TEACHERS'
HANDBOOK

EduCardia

Assessment and improvement of socioemotional competencies of students powered by a smart digital toolkit and targeted educational activities applied on physical and online classrooms.

EduCardia

" Educating the mind
without educating the heart
is no education at all ."

Aristotle

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Foreword

Dear Reader,

EduCardia is an Erasmus+ project that brings together education institutes, teaching practitioners and researchers from four European countries, namely Greece, Spain, Romania and Cyprus. The main objective of EduCardia is to design and pilot in schools an Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)-powered Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) methodology that helps to assess and promote the development of the social and emotional competencies of the students. The lifetime of EduCardia spans from 2022 to 2025, however the current document aims to serve the educational community across time.

The "EduCardia" Erasmus+ project operates on the belief that assessing learning in modern European schools should extend beyond merely evaluating the students' knowledge and academic achievements. It should also include approaches that observe and promote young people's personal growth, social skills and attitudes. To this end, we propose a collection of practical tools and materials to assess social and emotional skills at individual and group level. The developed tools and materials are designed for teachers to collaboratively work on with their students. These materials aim to enhance awareness of the social and emotional dimensions of learning, promote healthy personality development, and foster positive relationships within the school community.

This handbook is intended for teachers working at primary and secondary education schools and specifically with children at the ages from 6 to 18 years old. It outlines the main principles for successful practice of SEL at school, focusing on the assessment part. SEL is a rapidly developing field where new research data and educational practices are appearing everyday all over the world. The handbook does not attempt to provide full and comprehensive knowledge on SEL but aims to support educators in their practical school work and promote further development of assessment practices.

Although this guidebook is primarily targeted at school teachers, it can also be used by educators in non-formal education, including youth workers, sports coaches, art teachers and other specialists working with children and young people. We believe it is important that all the educators that are involved with children and youth have a common understanding of social and emotional development and share effective practices of assessment that move learning further.

We hope that the outcomes of the EduCardia Erasmus+ project will support both students and teachers in their path of personal emotional and social growth.

Yours sincerely,
The EduCardia Project Team

acknowledgements

Chapter 1

The Educardia Methodology

1.1 Motivation

The development of a safe and supportive school climate within the classroom can provide new opportunities for enhancing children's academic, social, and relational outcomes. To facilitate the success of inclusion as an approach and philosophy, it is important that all class members as well as their teachers develop the skills to understand each other, communicate and work together effectively.

Through the EduCardia methodology, teachers are able to identify at-risk and neglected students in the classroom, potential victims of bullying as well as the existence of cliques. By having access to assessment results of the socio-emotional status of the students, group-based educational activities are offered to improve the inclusion of the students and promote educational equity.

The vision of EduCardia is to facilitate the creation of a safe and supportive school climate that helps to prevent bullying and all forms of discrimination and violence and promote emotional education in schools.

EduCardia is offering an assessment methodology, focusing on assessing and improving socio-emotional competencies of students in primary and secondary educational level.

EduCardia tackles both the development of the appropriate social and emotional learning (SEL) material and the development of an online tool (software) that enables teachers to efficiently apply assessment processes within their classrooms and track the development of socioemotional competencies of students.

The main distinguishing point in EduCardia compared to various SEL-oriented activities is that it focuses on the assessment part and the provision of methodologies and tools to facilitate teachers to apply SEL programs within classrooms. Although there is a lot of SEL material available, few methodologies and tools are provided for the assessment part. In EduCardia, assessment processes are assisted by the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) tools.

1.2 Objectives

#1

To present the ICT-powered EduCardia SEL methodology for assessing and improving the socio-emotional competencies of students of ages from 6 to 18 years old.

#2

To make clear and self-explainable the interpretation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) constructs and models by teachers. This is achieved through the presentation of the open-access EmoSocio EI model, detailing a set of items and constructs that are applicable for students in primary and secondary schools.

#3

To facilitate teachers to apply the proposed pedagogical methodology in a wide scale and with low entry barriers, based on the development and the release of an open-source psychometric toolkit named EmoSociograms for assessing and tracking the evolution of socioemotional competencies of students.

#4

To present the EduCardia SEL activities repository that hosts a wide set of SEL activities that are aligned with the EmoSocio model and can be applied to students in primary and secondary education.

#5

To disseminate and communicate the impact of the EduCardia methodology.

1. 3 Educardia Methodology

Sure. It is a methodology for the assessment of social and emotional competencies of students.

The EduCardia assessment methodology consists of seven steps that should be followed by teachers to assess and improve the socio-emotional skills of the students (Fotopoulou, 2025), as depicted in Figure 1. A high level view of the EduCardia methodology is provided in this video.

Video also available at
https://educardia.eu/

Figure 1: The EduCardia Methodology.

1. 3 Educardia Methodology

The **first step** regards the familiarization of the teachers with the EduCardia pedagogical material and tools. In this phase, the teachers are invited to study the proposed SEL material part – including the current handbook- and enrich their knowledge on aspects related to emotional intelligence, emotional education and assessment techniques. The teachers should also get familiarized with the usage and configuration of the developed ICT tools.

In the **second step**, the assessment process takes place. To achieve so, the developed EmoSocio Inventory and the **EmoSociograms psychometric tool** are used. The EmoSocio Inventory includes a set of items that are used for assessing social and emotional competencies of the students, while EmoSociograms regards a software tool used for collecting the preferences of the students in a straightforward and online way.

In the **third step**, the assessment results are made available to the teacher of the classroom. Through a set of analysis results and intuitive visualizations, the teacher may observe better the social dynamics of the classroom as well as the social and emotional competencies of the students. In this way, identification of persons in need may take place, while assessment of group-based indexes is also provided (e.g., status of the classroom climate).

In the **fourth step**, interventions can be selected to improve specific competencies at individual and group level. The EduCardia SEL Activities Repository hosts a set of activities that may be applied.

Given that many of the activities demand the splitting of the classroom in subgroups, at the **fifth step**, an automatic splitting (sub-grouping) of the classroom is proposed based on the sociometric and emotional characteristics of the group. To achieve so, graph analysis algorithms are applied, aiming to provide optimal solutions in terms of partitioning of the overall classroom to smaller groups to achieve specific objectives (e.g., improvement in the average empathy index).

At the **sixth step**, the selected SEL activities are applied in the in person or online groups of students. Supervision of the students during such activities is important to guarantee the proper application of the socioemotional interventions.

Upon each activity completion, in the **seventh step**, both teachers and optionally the students can evaluate the applied activity. Based on the collected feedback, rating of the provided SEL activities in the EduCardia SEL Activities Repository is provided, facilitating teachers to select the more effective and qualitative activities to be applied in their classrooms.

The application of activities can be repeated many times. The assessment process can be realized periodically so as to track the evolution of the social and emotional competencies of students. The frequency of the assessment depends on the type and the needs of each classroom. The objective is to be able to identify changes in the assessed competencies, to proceed to corrective actions (e.g., application of further activities) and to support the development of a supportive school climate. In addition, teachers may contribute to the enrichment of the SEL activities repository by adding new activities and/or modifying the existing ones. Possible modifications could include the differentiation of specific activities depending on the unique characteristics of the groups (e.g., special needs or multicultural diversity).

Chapter 2

Overview of Emotions and the role of Emotional Education

What is an emotion?

We experience emotions all the time, that's why they are indeed considered to be an integral part of our human experience, shaping our perceptions and actions and determining our well-being.

Understanding the essence of emotions is essential for navigating through life's complexities, but...

What is an emotion? According to Bisquerra (Bisquerra , 2009), it is defined as it follows:
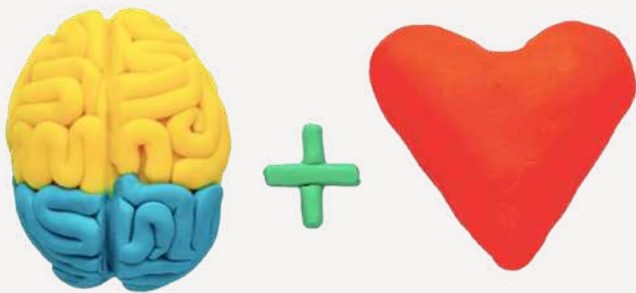
An emotion is a complex state of the organism characterized by an excitation or disturbance that predisposes to action

Bisquerra, 2009

2.2 HOW ARE THEY ACTIVATED?

Figure 2: Characteristics of an emotional response.

According to Bisquerra (Bisquerra , 2009), the emotional response encompasses several factors, as depicted in Figure 2.

Event

Every emotional response gets triggered by an event, which can be of different nature:
It can be an external event, such as a car crash, or an internal event, like a thought or memory.
The event can be current, related to the present moment, or it can be from the past or even anticipated in the future.
It can be a real event happening in reality or an imagined event created in our minds (i.e., through future forecasting or event simulation).
It can be something we are consciously aware of or something that operates at an unconscious level, influencing our emotions without us being fully aware of it.

The emotional response
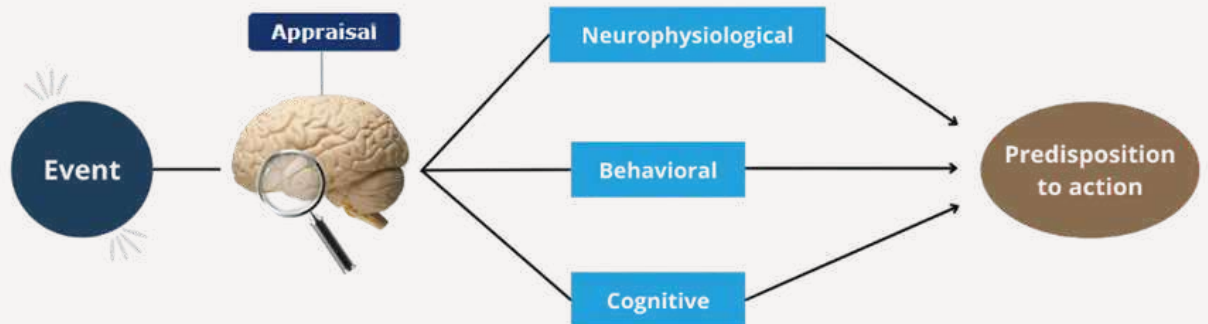
Figure 2: Characteristics of an emotional response.

HOW ARE THEY ACTIVATED?

According to Bisquerra (Bisquerra , 2009), the emotional response encompasses several factors, as depicted in Figure 2.

Appraisal

Our emotional response is influenced by various factors, including our previous experiences, learned patterns, beliefs, and the context in which things occur. The appraisal refers to the evaluation or assessment we make of the event and its significance to us.

