity and allow new ideas to emerge without preconceptions or blocks. Finally, we must use our critical thinking to analyse the different alternatives and select the best one [49]: "**Cognitive flexibility** (which) is represented by the mental functions that allow one to change strategy or to move from one mental disposition to another" is thus reinforced ([13], pg. 30). Therefore, cognitive flexibility, which allows a person to change their way of thinking in the face of a new or complex situation, plays a key role in the constructive resolution of conflicts. It allows a person to change perspective, to abandon an ineffective strategy or to reinterpret a

situation to consider other possible outcomes. It relies in particular on functions such as selective attention, cognitive inhibition (resisting automatic behaviours) and updating information in the working memory. Cognitive flexibility, which primarily entails mental processes related to intellectual adaptation, and psychological flexibility, which also involves emotional regulation, full attention and behavioural engagement, converge in their adaptive function. They both allow us to move beyond rigid or automatic reactions to open ourselves up to other points of view, to bring about new ways of doing things, and to find unique and innovative solutions in complex social situations. They are mutually reinforcing and support the development of more appropriate relational responses, particularly in situations of tension or conflict.

In addition to all the necessary psychosocial skills (see text above), resolving conflicts constructively requires two essential prerequisites:

- taking the needs, values, interests and desires of each person into consideration in a fair manner: contrary to common reactions, this skill requires giving everyone an equal place in the conflict situation and implies giving up imposing one's position and demands on the other.

- the ability to recognise the relational difficulty and have confidence in its joint resolution: in order to resolve a problem, it is essential to be able to first recognise and accept it. It is also necessary to have sufficient confidence in oneself and in the other, as well as in our ability to resolve the problem together in a constructive manner [26].

Key takeaways (S2.2)

Conceptual definition: "**Constructive conflict resolution** is the ability to manage relational difficulties constructively by promoting learning and proposing a favourable outcome for all parties involved" [23]. This skill involves mastering and knowing how to use different effective conflict resolution techniques depending on the context and the nature of the problems" [1].

Operational definition: Resolving conflicts constructively requires mastering several knowledge items and practical skills:

- **Calming down, observing and analysing a conflict situation** in order to determine: if it is a communication problem (misunderstanding), whether the difficulty requires the help of a third party and what unmet needs and/or compromised values lie at the origin of the conflict. It is thus possible to distinguish between type-1 conflicts in which only one person has unmet needs at the outset and type-2 conflicts in which all people have opposing unmet needs;

- **Implementing a support strategy to resolve a type-1 conflict (one person has unmet needs)** by using the skill of empathetic communication (*see S1.2*) and by offering to support the other person in resolving their problem using the 4-step technique *(see skill C2.3).*

- **Implementing a negotiation strategy to resolve a type-2 conflict (several people have opposing needs)**: this requires knowing the characteristics of negotiation, putting the prior attitudes and skills in place, implementing a negotiation process in a formal way (using the 4-step problem-solving technique adapted to relational situations) or in an informal way in everyday interactions.

Key points to remember (S2.2 *continued*)

<u>Main effects:</u> Resolving conflicts constructively enables us to:

- **reduce power dynamics and domination, reduce hostility and increase cooperation:** resolving conflicts constructively helps to prevent the interpersonal difficulties inherent to any relationship from turning into a crisis or chronic problems. This skill represents an alternative to the power dynamics and domination that inevitably lead to more frustration and hostility between people. Thus, it promotes quality relationships, interpersonal cooperation and improves the educational climate.

- **satisfy emotional and relational needs:** embracing and taking into account the needs, values and specificities of each person in situations of relational difficulties strengthens the connection to oneself and to the other. This relational quality helps to meet the needs for affection, belonging and recognition, which has a considerable impact on people's wellbeing.

- **strengthen cognitive abilities (observation, analysis, creativity, critical thinking and cognitive flexibility):** By seeking to resolve a relational difficulty in a constructive way, each person strengthens their ability for (self-)observation and analysis. We learn to become more aware of our feelings and needs, and to observe the problematic situation in which we find ourselves objectively (without judging or interpreting). In order to find the most relevant answer possible, we must mobilise our creativity and allow new ideas to emerge without preconceptions or blocks. Finally, we must use our critical thinking to analyse the different alternatives and select the best one [AIR, 2017]: "**Cognitive flexibility** (which) is represented by the mental functions that allow one to change strategy or to move from one mental disposition to another" is thus reinforced (Seznec, 2019, pg. 30).

<u>Main prerequisites</u>: Resolving conflicts constructively requires:

- **taking the needs, values, interests and desires of each person into consideration in a fair manner**: contrary to common reactions, this skill requires giving everyone an equal place in the conflict situation and implies giving up imposing one's position and demands on the other.

- **the ability to recognise the relational difficulty and have confidence in its joint resolution**: in order to resolve a problem, it is essential to be able to first recognise and accept it. It is also necessary to have sufficient confidence in oneself and in the other, as well as in our ability to resolve the problem together in a constructive manner [26].

Examples of activities to develop the PSS
Resolving conflicts constructively (S2.2)

Everyone can resolve their conflicts

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Resolving conflicts constructively

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☒ Calming down, observing and analysing a conflict situation
☐ Using a support strategy to resolve a type-1 conflict (=1 person has frustrated needs)
☐ Using a negotiation strategy to resolve a type-2 conflict (=2 people have conflicting needs)

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

This activity can be adapted to all age groups.

Equipment: Whiteboard or flip chart

Aims

- To learn about a variety of conflict resolution methods
- To identify the different techniques already used to resolve conflicts
- To develop interest and motivation to try out new conflict resolution methods proposed by group members
- To feel 'equipped' to prevent or resolve the conflicts encountered in one's family, at school, at work or elsewhere…

Instructions

Step 1: First, we define 'conflicts' with the group using terms that are suited to the age of the group members, and by giving concrete examples drawn directly from their experiences.
The group reflects on the notion of conflict.

> Conflicts are a part of life. Even with the best efforts, conflicts will sometimes emerge or erupt.
> They usually stem from the fact that we do not have the same needs as others at the same times. They are not necessarily associated with violence or aggression. Most of the time, we manage to resolve conflicts without even realising it. Example: My friend and I want to play with the ball, we are playing together.
> Some conflicts are necessary and can even be beneficial to us in one way or another: they allow us to resolve issues that annoy and bother us, to clarify things and to make a 'new start', etc.
> Once a conflict has been resolved, one generally feels better.

Step 2: The participants are asked to name any conflict resolution methods that they know from having observed them in their personal life, in their environment, in a film, in a book, etc. and each new method suggested is written on a sheet or on the board.
At the same time, each of these conflict resolution methods that can be used in a seemingly dead-end situation is described, while showing that creativity and goodwill are valuable resources in these situations.

Step 3: At the end of the activities, together with the group, we compare this list with our own list, drawing their attention to any methods not mentioned (See Factsheet).
Integration
Each time a participant mentions a conflict resolution method, they are invited to explain it, then, a group discussion is facilitated using questions such as:
- How does this method work?
- What effects or what results does it produce?
- Have you ever managed to resolve a conflict this way?

Activity tool
The following lists are not exhaustive and the definitions need to be expanded upon.
They can be used for illustrative purposes or as a working basis, while supplementing them with examples from your own experience and that of the group.