There are two stages in the appraisal part:

A first automatic or primary appraisal (Arnold, 1960), in which we ask ourselves: "**how does this event affect my survival? And how does it affect my well-being?**".
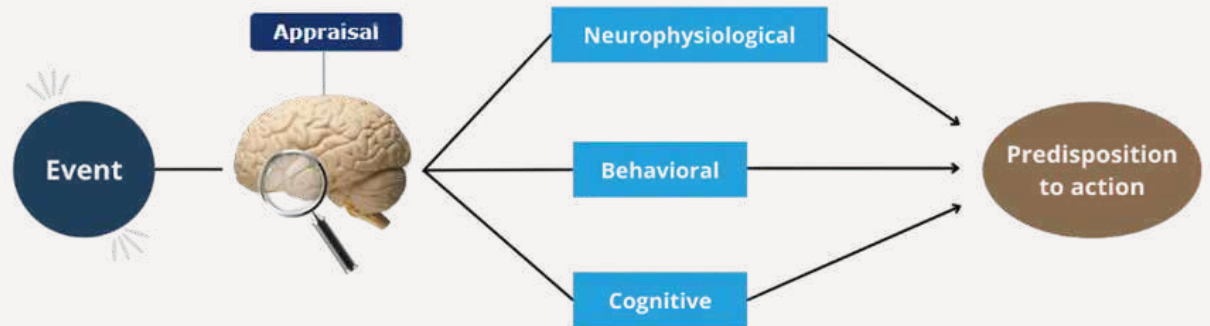
HOW ARE THEY ACTIVATED?

Figure 2: Characteristics of an emotional response.

According to Bisquerra (Bisquerra , 2009), the emotional response encompasses several factors, as depicted in Figure 2.

Appraisal

A second cognitive or secondary appraisal (Lazarus, 1991), which makes us ask ourselves: "**am I in a position to cope with this situation?**". Depending on the answer, the flight or fight response may arise (adapted to the nature and characteristics of each event).
The importance of the appraisal is reflected in these **famous words of Epictetus:**

We are not affected by what happens to us, but by what we tell ourselves about what happens to us
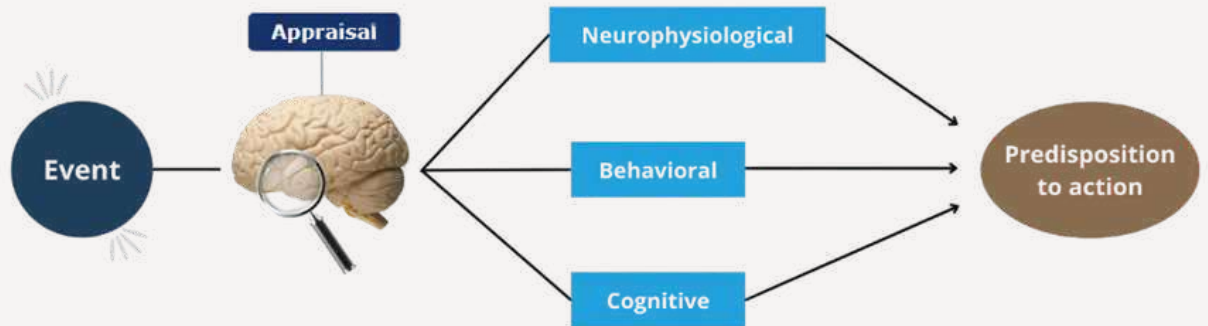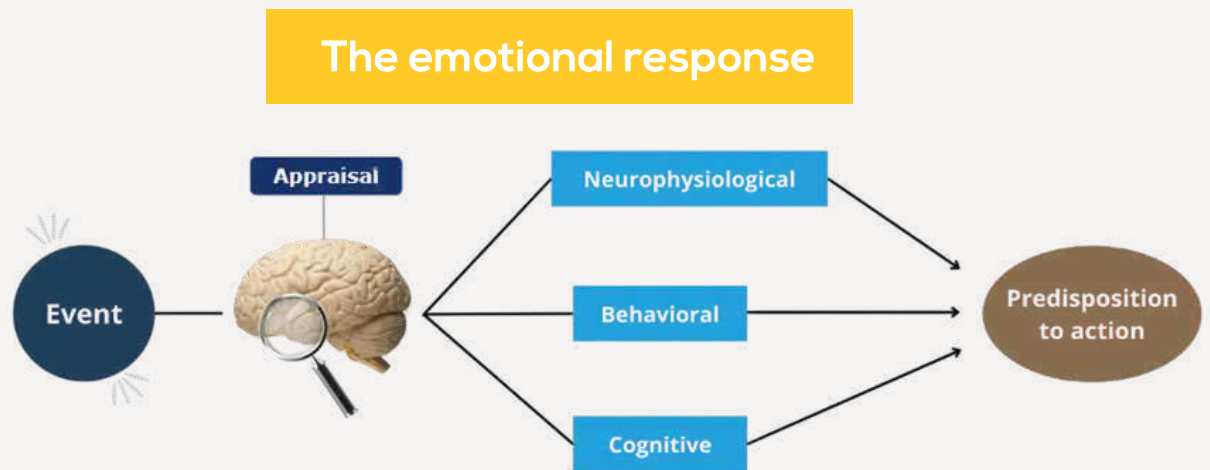
The emotional response

Figure 2: Characteristics of an emotional response.

According to Bisquerra (Bisquerra , 2009), the emotional response encompasses several factors, as depicted in Figure 2.

Appraisal

Now, picture yourself here, in the leopard's skin:

Question for the reader: What would you do if a lion was approaching you at a fast velocity?
This is an example of the two stages of the appraisal: the lion is threatening my survival and the odds I have to win the fight are really low, so I run. I **fly away** from the situation.

The fight or fly response

The two basic behaviors that phylogenetically have been in charge of ensuring survival (Darwin):

The **fighting behavior** occurs when we consider that we're in position to face a situation, and the **flying behavior** is activated when we assess the danger as greater than our possibilities of facing it.

HOW ARE THEY ACTIVATED?

Neurophysiological:

physiological changes occurring in our body in response to an emotion, which are controlled by the autonomic nervous system. For instance, when we experience fear, our heart rate may increase, our palms may sweat, and our muscles may tense up.

Behavioural:

outward expressions and actions accompanying an emotion, encompassing our facial expressions, body language and other observable behaviors. For instance, when someone is happy, they might smile, laugh, or engage in playful gestures. Conversely, when we experience anger, we may raise our voice, clench our fists or display aggressive behavior.

Cognitive:

subjective interpretation of the emotion, encompassing the thoughts, beliefs, and interpretations we associate with our emotions. For instance, if we receive a compliment, we might interpret it as a sign of appreciation and feel proud, but if we receive bad feedback, we may interpret it as a personal attack and feel hurt or angry. Our cognitive processes play a crucial role in shaping how we perceive and experience emotions.

These three components influence each other, and understanding their interplay provides valuable insights into the complexity and richness of our emotional experience.

Orexis

Orexis is our predisposition to act. It refers to the inherent inclination or readiness to engage in a particular behavior based on the emotional experiences. For instance, when experiencing fear, this predisposition may lead us to fly from a dangerous situation to ensure our safety. Here, this action would be considered adaptive, as it helps us to avoid harm, but it is not always like that. When experiencing anger, we may resort to aggressive behavior, such as physical violence, that is no longer adaptive, as it may harm others and enhance conflicts. The adaptive or maladaptive nature of the action depends on the context, social norms, and the consequences it brings, but it is crucial to manage these predispositions to ensure our actions align with our values and contribute positively to our well-being and to that of others.

How can Emotional Education modulate these components? (appraisal, 3 responses, orexis)

There are different techniques for each dimension:

Neurophysiological:

relaxation techniques, breathing, physical control of the body, etc.

Cognitive:

cognitive restructuring, introspection, meditation, causal attribution change, etc.

Behavioural:

social skills, emotional regulation and emotional training.

2.3 Emotions, feelings and the affective phenomena
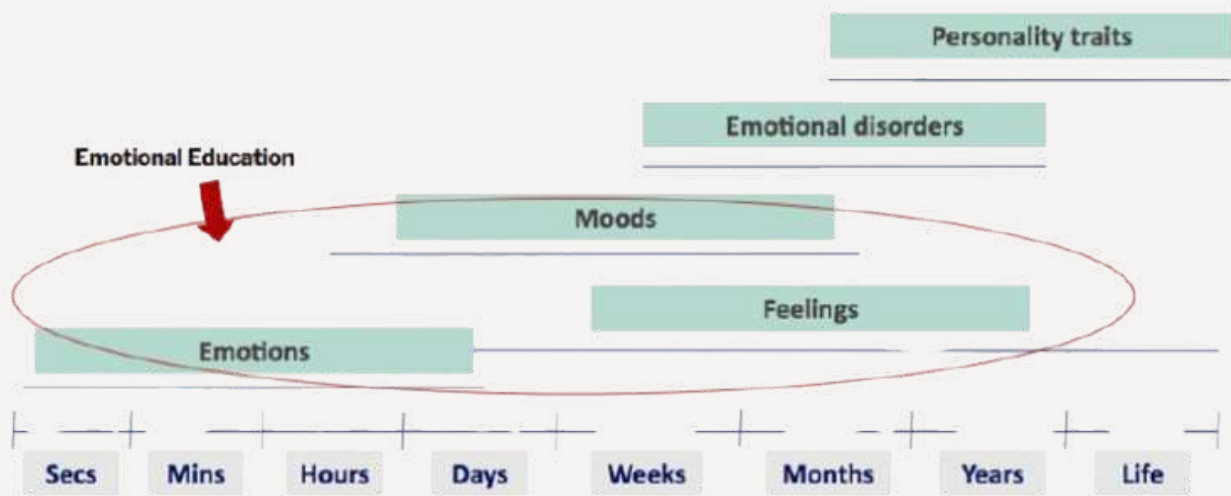
Figure 3: Affective phenomena and their duration.

The main functions of emotions regard:

Adaptation of the organism to the environment:

for example, it is clear in the case of fear, which triggers a physiological R that prepares our body to respond to potential threats.

Motivation of behavior:

emotions serve as powerful motivators for our actions and behaviors (orexis). They can drive us to pursue goals, achieve success, and overcome challenges.

Information:

emotions provide us with valuable information about our internal state and help maintain our intra-organic balance. For instance, feelings of fatigue signal our body's need for rest, prompting us to take appropriate actions to restore equilibrium.

Participation in other mental processes:

such as perception, attention, memory, reasoning, decision-making and creativity, among others (i.e., our emotional state can shape how we perceive and interpret events or stimuli).
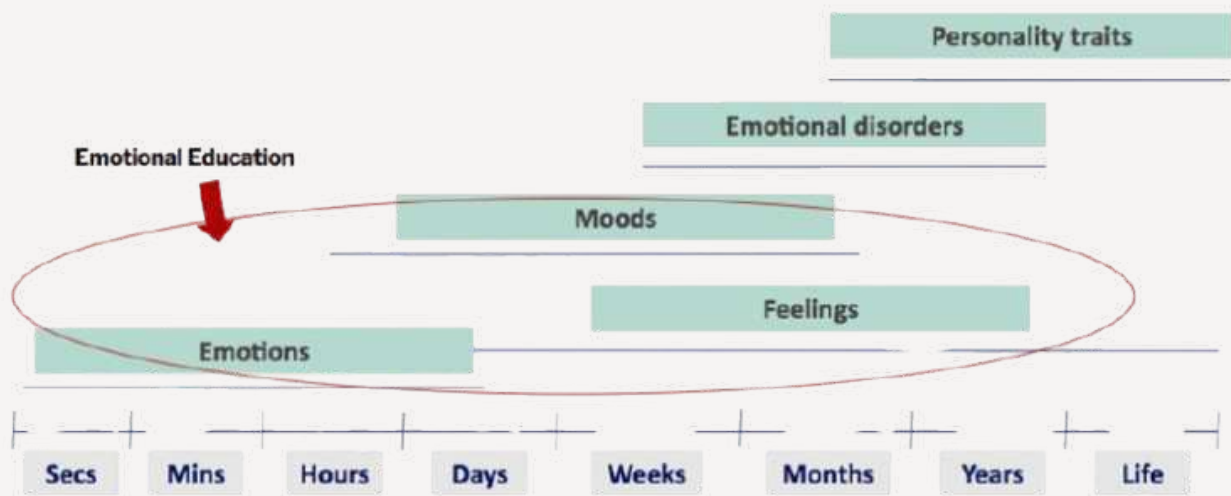
Figure 3: Affective phenomena and their duration.