Some reactions to conflict
- Violence: Resorting to verbal or physical violence (possibly to be defined with the group and supported by examples)
- Escape: Withdrawing into oneself or leaving the place rather than facing up to the conflict
- Submission: Giving in to the wishes of the other and abandoning one's own
- 'Reporting': Trying to involve other people so that they resolve the conflict in one's place

Some conflict transformation methods
- Postponement: A mutual agreement to postpone the discussion to a more appropriate time
- Distraction: The parties' attention is diverted in order to ease the tension
- Abandonment: Moving on to something else when we cannot solve the problem
- Exaggeration: The people involved interpret the other person's position by amplifying it
- Humour: The anger generated by the conflict is released in a humorous way

Some conflict resolution methods
- Active listening: One person listens to the other, decodes their message and reflects back to them what they have said to ensure they have understood correctly
- Explanation: Each person expresses their personal position on the conflict without threatening the other
- Apology: We say we are sorry, but without accusing ourselves of having been wrong
- Alternating: Each person enjoys the desired benefits in turn
- Sharing: We decide to share in order to derive mutual benefit
- Chance: The conflict is resolved by drawing lots
- Compromise: The parties waive one of their demands in order to reach a mutually acceptable solution
- Negotiation: Each person shares their personal position on the subject of the conflict, and then possible solutions are discussed
- Mediation: A third party is consulted to clarify and resolve a complex or overly intense situation
- No-loser problem resolution: The goals and needs of both sides are identified and together they work out ways to satisfy them.

A conflict? What can be done?

(Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école [Educational kit for empathy sessions at school] Volume 3, Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs & Santé publique France [20])

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Resolving conflicts constructively

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Calming down, observing and analysing a conflict situation
☐ Using a support strategy to resolve a type-1 conflict (=1 person has frustrated needs)
☒ Using a negotiation strategy to resolve a type-2 conflict (=2 people have conflicting needs)

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Scenario handouts

An activity to learn how to resolve conflicts constructively - 1

A conflict? What can be done?

Level: Age 3-5 years

Learning area: mobilising all dimensions of language, learning to live together

Specific objectives:

- to understand what a conflict is

- to learn to express one's feelings and needs in order to resolve a conflict

Duration: approximately 30 minutes

Format: group work

Prerequisite: understanding of the associated vocabulary

Equipment: images or illustrations depicting conflict situations at pre-school, possibly children's picture books presenting conflict situations

Suggested activity plan

1 - Set-up phase

- Recall what has been covered previously, particularly in relation to emotions and effective communication.
- Present the objectives of the activity to the pupils: to understand what a conflict is (= when we disagree) and to learn how to resolve a conflict together in a positive way.

2 - Implementation

Step 1: Guided discussion

- Using a children's book or an image, propose several situations that illustrate different types of conflict. For example
    - *Leila* is *happy, she managed to do the puzzle all by herself. Leila calls the teacher over, but Jules comes along and takes the puzzle apart.*
    - *Neil chooses a book from the library, Pauline wants the same one and snatches it from him.*

- *The pupils are playing in the playground. A small group of boys decide to play with a ball. Elsa and Sarah want to join them. They refuse.*

- Ask open-ended questions to encourage thinking:
- "What do you see in this image? What do you understand from the story? How do you think the children feel in this situation?"
- Guide the children in thinking of solutions that could be fair and respectful of everyone's needs.

Step 2: So, what is a conflict?

- Define the term 'conflict' in a way that is simple and accessible for the children: "A conflict is when people disagree, either because they want the same thing at the same time, or because they want different things, or because they don't have the same opinion as one another, and they end up getting angry or arguing."

For teachers: the noun 'conflict' has its origins in the Latin *conflictus* 'clash, fight, contest (both literally and figuratively)', which is itself derived from the verb *confligere* 'to fight'.

Step 3: Practical activity

- The children are divided into small groups. Each group chooses a conflict scenario from those presented in step 1 or those found in the 'Printable Resources'.
- Each group must act out the proposed situation, so that they understand it, and then discuss and decide on possible solutions to resolve the conflict in a fair and respectful way. The group can represent them in the form of a drawing or dictate them to the adult.
- An adult will be present to help and guide them in their thinking.

Examples of solutions to conflicts:

The different phases for reaching a positive outcome to the conflict can be addressed. It is necessary to be able to:

- regain calm in the face of the storm of emotions
- understand everyone's needs
- come up with solutions and choose the one that is best for everyone
- Suggest to Jules that he and Leila redo the puzzle together.
- Suggest to Pauline and Neil that they sit together in the reading area to read the book together.
- Suggest to Elsa and Sarah that they make their own team to play a ball game.

Step 4: Conflict resolution practical exercise

- Each group of children presents the conflict scenario and their ideas for solutions to the class.
- Encourage discussion and constructive feedback from the other children.
- Highlight ideas that promote collaboration and mutual respect.

Step 5: Conclusion

- Summarise the main ideas of the session: understanding conflicts, expressing feelings and needs, and finding solutions together.
- After these sessions, a display can be created summarising the conflict situations and the proposed solutions.
- Praise the children on their participation and creativity in resolving conflicts.
- Encourage them to use the skills learned when faced with conflicts in the future.

3 - Review of the activity

- Ask the pupils what they have learned from the activity.
- Conclude with "What have you learned today from this activity?"

Other formats and possible extensions

- The definition can be constructed from reading children's picture books.
- For pupils who are very emotional or who have great difficulty managing their emotions, it will be better to use situations they have not experienced.
- For younger pupils, together with an adult:
    - either describe the image, identify what the problem is or provide guidance using questions;
    - either have one pupil act out the situations (e.g., give a puzzle to one pupil and ask another to come and take it from them) and then stop the role play at the moment that poses a problem, like a 'freeze frame'. Engage in an exchange (guided by questions from the adult) to show what the problem is, what the pupils feel, and how we can do things 'differently' to avoid a conflict or to resolve it.

Printable resources

Examples of conflict situations











Conflict resolution sketches

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☒ Children
☐ Teenagers
☐ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Resolving conflicts constructively
Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Calming down, observing and analysing a conflict situation
☐ Using a support strategy to resolve a type-1 conflict (=1 person has frustrated needs)
☒ Using a negotiation strategy to resolve a type-2 conflict (=2 people have conflicting needs)

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

Equipment: Scenario handouts

Instructions

Step 1: After having reminded the participants that while conflicts are inherent to everyone's life, it can be helpful to work on our ability to resolve them, we can explain that today's activity will allow us to work on different conflict resolution methods.
Next, invite two volunteers to act out one of the conflict situations described in the scenarios in front of the group.

Step 2: After having read out one of the scenarios, the two volunteers act out the situation that caused the conflict in front of the group.
Remember to thank them after their sketch!
If necessary, they can replay the sketch several times to allow them to truly identify the feeling(s) of their respective character(s), and interpret this in front of the group.
For this, after the first performance we can ask them:
- What did you feel when you were acting?
- What do you think your character was feeling?

If the actors really embody the conflict scenario, the need to find a method for resolving this conflict becomes more apparent.

Step 3: The group is then asked to think together about a way to resolve the conflict, and to act out the proposal(s) in front of the group. Once the volunteers have reenacted the sketch with their own conflict resolution method, thank them and ask them what they would call this conflict resolution method.
Write this method on the board.

Step 4: If necessary, the volunteers can then be asked to perform the sketch again, resolving the conflict using the indicated method at the end of the scenario. Ask the group what they think this conflict resolution method is called.

Step 5: Two other volunteers perform the next conflict sketch. Integration
Allow the children to share their thoughts about conflicts and their methods of resolution at any point during the activity. At the end of the activity, enable them to become aware of all the resolution methods experienced during the activity.

The proposed scenarios make it possible to get the activity started and to understand how it works. They also act as a support to help the participants reflect, in a second stage, on (real or fictional) conflicts that they would like to act out and for which they could look for resolution methods. This can make it possible to gain a more personal understanding of the benefit of working on conflicts and their resolution.
It is best not to encourage the children to present conflicts in which several of them are currently involved to avoid a settling of scores.