The main functions of emotions regard:

Decision-making:

emotions play a significant role in guiding our decision-making, especially when the information is scarce or incomplete, in which cases our emotions provide intuitive insights or gut feelings that help us make choices.

Personal development:

emotional involvement and commitment are crucial for personal development. Emotions can fuel our passion, dedication and perseverance towards achieving personal growth and self-improvement.

Subjective or emotional well-being:

emotions significantly contribute to our subjective well-being and overall experience. Cultivating positive emotions and finding ways to manage and regulate the negative ones are essential for fostering emotional well-being.

Sociability:

emotions are crucial for social interaction, communication, and influencing others as they enable us to express ourselves and connect with others (i.e. empathy). Emotions also play a role in influencing others' behaviors and attitudes through non-verbal cues, facial expressions, and emotional contagion.

2.5 The basic emotions and their main message

Ekman (Ekman, 1984) identifies 6 basic emotions that represent fundamental human experiences:

Ekman 1984 — Fear, Anger, Sadness, Joy, Surprise, Disgust

Fear:

experienced in the face of real and imminent danger.
Crucial role in the survival and adaptation→ it intends to preserve what's most important for us: our life.
Our survival system can be useful when a danger arises, but it may also cause adaptation problems.
The excess of it can cause emotional disorders (i.e., anxiety, stress).

Sadness:

experienced at the loss of something or someone.
It is inevitable that we lose someone or lose-break something, so we need to learn how to manage it properly.
Unfortunately, after a loss, some people remain in permanent sadness that can become depression.

Ekman (Ekman, 1984) identifies 6 basic emotions that represent fundamental human experiences:

Ekman 1984

Fear   Anger   Sadness

Joy   Surprise   Disgust

Joy:

experienced when facing events that signify progress towards well-being (achieving a goal, receiving a personal recognition, etc.).
We must be aware of this emotion to fully enjoy it.
Even in this case it's not that hard, joy also has to be regulated in order to prevent addiction to maladaptives sources of joy (drugs, rewards, etc.).

Anger:

triggered by situations that we value as unfair or that threaten our moral values and personal freedom (verbal or physical abuse, setbacks...).
It appears for two reasons:
a) things don't happen the way we want;
b) someone doesn't treat us how we think we deserve.
It teaches us to defend ourselves from what can harm us, but, if poorly regulated, it can harm the person who feels it and their receiver and environment.

2. 5 The basic emotions and their main message

Ekman (Ekman, 1984) identifies 6 basic emotions that represent fundamental human experiences:

Disgust:

experienced when faced with food in poor condition.
Its function is to avoid consuming something that can cause illness or even death→ originally, it had a lot to do with fear.
There has been a displacement of disgust to people through socialization (e.g. you are disgusting).

Surprise:

experienced before an unexpected event.
It can be either positive or negative→ ambiguous.
The facial expression before a real surprise cannot be hidden (at least, for a few fractions of a second, there are micro-facial expressions of it).
A way to prevent negative ones is through anticipation and by being proactive (it requires an ability for forecasting, alternative and anticipatory thinking).

Are emotions positive or negative? What does it mean?

Although the common categorization of emotions is that of positive or negative, we have to be aware that **each emotion serves a purpose and carries valuable information**. For example, happiness is often considered a positive emotion as it brings joy and contentment, while anger may be seen as a negative emotion due to its association with conflict. However, both happiness and anger have their own significance and can provide insights into our experiences and needs.

All emotions are functional, necessary and helpful. They all bring a message that we need to learn to read in order to **be more aware of what's triggering it** (being that an external or an internal stimuli) and to **be able to manage it if necessary**.
:

2. 6 Emotional Vocabulary

One way to become aware of emotions and to be effective in their management is through....
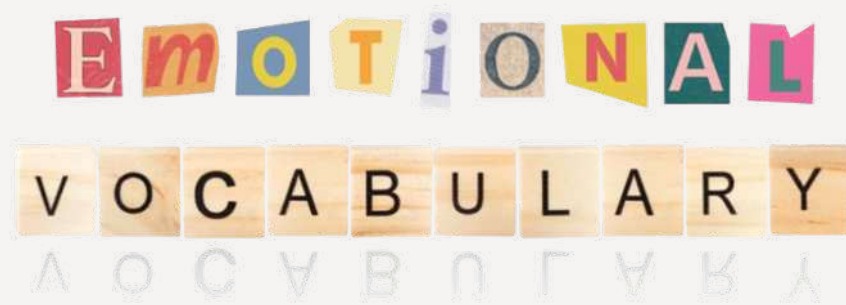
which is essential to be able to **name and recognize what we are feeling**. The emotional vocabulary enhances **further understanding of emotions**: if we don't know how to name something, that thing isn't fully characterized and, therefore, it can't be as easily identified (Gomis, García, Filella y Ros, 2022).

Importantly, Its **richness** depends mostly on whether

• the infant/child/adolescent had an early exposure or not to a varied and abundant emotional vocabulary within their family and at school (basically, at their primary environments).
• the culture and respective language have more or less words designed for emotions.

Question for the reader:

In general, when asked to think of a list of emotions, are people more capable of listing positive or negative emotions? (...) When answers are given, ask: Why do you think so?

After some discussion, the answer is given (negative) and these facts are shared:

• Their duration and intensity is greater than the positive ones.
• There are more words in dictionaries to describe the negative, which reflects that the sight and concern, historically, has been posed more in those kinds of emotions than in the positive ones **(Bisquerra, 2009)**.

As previously stated, **analyzing an emotional vocabulary is a way of enhancing emotional awareness and promoting emotional management**.

When someone says...

<u>"I don't know what's wrong with me"</u>

what may be truly happening is that they're **experiencing an emotional phenomenon that they can't identify**, usually because of some limitations in the vocabulary domain.

When we are able to put words to what is happening to us, we are in better conditions to regulate emotions in an appropriate way. That's why we say that **naming emotions is a key factor for emotional awareness**; however, it is not only important to be able to name the emotion we think we're experiencing, but also to critically observe and ask ourselves if that is actually the true emotion we're feeling, or if it really is a similar but different one...

For instance, sometimes we may think or say we're angry, but this can be too general or mismatched for some specific situations. Maybe, if we look a little deeper, and train our emotional competency to identify what's going on inside us, we might discover that what we're really feeling is rage, resentment, indignation, or jealousy.

Can you see the nuance?

"Knowing how to name emotions is one of the many key factors that are needed to form emotionally competent citizens and, this way, favor the creation of a society with greater emotional well-being and mental health."
(Gomis, et. al., 2022, p.116).

2. 7 What are the emotional competencies?

Nowadays, children and teenagers are prepared to have a lot of **technical and theoretical knowledge to be successful in their professional life**, which relate to technical-professional or specific skills.

However, **emotions are hardly addressed** and, nonetheless, all of them will live and coexist in **complex social contexts and societies that are not exempt from conflicts** (interpersonal, family, economic, unemployment, illnesses, etc.). Here is where the importance of emotional education rests and becomes essential.

Here is where the importance of emotional education rests and becomes essential.

A set of emotional competencies have also to be developed, which are defined as:

"Set of knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to become aware, understand, express and regulate social phenomena in an appropriate way (Bisquerra, 2009; Bisquerra and Pérez, 2007) (Bisquerra, 2016, p. 57)".

Promoting the development of emotional competencies is the core-objective of Emotional Education.

Emotional education is **a continuous and permanent educational process** that aims to promote emotional competencies as an essential element of human development. Unfortunately, these competencies are the most difficult to acquire, as we may be able to quickly learn historical or mathematical facts, but learning to fully regulate our emotions takes time, training and experience, that's why it needs insistence and that the whole education system endorses the comprehensive - 24/7 model, which will be later on more deeply discussed.

Importantly, emotional education optimizes our integral development (physical, intellectual, moral, increasing personal and social well-being, emotional development, etc.) (Bisquerra, 2009) and increases our personal and social well-being.

That's why it is considered an education for life.

According to what we saw when talking about affective phenomena (Figure 3), do you think emotional education is focused on prevention or psychological intervention?

Figure 3: Affective phenomena and their duration.

Minimizes our vulnerability to certain emotional dysfunctions
(stress, depression, impulsiveness, aggressiveness, etc.)

Aids the acquisition of skills applicable to a multitude of situations.

Aids to prevent their occurrence
(prevention of violence, drugs use, anxiety, etc.).
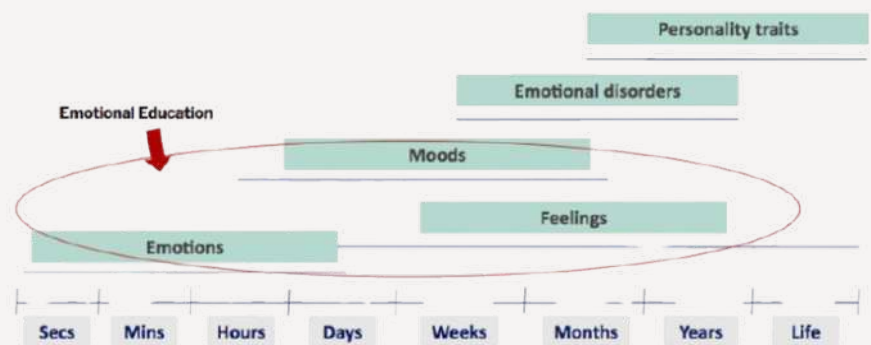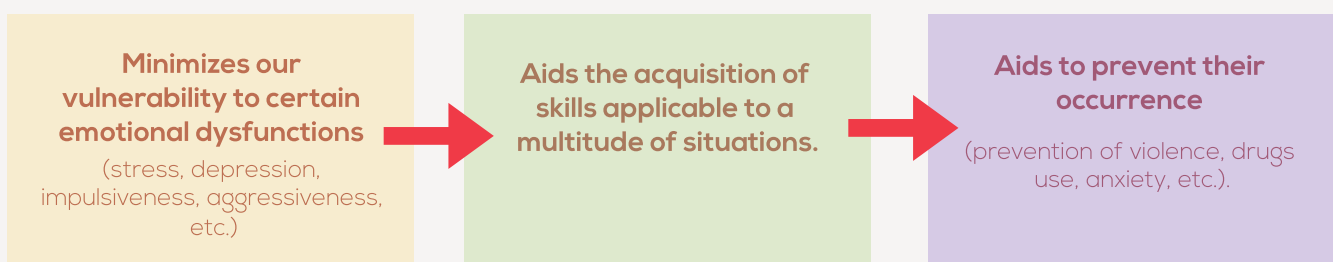
When there is still no dysfunction, primary prevention tends to converge with education to maximize constructive tendencies and minimize destructive ones.