Conflict sketch scenarios to perform

- The proposed scenarios make it possible to get the activity started and to understand how it works. They also act as a support to help the participant(s) reflect, in a second stage, on (real or fictional) conflicts that they would like to act out and for which they could look for resolution methods. This can make it possible to gain a more personal understanding of the benefit of working on conflicts and their resolution.
The conflict resolution method used in the sketch can be found at the end of each proposed scenario. For each of them, other types of resolution are possible, this time initiated by the pair of actors, or by another pair who perform in turn.

Scenario 1: 'Book lover's help'
Act 1: The first actor is carrying a large pile of books. The second one comes running up, wants to help them and snatches the books from their hands. The first one does not want any help and shouts at the top of their lungs: 'Leave me alone!' Act 2: The conflict is resolved when the first person explains to the second why they do not want their help.
Method: Explanation

Scenario 2: 'Money found'
Act 1: A coin is twinkling on the ground. Both actors see it at the same time and they both want to have it. A conflict ensues as each one claims that the coin belongs to them.
Act 2: To resolve their conflict, they decide to toss the coin.
Method: Chance

Scenario 3: 'Free seat'
Act 1: There is a free seat at the front of the car or bus. Both actors want to sit there and a conflict erupts.
Act 2: The two actors decide to take turns in sitting there and thus resolve their conflict. The first one sits there for the first half of the journey, then lets the other one have the seat.
Method: Alternation

Scenario 4: 'One ball, two players'
Act 1: The two actors are quarrelling because they both want to play with the same ball. Act 2: They decide to play together, with the same ball, and the conflict is then resolved.
Method: Sharing

Scenario 5: 'Collision on the way to the bus'
Act 1: Two actors are running towards the bus. The first one is in a big hurry and doesn't see the second one who is also running in the same direction. Without realising it, the first one trips the second one. The second one stumbles, gets angry and insults the first one.
Act 2: The first apologises and the second accepts their apology. They resolved their conflict.
Method: Apology

NOTE: *It is best not to encourage the children to present conflicts in which several of them are currently involved to avoid the settling of scores.*

I negotiated or compromised, and thus resolved the conflict

(PRODAS Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)

Audience: ☒ Children
☒ Teenagers
☒ Adults

Activity type : ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

Main objective: Resolving conflicts constructively

Knowledge and practical skills developed:

☐ Calming down, observing and analysing a conflict situation
☐ Using a support strategy to resolve a type-1 conflict (=1 person has frustrated needs)
☒ Using a negotiation strategy to resolve a type-2 conflict (=2 people have conflicting needs)

Format:
☐ Individual
☒ Group

The activity can be adapted to be done with children

Equipment:

The facilitator explains that the members of the group and they themselves are going to take some time for reflection and personal expression. This will allow them to get to know themselves and others better. Today, they will do this by trying to remember a personal experience on the following theme: I negotiated, or came to a compromise, and thus resolved the conflict. Once they have thought of an experience, the participants are asked to identify the feelings they experienced, the thoughts that went through their minds, and the behaviours they adopted during that experience. When a participant speaks, the facilitator helps them formulate their story if they have difficulty doing so, then rephrases their statement so that they feel heard, understood and accepted. Once they have finished, if they have not expressed their feelings, thoughts and behaviours, the facilitator helps them to identify these:

- If I understood your story/experience correctly, you told us that… Is that right? The facilitator allows the person to complete, correct or validate their reformulation.
- How did you feel when…?
- At the end of the story, did you feel different? Did you say anything in particular to yourself at that moment?
- How did you act?
- Thank you very much for sharing this story!

Thanking each person for sharing their experience, which benefits the entire group, is essential. Then, the facilitator gives the floor to another person who wishes to share an experience. The facilitator is also invited to share an experience on the same theme, which helps to promote mutual acquaintance and a bond of trust between the adult in the position of educator and the young people. If the participants are having trouble getting started, the facilitator can also begin by sharing their own experience on the theme.

CONCLUSION

With the publication of this second volume, **PSS experts and trainers** have a complete operational framework that provides a body of fundamental knowledge on all the PSS in the updated classification published by Santé publique France in 2022 [1]. Mastery of these theoretical foundations of the PSS will facilitate proper identification of the psychological mechanisms involved in interventions aimed at developing PSS, the ability to construct or adapt an intervention for a defined audience and context, and the transmission of the necessary expertise to the participants.

As highlighted in the introduction to this work, the updated PSS classification sets out the main PSS that are key to individuals' psychosocial development, based on various international classifications and research data. It is in line with the World Health Organization's definition of the three categories of PSS: cognitive, emotional and social. Although neither the number of PSS nor their names are completely identical at the international level, the various classificatory approaches do converge.

The one proposed by Santé publique France, as a result of the collective work undertaken by its thematic support committee composed of French-speaking researchers and field experts, aimed to establish a common and operational framework for French professionals. This framework is fundamental to the deployment of PSS actions nationwide with all the stakeholders involved in the multi-sectoral strategy to develop the PSS of children and young people, and thus promote the consistency of its application.

Consequently, the Santé publique France frameworks aim to foster a common culture among all the persons and sectors involved in the national strategy to deploy PSS. Nevertheless, it is important to keep their limitations in mind. These works, which are based on evidence and experiential knowledge, form part of a comprehensive knowledge transfer approach aimed at practitioners. They do not purport to be:

- academic works presenting an exhaustive synthesis of the established scientific knowledge on the subject, reporting the multiple theoretical models and the various research works in the diverse fields of psychology;
- intervention manuals to implement PSS activities based on a 'self-service' choice of activities. While a theoretical description of the knowledge and practical skills related to each PSS is followed by a presentation of sample activities for different age groups, these activities are included for the sole purpose of illustrating, through practice, the PSS presented.

One of the **key contributions** of this framework is that it has formalised and given structure to two important elements for understanding PSS from an operational perspective:

- the identification of two developmental phases, which justifies the idea of progressive learning; this understanding is often requested by professionals wishing to implement interventions. This affects the three categories: cognitive, emotional and social, with, for each of them, an initial general PSS relating to
- self-understanding and self-acceptance, and a secondary general PSS of self-regulation and self-fulfilment;
- for each of the specific PSS, the formalisation of the core knowledge and practical skills to be acquired to promote its optimal development.

For harmonious cognitive, emotional and social development, it is evident that the three PSS categories are interrelated, and that there would be little sense in favouring the development of one or two categories

of PSS at the expense of the other. For example, the basic general cognitive PSS 'Raising self-awareness', entailing, among other things, understanding the different dimensions of the self and becoming aware of one's values, psychological needs and goals, is just as crucial for understanding and regulating one's emotions as it is for strengthening one's ability to forge enriching social interactions.

The acquisition and strengthening of PSS take place gradually from early childhood, tracking the neuropsychological development of the child and young person, and can be continued throughout life. This progression is therefore a function of age, but is also contextual, depending on life experiences and the family, social and cultural environment of the individual. The implementation of a policy to develop PSS in children and young people aims to enable them to reach an optimal level of psychic resources, and thus significantly reduce inequalities.

The adaptation of PSS interventions to the age of the participants and on the basis of contextual factors is a major step in the National PSS Deployment Strategy. These adaptations must be carried out by experienced PSS experts and trainers who have, on the one hand, precise and up-to-date knowledge and understanding of PSS and, on the other hand, experiential knowledge of the implementation of PSS interventions that are adapted to the audience and intervention context. A recent experience of adaptation to the educational context is the joint production of the 'Empathy Kit' by the Primary and Secondary Education System and Santé publique France. It is aimed at the implementation of PSS sessions to develop empathy and associated PSS that are well integrated into the educational setting. The initial feedback, which was generally very positive, demonstrated the benefit of the approach and even the need to go further in adapting it to different ages, and to provide operational support for its implementation. In all settings, it will also be necessary to ensure that the vulnerabilities of different audiences, situations of disability, and the sensitivity of certain situations or contexts are taken into account.