Which is the main target of Emotional Education?

The main target of emotional education is the teachers. And why? Because they need emotional skills to practice their profession and be able to contribute to the development of the emotional skills of their students. Importantly, only a well-trained teacher will be able to implement emotional education programs effectively, that's why their training is crucial.

Question for the reader:
is it students, teachers, the family, organizations, the school...?

The main target of emotional education is the **teachers**.

And why?

1 Because they need emotional skills to practice their profession and

2 be able to contribute to the development of the emotional skills of their students.

Importantly, **only a well-trained teacher will be able to implement emotional education programs effectively**, that's why their training is crucial.

What is the role of families?

Although teachers are the main target, we cannot miss that the **first emotions are experienced in the first months of life, and that's when socioemotional learning arises** and the reason why emotional education should start within the family.

Family ←→ Formal education

Share the **same project**

Children's integral development.
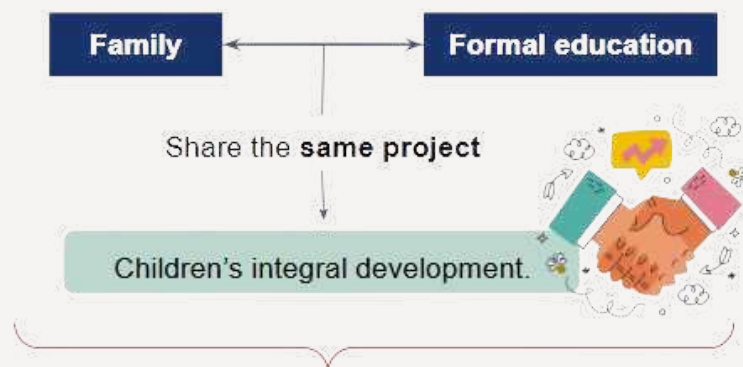
There must be a **permanent collaboration between them.**

Neither of them can discharge their responsibilities on the other.

What is the role of families?

Importantly, children tend to take the **adult figure as a model and a referent** (this includes both teachers and family members)

and then resort to imitative behaviours, which are integrated into their development schemes.

There resides the importance that adult behaviors and attitudes are in line with emotional competencies.

We need to bear in mind that **small changes in families have considerable effects on academic performance, coexistence and well-being.**

Finally, **educational centers** are in a privileged situation to encourage the **involvement of families.** Although some difficulties may arise (e.g., attendance to general meetings), it is necessary to seek strategies and alternatives that make family training viable.

To conclude, to develop emotional competencies in children, educators (teachers and families) are the first who need to be emotionally trained.

2. 9 The stages of the emotional development: Different needs & knowledge

Early childhood (0-6 years)

In this stage, children develop their cognitive, linguistic, motor, social & emotional capacities. Emotions "go from being innate and for survival (crying), to being a means of communication and relationship with the adult" (López-Cassà, 2011), who becomes an emotional coregulator. Likewise, early childhood is crucial for the construction of self-concept and self-esteem. All the changes at this stage can be tackled through the implementation of activities and some recommended practices that will be given through the training.

Primary School (8-12 years):

After becoming 8, kids better understand how we can experience opposite emotions (love-hate, sadness-joy) in the same situation (Agulló, 2010). Likewise, they are able to take several points of view into account at the same time and coordinate them, defending their interests and valuing those of others. Importantly, there are changes in the moral thought: the intentional and responsible citizen is born, one capable of developing an attitude about their own emotions according to what they generate in their environment.

Primary School (6-8 years)

6 year-olds start to understand that what explains an emotion is not the objective situation, but their subjective evaluation (Agulló, 2010). 7-8 year-olds (Gallagher, 2002) start developing the idea of equality (which dominates over the idea of sanction) and punishments are aimed at making the offense understood (which has moral and emotional implications). The first cooperative relations in the game arise here and kids begin to understand the possibility that different emotions can occur at a time and influence each other.

Secondary School (12-18 years)

Emotional instability and need for acceptance usually arise (reaffirmation stage). The figure of equals becomes crucial and they usually feel distant from adults. Some problems at this stage are: discipline, motivation to study, school adjustment, violence, drug use, risky sexual behavior, emotional disorders... Fortunately, evidence says that, the more dedication given to emotional education, the fewer the disciplinary problems, the greater the motivation to study and the higher increase in grades (Pérez-Escoda, 2010).

Emotional education has a place in all academic areas, and teachers' training and creativity will be decisive when it comes to putting emotion into their teaching strategy.

Chapter 3 The EmoSocio Emotional Intelligence Model

EmoSocio is developed as an open-access model that combines social and emotional competencies at individual and group level (Fotopoulou, 2021, 2022) (López-Cassà, 2024). It includes competencies for assessing the **Emotional Intelligence (EI) of individuals**, considering intra-personal and inter-personal characteristics, competencies for assessing the Collective Emotional Intelligence (CEI) within a group, and competencies for assessing the **group dynamics** based on sociometric indexes.

Emo	Individual Emotional Intelligence
Emo is built upon a detailed comparison and synthesis of the main constructs represented in widely-accepted EI models. The individual Emo constructs are classified in two categories as intrapersonal or interpersonal. The intrapersonal EI constructs are self-awareness, emotional regulation, self-motivation, optimism and self-esteem. The interpersonal EI constructs are empathy, teamwork, flexibility, emotional expression, assertiveness, influence and relationships.	**Self-awareness:** Understand our own emotions and the effects they have on us. **Empathy:** Sense others feelings, needs and perspectives, taking an active interest in their concerns and picking up cues to what is being felt and thought. **Emotional regulation:** Modulate an emotion or set of emotions and maintain our effectiveness under stressful conditions. **Flexibility:** The ability to adapt to new environments and conditions. **Influence:** Effectively manage others' emotions to achieve a desired outcome and/or change their behaviour or attitude. **Emotional expression:** Communicate our emotions to others and express accurately and unambiguously our feelings. **Optimism:** The anticipation of positive outcomes and things to happen in life and the confidence for achievement of desired goals. **Assertiveness:** An adaptive style of communication in which individuals express their feelings and needs directly, while maintaining respect for others. **Self-motivation:** The impetus that gives purpose or direction to behaviour and operates in humans at a conscious or unconscious level. **Relationships:** Start and maintain emotional bonds with others, establish mutually satisfying relationships and relate well with others. **Self-esteem:** The degree to which the qualities and characteristics contained in one's self-concept are perceived to be positive. **Teamwork:** Work with others towards a shared goal, participating actively, sharing responsibility and rewards.

Socio	Sociometric and Social Network Analysis indexes at individual and group level
Socio constructs are meaningful within a specific group context (e.g., an individual may be popular in one group and unpopular in another group). It focuses on the positioning of a member within a group, considering its relationship with the group members. The defined constructs are popularity, antipathy, affective connection, sociometric status, social expansion and realistic perception. At group level, social cohesion is observed as a multi-dimensional construct that reflects the tendency of the group members to stick together and remain united. Concepts specified in the sociometry and social network analysis theory are applied for the measurement of different dimensions of social cohesion.	**Popularity:** The number of elections received by each member of the group in comparison with the group's size. **Antipathy:** The number of rejections received by each member of the group in comparison with the group's size. **Positive Social Expansion:** The number of elections a member does towards the rest of the group in comparison with the group's size. **Negative Social Expansion:** The number of rejections a member does towards the rest of the group in comparison with the group's size. **Affective Connection:** The proportion of congruence between reciprocity and a member's elections. **Graph density:** The graph density is the ratio of the number of edges (positive relationships) with respect to the maximum possible positive relationships the graph may have. **Association Index:** It examines the cohesion within the group taking under consideration the number of reciprocal elections considering the group size. **Social Intensity:** Considers the number of elections and rejections within the group to determine the total social expansiveness of the group members. **Number of cliques:** A narrow exclusive circle or group of members. Usually held together by common interests, views, or purposes. **Transitivity:** High transitivity means that the classroom contains communities or groups of students that are densely connected internally without being isolated from the rest of the group members. **Cohesion Index:** The relationship between the reciprocal elections in the classroom and the elections made.

| CEI	Collective Emotional Intelligence
CEI focuses on the collective emotional competencies of the group as a whole. Three main constructs are considered, namely group emotional awareness, group emotional regulation and group emotional climate. The specification of each derived construct is based on the synthesis of the associated definitions of the relevant constructs in a set of examined models offered by the literature review.	**Group emotional awareness:** Understand the emotions that are experienced within a group by ourselves and the members of the group and the effects they have on the group. **Group emotional regulation:** Manage own emotions and the emotions of the group members, facilitating conflict resolution and proactive problem solving. **Group emotional climate:** Develop strong sense of belonging, collaboration and solidarity by the group members, enabling them to repair negative emotional states and maintain positive ones.

Age	Questionnaire	Details
6-8 years old	Emo-Tutor	Observation scale (40 items). The teacher is in charge of answering on behalf of the students. The scale is from 0 to 10 (0=Never, 10=Always) for each item.
6-8 years old	CEI-Tutor	Observation scale (7 items). The teacher is in charge of answering on behalf of the students. The scale is from 0 to 10 (0=Never, 10=Always) for each item.
6-8 years old	Socio(S)-YoungChild	Individual questionnaire with 4 sociometric questions. The students can answer with the help of the teacher.
9-12 years old	Emo-Child	Answered by students. Individual questionnaire with 39 items scoring between 0 and 10 (0 = Never, 10 = Always).
9-12 years old	CEI-Child	Answered by students. Individual questionnaire with 9 items scoring between 0 and 10 (0 = Never, 10 = Always).
9-12 years old	Socio(S)-Child Socio(W)-Child	Answered by students. Individual questionnaire with 4 sociometric questions. Answered by students. Individual questionnaire with 4 sociometric questions.
13-18 years old	Emo-Adolescent	Answered by students. Individual questionnaire with 44 items scoring between 0 and 10 (0 = Never, 10 = Always).
13-18 years old	CEI-Adolescent	Answered by students. Individual questionnaire with 9 items scoring between 0 and 10 (0 = Never, 10 = Always).
13-18 years old	Socio(S)-Adolescent Socio(W)-Adolescent	Answered by students. Individual questionnaire with 4 sociometric questions. Answered by students. Individual questionnaire with 4 sociometric questions.

The EmoSocio questionnaires are made available via the EmoSociograms psychometric tool, that helps the teacher to collect the data from the students and explore the social and emotional results of them in an automated, easy to interpret and user friendly way.

Chapter 4 The EmoSociograms psychometric tool
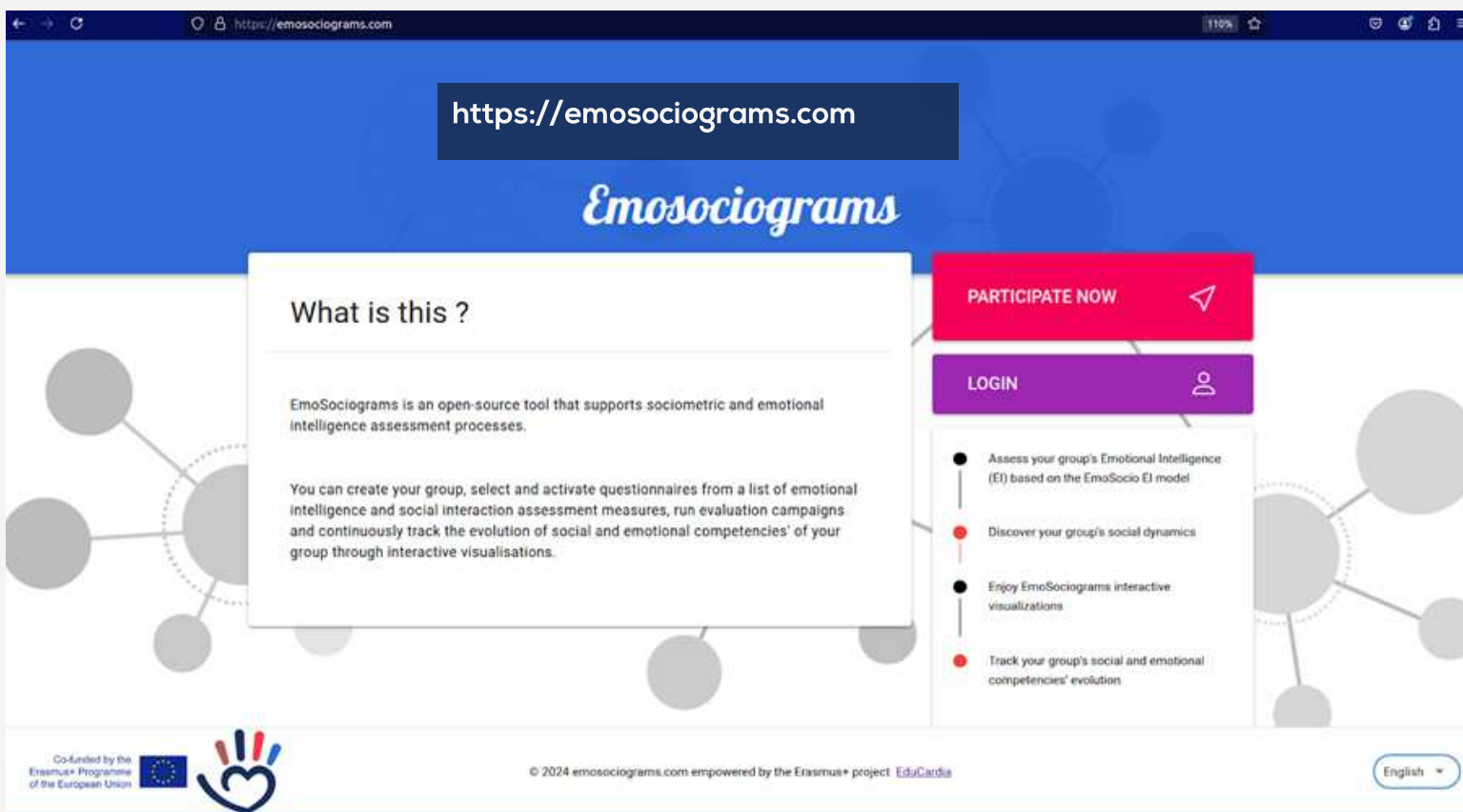
Figure 4: The EmoSociograms psychometric tool.

EmoSociograms is an open-source psychometric software that can be used by the teachers for the assessment of social and emotional competencies of students in schools (Fotopoulou, 2023). Its main goal is to simplify the process of evaluation for teachers. With this tool, teachers can easily create and manage their classrooms, administer questionnaires in the form of tests, monitor the completion of these tests, and view the results at both individual and group levels. Additionally, EmoSociograms provides recommendations for grouping students for the purpose of implementing targeted SEL activities according to the identified weaknesses from the assessment process. It can be applied in in-person, online or hybrid classrooms.

The functionality of EmoSociograms can be summarized in the following eleven steps. A complete tutorial that explains step by step how to use the EmoSociograms tool can be found here.

Step 1: Open EmoSociograms
Step 2: Select the language of your preference
Step 3: Have a look at the landing page
Step 4: Create a new account
Step 5: Login into EmoSociograms
Step 6: Create a new group for your classroom
Step 7: Add members to the group
Step 8: Create a test
Step 9: Respond the test
Step 10: See the results
Step 11: Match your students in working groups

Following, we provide some indicative screenshots for the assessment information provided to the teacher, upon the usage of the EmoSociograms tool. The aim is to show the type of the provided results in the EmoSociograms tool. However, it is strongly suggested that the teachers go through the provided tutorial to check in detail the provided functionalities.
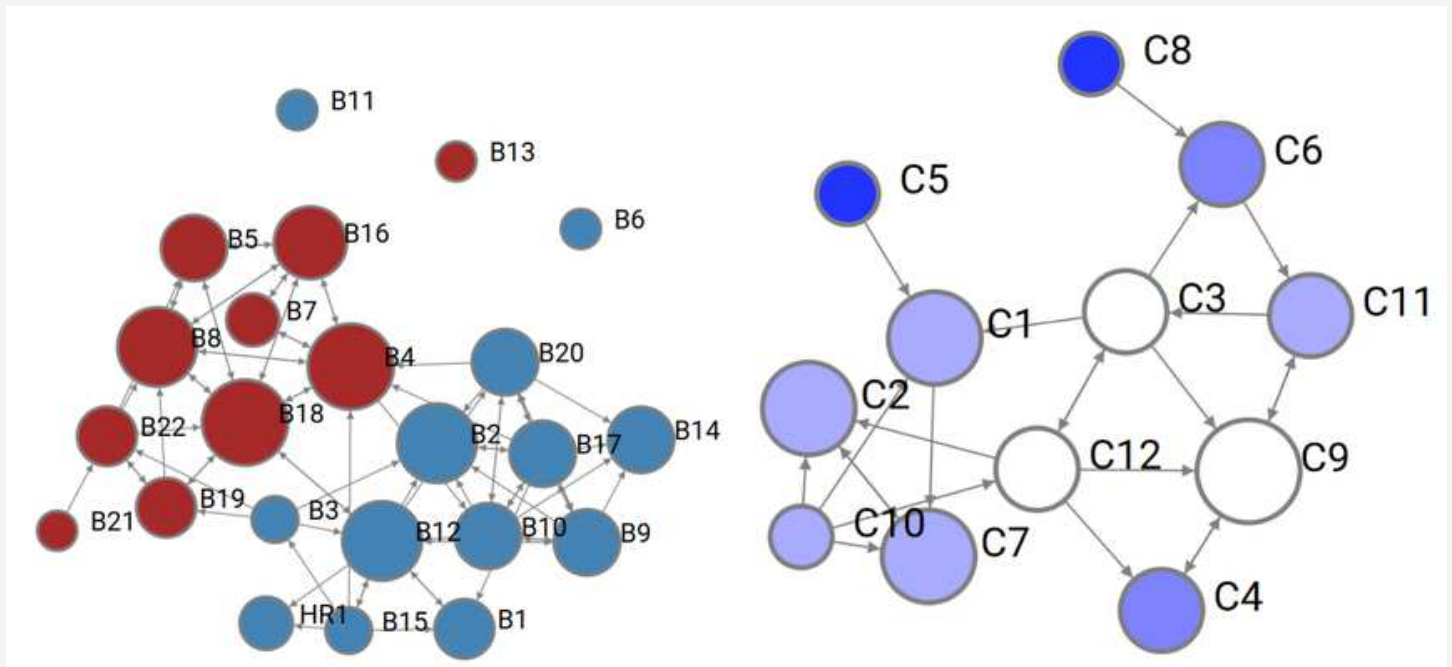
Figure 5: (a) Sociogram with gender-based clusters; (b) Low density sociogram (Fotopoulou, 2023)

In Figure 5a, a sociogram is provided from a classroom with students in the age group from 13 to 18 years old. The sociogram depicts the social preferences of the students. A strong separation between boys and girls is noticed, while three isolated nodes are also detected. In Figure 5b, a low density sociogram is provided in a classroom with students in the age group from 6 to 8 years old, indicating poor group climate and potential inclusion issues.
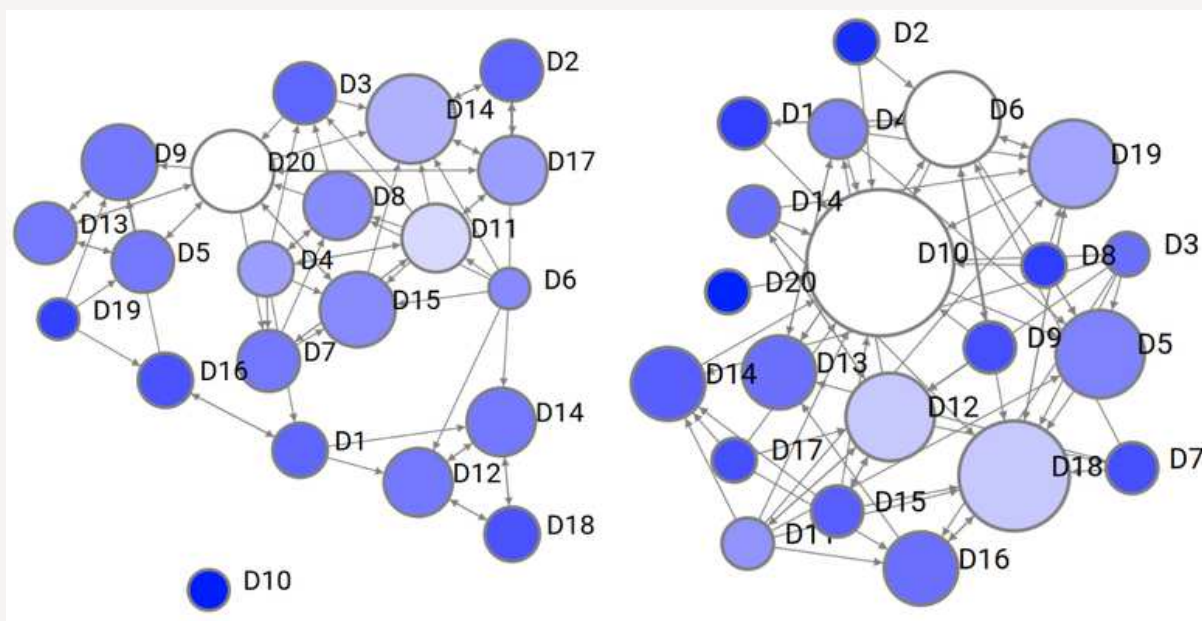
Figure 6: (a) Preferences Sociogram; (b) Rejections Sociogram (Fotopoulou, 2023)