The importance of the intervention setting is recalled in the introduction to this work (it is the subject of the first chapter of volume I of the operational framework). This entails integrating scientific evidence and experiential knowledge from professionals and the target audience into the design and application of an intervention (in line with the original Evidence Based Medicine approach). This implies that an intervention and practices are co-constructed. Based on research and evaluation work carried out on interventions, the criteria of a high-quality intervention [1, 2] include many factors relating to the setting and context, including an educational environment that is favourable to the development of PSS. For the general deployment exercise that is in progress, the development of PSS cannot rely on one-off interventions at volunteer establishments run by expert facilitators.

As their involvement in PSS practices is necessary, there is therefore **a considerable need to train professionals** in educational positions to raise their knowledge of PSS, strengthen their own PSS, develop professional behaviours that support PSS and implement high-quality PSS practices. In support of the national strategy, ministerial roadmaps and the PSS strategies of each of the ministries, **Santé publique France is, as part of its PSS programme,** involved in the transfer of expertise and the production of generic materials that can serve as a basis for the different sectors and field professionals.

In this regard, Santé publique France has already produced several reference deliverables on PSS. These are free to access from its website and from the Eduscol website (in particular for the 'Empathy Kit'):

- a scientific and theoretical reference: complete report and summary [1];
- a brochure '*L'essentiel à savoir sur les compétences psychosociales*' [The key things to know about psychosocial skills] [8];

- a tool for intervention in schools, co-constructed with the Primary and Secondary Education System: *le Kit pédagogique pour les séances d'empathie à l'école* [The pedagogic kit for empathy sessions at school] (2024);
- Volume I of the PSS operational framework [2];
- summary sheets based on the operational framework, Volume I [8];
- self-assessment grids: one grid on intervention quality criteria and one on the knowledge and practical skills associated with each PSS (2025).

This operational framework should be of use to all the trainers and experts involved in psychosocial skill actions and practices, regardless of their target audiences and sectors of intervention. It contributes to constructing a common culture based on science and French expertise and to supporting the deployment of high-quality interventions nationwide. The stakes are high for children and young people, as well as for all the adults who support them, given that the aim of the Intersectoral Strategy is for the 2037 generation to be the first to grow up in an environment of continuous support for the development of psychosocial skills.

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This two-volume framework has been designed to **promote knowledge sharing and to forge a common culture** in relation to psychosocial skills (PSS). It provides a robust conceptual and operational basis aimed at enabling the implementation of high-quality, evidence-based PSS interventions.

In support of the national strategy for deploying PSS to children, young people and adults in educational positions, this work is based on a synthesis of scientific knowledge combined with the experiential knowledge accumulated by French experts. It is **primarily aimed at experienced professionals** – PSS trainers, experts or programme managers – and sets out the main knowledge and practical skills that are essential for enriching and consolidating their PSS practices.

Its main objective is to explain the **psychological mechanisms** that underlie each PSS. To do this, it associates each PSS with its specific theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Its structure follows a pedagogical progression, split over two volumes.

Volume I covers the 'fundamental' PSS, which aim to strengthen the **understanding and acceptance** of cognitive, emotional and relational processes. The development of these initial cognitive, emotional and social PSS is a prerequisite for developing the subsequent PSS.

Volume II introduces the PSS that facilitate growth in **emotional and behavioural regulation, and in self-fulfilment capacities.**

Together, these two volumes cover all the six general and twenty specific PSS – classified into three categories (cognitive, emotional and social) – and the fifty-five associated knowledge items and practical skills, in order to offer a comprehensive and progressive approach.

KEYWORDS: psychosocial skills, wellbeing, mental health, educational success, violence, addictions, prevention, health promotion, psychoeducation, children, young people, parenting.

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