In Figure 6 we depict the preferences (Figure 6a) and rejections' sociograms (Figure 6b) of a classroom (age group of 9 to 12 years old). From the preferences sociogram, it is noticed that the students D1 and D6 can undertake the role of bridges for improving the interaction across all the students. A bridge in a social graph is a relationship whose removal causes the social group to split into subgroups. This means that the presence of many pupils that act as bridges into a classroom makes the classroom more vulnerable in terms of group cohesion/climate. Upon the removal of such bridges the group loses part of its cohesion. At the same time it is very important to be able to detect these "bridge" students and take advantage of the inclusive role they play in their classroom. For instance, in case of planning SEL activities in the classroom for improving the group climate, these students can undertake a leadership role. It is also noticed that the student D10 is the most rejected student in the classroom (Figure 6b). It is worth mentioning that D10 did not express any preferences in the sociometric test. This could be due to a sense of rejection that the student may feel and a tendency to avoid answering questionnaires.
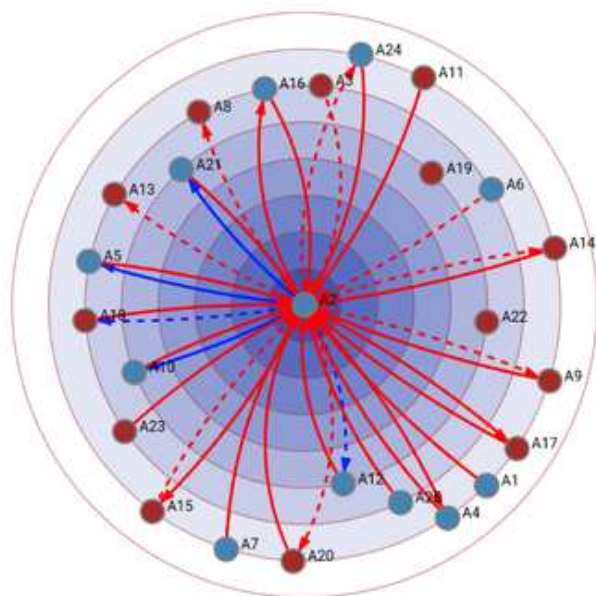
(a) Egosociogram of student A2.   (b) Egosociogram of student A15.
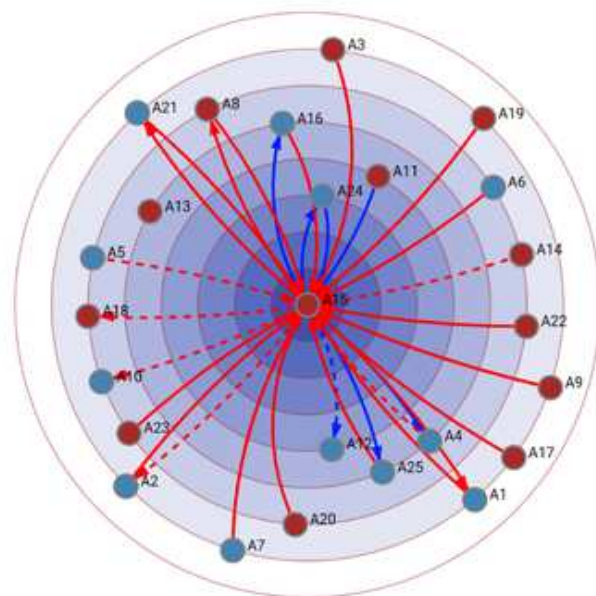
Figure 7: Indicative egoSociograms for two students (Fotopoulou, 2023)

Following, in Figure 7 we present the EgoSociograms for two students (age group of 6 to 8 years old) that seem to be highly rejected from their peers. In this case, at the center of the figure is placed each one of the students and around him/her are placed the rest of the students along with the type of relationship they maintain with him/her. Blue/Red edges represent the preferences/rejections towards the student, while the dotted lines represent the perception of the individual regarding his/her social status. For example a red dotted line represents that the student in the center perceives/feels that another student may reject him/her.
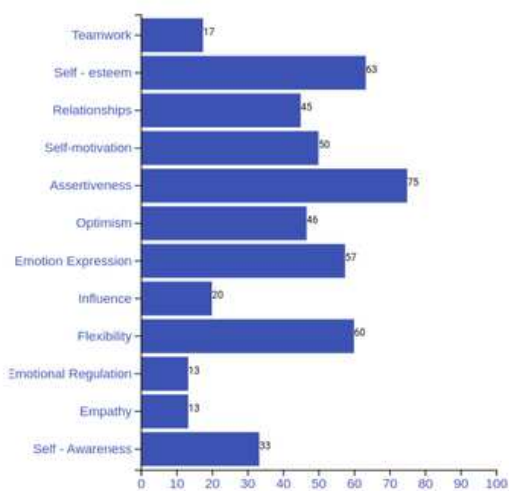
(a) EI results of student A2.   (b) EI results of student A15.
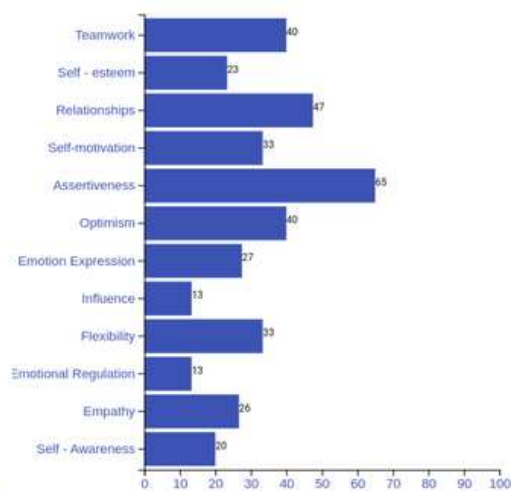
Figure 8: Indicative Emotional Intelligence (EI) results for two students (Fotopoulou, 2023).

In Figure 8 we present the results of the assessment of the EI competencies for these students. A15 is slightly less rejected than A2 but it can be considered that is in a more vulnerable situation since his/her emotional intelligence competencies are weaker. As seen by the emotional profile of the A15 he/she has very low self-esteem, emotional regulation and influence.

Chapter 5

The SEL activities repository

The EduCardia Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Activities Repository hosts a set of activities that can be applied to schools to promote the development of social and emotional competencies of students. The activities are targeted to various age groups in both primary and secondary education levels. Classification of the SEL activities is provided, based on the core social and emotional competencies they are targeted to and in accordance with the EmoSocio Emotional Intelligence (EI) model. Through the repository, the teachers may easily navigate to the pool of activities, select the ones that fit better the needs of the students in their classroom and apply them. Provision of feedback regarding the applicability and efficiency of the SEL activities is very welcome to help the EduCardia team to improve the existing content.

The design and collection of the repository activities follows the **S.A.F.E approach**. The S.A.F.E. approach (Durlak et al., 2015) highlights that classroom-based activities need to be **Sequenced** (connected and coordinated to foster skills development across years in order to be developmentally age-appropriate), to include **Active** forms of learning (to help students master new skills and to apply new competences in other settings outside the school context), to be **Focused** (having clear goals and desired results) and to target skills **Explicitly** (focusing on specific skills and competences).

The **SAFE** approach is built upon the idea that the challenging behaviours actually highlight a lack of skills. Thus, the systematic teaching of the skills that are missing, may have a major impact on a child's capacity to manage the varied sensory, social, emotional and cognitive challenges met everyday.

Sequenced: Social and emotional skills develop more effectively when built on a foundation of other knowledge. For example, learning about empathy before exploring the abuse of bullying, is more impactful.

Active: Learning is more effective when it involves doing. The students should have an active experience during the application of SEL activities.

Explicit: The activities should be explicit about the competences and skills they target. Such a clarification helps the students to be more conscious and autonomous about their own emotional and social learning paths.

Focused: The activities should have clear goals in combination with transparent processes on how to achieve them.

The ⊞ **Educardia SEL Activities Repository** is a living platform where the activities are constantly improved and enriched with new ones (Figure 9). By the time of editing the current handbook, the repository hosts 141 activities in English, 95 activities in Greek, 144 activities in Spanish and 90 activities in Romanian. The pool of activities is continuously updated, considering the introduction of new activities.
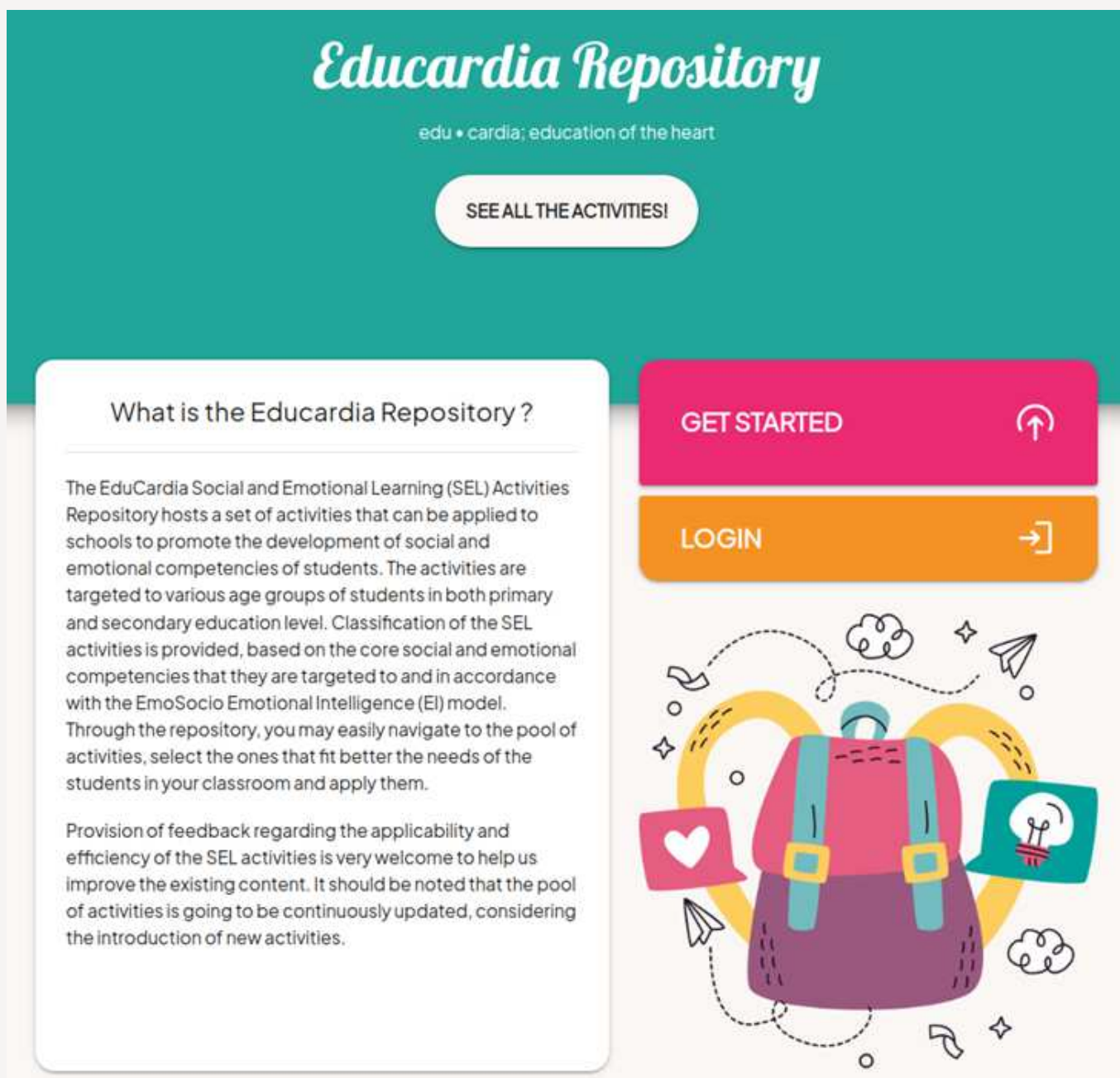

Figure 9: The EduCardia SEL Activities Repository.

The core concept of the SEL repository is the activity itself. An activity is composed of a set of characteristics that are presented below. All the available characteristics are filterable, meaning that the end user may search and select the activities that mostly interest him/her based on the activity metadata.

Title	The title of the activity.
Learning Objectives	A short description of what students are expected to achieve as a result of this activity.
Didactic Strategy	Demonstration of one or more didactic strategies that the activity follows: Experiential learning, Peer to peer learning, Gamification, Role playing, Project based learning, Collaborative learning, Case study learning, Problem solving learning, Remind (Relaxation, respiration, Meditation, Mindfulness), OST (Out of School Time) - Comprehensive approach, Cross Curricular learning, Arts-Based Learning
Description	The description of the activity. If there is a need for family involvement, it has to be noted in this field.
Target Age Group	The target age group where the activity can be applied: 6-8 years old, 9-12 years old, 13-18 years old.
Periodicity	The frequency that the activity should be implemented in case it is not a one-time activity. The offered options are: One time, Daily, Weekly and Monthly.
Duration	The teaching hours required for the activity. The options that are offered are from 1 to 3 teaching hours. If an activity has a duration more than 3 teaching hours, it is recommended to be splitted and documented as two sequential activities.
Presence	The type of the activity in terms of students' presence: Online, In-person, Both.
EmoSocio Competences	The set of EmoSocio competencies that the activity tackles in accordance with the EmoSocio Emotional Intelligence model.
Sub-grouping	The types of sub-grouping that best fit to execute the activity: Individual, Small Group (2 - 4), Medium Group (5 - 7), Large Group (8 - 10), Whole Class. For example, the whole class can participate at the same time, or the students can be separated in groups of five persons or the activity can be accomplished per individual. It is worth mentioning that through the EmoSociograms tool, teachers may get automatic recommendations about how to better combine the students in subgroups based on their emotional characteristics and their social preferences.

The core concept of the SEL repository is the activity itself. An activity is composed of a set of characteristics that are presented below. All the available characteristics are filterable, meaning that the end user may search and select the activities that mostly interest him/her based on the activity metadata.

Teacher role	The teacher may participate, lead the activity without being part of the group or just observe without any intervention to the process. Therefore, the teacher role during an activity may be: Leader, Observer, Facilitator.
Evaluation	Description of how the teacher can evaluate that the activity has been successfully implemented.
Didactic Strategy	Demonstration of one or more didactic strategies that the activity follows: Experiential learning, Peer to peer learning, Gamification, Role playing, Project based learning, Collaborative learning, Case study learning, Problem solving learning, Remind (Relaxation, respiration, Meditation, Mindfulness), OST (Out of School Time) - Comprehensive approach, Cross Curricular learning, Arts-Based Learning
Guidelines for attention to diversity	Guidelines of how an activity can be adapted for students with special educational needs.
Source of the activity	Reference to the source of the activity that may be: Book, Publication, Education program, Website, Conference.
Material Description	The declaration of any necessary material to accomplish the activity. This can be in the form of images, pdfs, physical material (markers, crayons, coloured pencils, sheet papers etc) or audiovisual material (audios, videos).
Languages	The languages (e.g., English, Spanish, Greek, Romanian) that the activity is available within the repository.
Dependency to other activities	The type of the activity in terms of students' presence: Online, In-person, Both.

The functionality of the EduCardia SEL activities repository can be summarized in twelve steps.

Step 1: Visit the Educardia SEL Activities Repository

Step 2: Select the language of your preference

Step 3: Have a look at the landing page

Step 4: See the list of the offered activities

Step 5: Use the filters to select the activities of high interest for your classroom

Step 6: View an activity

Step 7: Create a new account

Step 8: Login into the Educardia SEL Activities Repository

Step 9: Create a list of your favorite activities.

Step 10: Rate an activity

Step 11: Evaluate an activity

Step 12: Create an activity upon getting in contact with the EduCardia Research team (optional)

A complete tutorial that explains step by step how to take advantage of the EduCardia SEL activities repository tool can be found **here.** The SEL activities are designed to require minimal material, are easy to implement, are short enough to take no longer than three hours and can prolong the impact of the emotional learning training out of the school hour they are initiated.

5.2 Emotional Needs and Relevant Topics

GROUP 6 TO 8 YEARS OLD

The main emotional needs focus on the recognition and expression of basic emotions such as joy, sadness, fear or anger, as well as on the development of self-esteem, self-concept and the first social skills, such as sharing, respecting turns or resolving simple conflicts. At this stage, it is also essential to address early prevention of bullying and work on promoting empathy and respect among peers, key issues to build a safe environment from the early years of schooling.

GROUP 9 TO 12 YEARS OLD

Emotional needs are oriented towards more complex conflict management, increased personal responsibility and empathy, as well as the development of group problem-solving skills. At this stage, issues related to bullying and cyberbullying become especially relevant, given the increasing use of technologies and social networks by children. It is essential to teach strategies to identify and prevent these situations, encouraging open communication and cooperation. In addition, we work on topics related to the management of social pressure and the importance of emotional self-care, strengthening resilience in the face of possible challenges.

GROUP 13 TO 18 YEARS OLD

Emotional needs are related to building a self-identity, regulating intense emotions such as frustration or anxiety, and coping with social pressure. At this stage, in addition to continuing to address the prevention of bullying and cyberbullying, it is essential to work on the prevention of more serious problems such as depression and suicide, which begin to have a higher incidence in adolescence. The proposed activities include the development of skills to manage stress, identify signs of emotional distress, seek support and encourage dialogue in the family and school environment. It also promotes reflection on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and the impact of social networks on self-esteem and emotional well-being.

We selected an indicative activity from the repository to demonstrate how an activity can be implemented in the classroom. The name of the activity is the ➕ "The Guardians Angels" and is a simple but powerful example of how emotional training can start in the classroom, but get out of it expanding and multiplying the emotional training impact.

- 🕐 9 – 12
- 🕐 2 Teaching Hours
- 🔄 Monthly
- 🖥 In Person
- 👥 Small Group (2 – 4)
- 🎓 Observer

The activity is intended for students of 9 to 12 years and needs two teaching hours to be completed. The first hour regards the presentation of the activity to the students and the second the reflection upon the gained experience during its implementation. It is recommended to repeat this activity on a monthly basis, however this is optional. This is an activity that is also recommended to be executed preferably in person (not online) and there is the need to split the students in small subgroups to accomplish it. Furthermore, the role of the teacher is to observe the students upon giving them the initial instructions.

At the description field of the activity, a short text is provided on how to implement it. The teacher is invited to create groups of three students. The students do not have to know the group they belong to. It is important to match the students having in mind the social preferences and rejections between them as well as their emotional profile. It may be helpful to access this information via the ➕ EmoSociograms tool and specifically the provided group partitioning feature. The EmoSociograms tool takes under consideration a set of criteria and tries to create best matches between the students. For example, it matches students that may have common friends or matches less popular students with students with high scores in empathy and teamwork. Alternatively, the teacher may assign the guardians in a random way, even if it would be thoughtful to have a glimpse on the recommended groups first.

The teacher explains to the students that, by the end of the school hour, each student (guardian) will receive a paper with the names of two colleagues he/she has to take care of discreetly during the upcoming week. The "guardians" have to help in secret the students they protect, without being revealed or doing exaggerated actions.

In that way, the whole classroom enters in a process of self-caring during a week and actively practices the competencies of empathy and relationships among them. After one week, a follow-up action is made where all students sit in a circle and reflect on their experiences. The teacher asks the children to reflect on their experience.

Some indicative questions could be:

• Did you feel someone was really taking care of you?
• Did you feel your guardians took care of you in a discrete way?
• Did you feel overprotected?
• Can you guess who were your guardians?
• Did you feel you were a good guardian?
• What kind of actions would you like to receive from your guardians?
• What kind of interactions with your colleagues did you mostly appreciate last week? Were some of them done by your guardians?

The evaluation of the activity is proposed to be based on the feedback of the students during the phase of reflection. Furthermore, during the follow-up session, students may evaluate themselves whether they have been good guardians or not, depending on the way they have taken care of their colleagues.

The activity can be repeated from time to time during the school year. Each time, it is expected that the children will be more affective, building on their previous knowledge of how to take care of their friends.

Such activity is tagged with a set of competencies such as empathy, relationships, group emotional awareness and group emotional climate. The didactic strategies that are used are the experiential learning, role playing, while the activity is accomplished out of the classroom propagating the positive impact of the emotional training.

EduCardia

The didactic strategies encompass a collection of many methods and procedures that are organized within an operational framework and employed in the context of teaching, learning, and evaluation. A set of didactic strategies have been selected by the EduCardia team to foster the design and implementation of the emotional education activities.

Experiential Learning (EL)

Experiential Learning (EL) is a teaching philosophy that focuses on learning through active participation and reflection. It bridges theory with real-world application, fostering the development of knowledge, skills, and values. In EduCardia, EL is adopted to enhance emotional competencies through the engagement of students in hands-on experiences, followed by structured reflection.

The application of EL is based on the Kolb's EL model that involves a cyclical process (Kolb, 1984):

- **Act** – Engage in a meaningful experience.
- **Reflect** – Analyze and think about the experience.
- **Learn** – Derive insights or new knowledge.
- **Apply** – Implement new understanding in a different context, restarting the cycle.

Detailed information is provided in the video at:

+ https://experientiallearninginstitute.org/resources/what-is-experiential-learning/

The key principles that have to be considered by teachers for implementing EL include:

- To **prioritize the learning process** while acknowledging outcomes.
- To **use personal and social experiences** as foundational learning tools.
- To **encourage interaction and collaboration** for mutual support.

EL positions learners as central to the process through the following stages (Kolb, 1984):

- **Exploration ("Do it"):** Engage in independent or guided activities like role-plays or problem-solving.
- **Sharing ("What Happened"):** Discuss results, feelings, and observations freely.
- **Processing ("What's Important?"):** Reflect on the activity, identifying themes and resolving challenges.
- **Generalizing ("So What?"):** Connect the experience to real-life principles and universal truths.
- **Application ("Now What?"):** Apply insights to new scenarios, promoting ownership of the learning process.

Reflection questions (conceptualization and application)

The teacher can facilitate the learning experience through several questions that support reflection and brainstorming (conceptualization). Each of these questions is designed to foster curiosity and a receptive mindset, as well as facilitate the development of crucial abilities and behaviors that have been previously identified as significant. Following, some indicative questions are provided.

Reflection questions:	Conceptualization questions:
What happened? What did you do? How did you feel? Tell me more about it... Please, extend your point of view. What did you notice? What is still a question mark for you? What was difficult? What was easiest?	Why does that happen? What is the way this is related to yourself? Does that happen to you? Does that happen in life? What did you learn? How did what you learn relate to other things you have been learning? What similar experiences have you had?

Peer to peer learning

Peer-to-peer learning is a mutual learning and training approach where participants at the same level engage in collaborative education processes. This method actively involves students in both learning and teaching roles, fostering a cooperative environment. Students may act as both tutors and tutees, supporting each other on their educational growth. A peer tutor is someone in a similar position to the learner, serving as an active and collaborative partner in the learning process. It's important to clarify that the students are not responsible for delivering or introducing new educational material, but follow the guidance provided by their teacher. Learning from peers has the potential to offer prompt feedback and cultivate a diverse range of practical abilities. It supports enhanced alignment between students' levels of comprehension, critical thinking abilities, broader student involvement, improved feedback, and increased engagement with the subject matter (Stigmar, 2016).

Gamification

Gamification in learning incorporates game-like elements (e.g., point scoring, peer competition, teamwork, leaderboards) to enhance engagement, facilitate the assimilation of new information, and assess students' knowledge.

The primary objective of using gamification in educational settings is to foster positive behavior and enhance student engagement, facilitating more enjoyable learning experiences and cultivating a competitive environment (Kim and Lee, 2015). The use of gamification is of significant importance in the cognition, emotion, and social domains. Related to emotional areas, gamified systems provide feedback to players in situations where they fail to achieve specific tasks (e.g., accumulate the necessary points) and are therefore obligated to retry, while reducing the fear associated with potential failure (Lee and Hammer, 2011).

Role play

Role play is a type of experiential learning where **students are assigned specific roles and act based on them through a scripted scenario.** This can be done individually (one-on-one role play) or in groups, with each participant taking on a specific role or character. The benefits of role-playing activities in education include:

• **it facilitates the occurrence of the desired event:** it allows students to engage in events that may not be easily accessible in real-life situations. Students may encounter a situation or circumstance that presents either a crisis or an opportunity, which may necessitate a prolonged period of waiting in the real world.

• **it offers a secure and protected setting:** students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills without worrying of significant consequences due to the errors they commit.

• **it facilitates the manifestation of positive group dynamics:** it has the ability to bring out the good aspects of group dynamics and direct the collective energy towards specific goals or notions related to desired societal change. Role-playing approaches use elements of affective awareness and group dynamics to facilitate the personal and collective growth of participants.

• **time can be reduced:** the process of applying real-life experiences into role-playing activities allows for a significant reduction in time required, as days' worth of experiences can be simulated in only a few minutes. Additionally, the provision of feedback to students can be expedited, resulting in a more efficient process (Joyce et al., 2004).

Project based learning

Project-based learning is an **instructional approach** designed to give students the opportunity to **develop knowledge and skills through their engagement in projects to tackle real-world challenges**. It encourages students to actively engage in the learning process, with the teacher assuming the role of a facilitator. It facilitates the development of various skills in students, including **problem-solving abilities, creativity, self-directed learning, a critical mindset, effective communication, collaborative teamwork, sound decision-making, more trust in peers** (Valdez & Bungihan, 2019). Additionally, it **fosters the development of creativity, autonomy, and motivation**. During the initial stages of the learning process, explicit and demanding criteria and rules are developed to enhance their engagement, with the instructor assuming the role of a learning facilitator (Alacapinar, 2008).

Collaborative learning

Collaboration can be conceptualized as the process of dividing functions among students depending on the distribution of tasks, ultimately resulting in the formation of an assembly group at a subsequent stage. For the purposes of this handbook, collaborative learning can be defined as a broad term encompassing various educational methods that involve joint intellectual efforts between students, or between students and teachers. Typically, **it involves students working in pairs or groups, collaboratively seeking understanding, solving problems, exploring meanings, or producing a shared outcome.**

Case study learning

Case studies is an **instructional method where a scenario is given to students, based on which they can observe, analyze, implement, conclude, or recommend actions.** They are considered as a tool that can be used to promote analysis and discussion. It is a method of in-depth analysis of a situation, context, group. In general, the structure of a case study is:

• **Introduction;** arguments for the topic.
• **Objectives to be achieved;** questions to be answered.
• **Theoretical models and perspectives supporting the approach of this study** (literature will be used to build the theoretical foundation of the case study).
• **Definition of the situation/case;** categorising the problem.
• **Description of the situation/case;** describing important aspects from a behavioural, attitudinal, cognitive, emotional point of view.

• **Identification of factors shaping and developing the situation/case;** identification of contexts, people and their impact on the development/dynamics of the situation/case.
• **Identification of risk factors/problems in the situation/case;** those preventing the formation of desired relationships.
• **Conclusions;** the objectives of the introduction and how they have been achieved by presenting the dimensions and dynamics of the case.

Problem-based learning

Problem-based learning (PBL) is an **educational strategy that places students in charge of their learning journey.** Using intricate, real-world problems as the central theme of the classroom, PBL encourages students to develop problem solving abilities and understand concepts beyond the simple memorization of facts. This approach enables students to acquire knowledge and skills by actively participating in problem solving, with the support of a facilitator. Students explore a complex topic without a single, clear answer, frequently working in collaborative groups. **They undertake self-directed learning (SDL), applying their newly discovered knowledge to address the issue, and reflecting on both their learning journey and the effectiveness of their approaches.** In this framework, the teacher's role transitions from a direct instructor to a learning facilitator.

Remind (Relaxation, respiration Meditation, Mindfulness)

Mindfulness education, which includes lessons on **calming techniques for the mind and body**, can alleviate the adverse impacts of stress and improve student engagement levels. These techniques help students **maintain focus on their academic and learning goals while also preventing behavioral problems.**

OST (Out of School Time)

Out of School Time (OST) refers to **organized activities that young people participate in consistently during non-school hours.** This includes programs **on school premises** before and after the regular school day, as well as those conducted in alternate locations. These OST programs **may focus on academics** such as reading or mathematics, offer specialized pursuits such as sports teams, STEM, and arts, or **provide a mix of activities in multi-purpose setups**.

Cross Curricular learning.

Cross-curricular learning is based on **establishing patterns of information between different academic subjects.** This approach helps the students to improve their understanding by **combining concepts from different disciplines and by promoting real-world links.** It also offers students chances to apply their skills in diverse contexts. For example, a student who is enthusiastic about science might become more involved when applying mathematical concepts to scientific issues. Likewise, a student who feels insecure about writing but has a passion for history may cultivate a more favorable perspective and increased engagement when writing tasks are included in social studies classes. Teaching across different subjects is particularly effective for project-based learning, which provides students with a real-world and applicable way to use their knowledge. This method allows students to **form significant connections among various subjects while perceiving their education as a unified and integrated experience**.

Arts-Based Learning

Arts-based pedagogy is a creative strategy that uses an art form to facilitate learning about another subject matter (Rieger et al., 2013) in non-artistic disciplines and domains. The adoption of an interdisciplinary curriculum that encompasses music, dance, theater, and visual arts for all students in a school can be facilitated by a comprehensive whole-school paradigm. This model involves the active participation of school personnel, artists, and the community. An arts-based educational institution is characterized by the integration of artistic disciplines throughout all sections of the curriculum.

Based on existing scholarly literature, it has been observed that the use of arts-based teaching methodologies effectively enhances the learner's affective development through the stimulation of their interest, motivation, and excitement towards the process of acquiring knowledge. Arts-based pedagogy facilitates experiential learning by considering sensory experience and aesthetic reflection as independent sources of knowledge and cognition (Archibald, 2021).

Comprehensive model

The objective of the comprehensive model is to support 'authentic learning', i.e. "a wide variety of educational techniques that enable students to relate to, and probably solve real life problems" (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). The following teaching and learning concepts are identified as the foundational principles of the comprehensive model.

• **learning by doing** - characterized by the engagement of students in self-directed activities. This educational method involves the provision of appropriate learning materials in the form of activities, enabling students to independently undertake tasks with the aim of attaining specific learning objectives. Through active participation in these activities, students not only accomplish desired outcomes but also enhance their learning through the experiential process.

• **flexibility** - engaging learners in the process of determining their desired areas of development, while also ensuring alignment with the specific context and practicality.

• **scenario-based learning** is an instructional approach that promotes the utilization of learners' pre-existing knowledge, experiences, and critical thinking skills within a safe and realistic setting.

5.5 Emotional Competencies

The Educardia SEL activities are focused on the specific competencies of the EmoSocio model. In this section we present some theoretical background and concrete tips for each one of these competencies.

Assertive communication

Assertive communication refers to **the capacity to effectively express one's views, emotions, and requirements while simultaneously demonstrating respect for the rights of others.** Assertiveness is a skill that allows teachers and students to express their needs in a positive and productive manner (Kolb & Griffith, 2009). Such skill may be acquired through exercise and includes:

- ✅ **Language** – using "I" statements;
- ✅ **Posture** – adopting a relaxed posture;
- ✅ **Eye Contact** – keeping eye contact when addressing others;
- ✅ **Emotion expression** – expressing elicited emotions

Assertive communication differentiates from passive and aggressive communication styles. Responding in a passive way tends to mean compliance with the wishes of others and can undermine individual rights and self-confidence, while by being aggressive towards someone else, the rights of the others are undermined. An aggressive style of communication decreases self-esteem and academic performance (Ogunyemi & Olagbaju, 2020). Being assertive involves taking into consideration your own and other people's rights, wishes, wants, needs and desires. For example, in order to improve assertive communication in the classroom, the teacher may present the following situation: Your colleague just told your secret to a few other colleagues. After this, the teacher will present a message specific to each communication style:

Passive: "I guess that is fine. It was not such a big deal anyway. Sorry."

Assertive: "When you tell my secrets to other colleagues I feel I am not in control and I can not trust you. Could you talk to me first next time?"

Aggressive: "How could you do that? I don't want to speak to you anymore!"

Self-esteem

Self-esteem **reflects how we perceive ourselves and our sense of self-worth**. High self-esteem enhances feelings of value, strengthens self-belief, improves performance, and promotes overall well-being and psychological health. It supports personal growth and acts as a buffer against setbacks and failures (Jordan, Zeigler-Hill, & Cameron, 2017). In contrast, low self-esteem can have the opposite effect, potentially leading to negative self-perceptions and even a dislike of oneself (Abdel-Khalek, 2016; Orth, 2017). For some students, self-confidence in the classroom comes effortlessly. They approach new material with ease and communicate their ideas effectively. However, for students with lower confidence, the daily demands of school can lead to anxiety and frustration. They might doubt their abilities and find it challenging to manage everything. Teachers play a vital role in supporting these students, helping them build confidence and take pride in their skills and achievements.

Tips to increase students' self-esteem and confidence in the classroom:

#1 Celebrate achievements

Students who don't have a lot of confidence tend to focus on only the negative aspects of what they are doing. Positive and specific reinforcement helps students know that you're paying attention and helps them acknowledge their own small wins. Giving short feedback on a paper praising their word choice or having the class give a round of applause for fellow students can make a significant difference.

#2 Ensure your expectations are realistic

Help students to prioritize realistic goals in the short and long term. Reviewing these objectives together allows them to track their progress and be conscious of their own development. Try to differentiate your teaching and create personalized goals for each student. Use mistakes or errors as teaching opportunities for students. Remind the students that they are not defined by their shortcomings but the effort and self motivation they put on their goals.

#3 Encourage students to be the leaders of their own learning process

Empower students self-monitoring regarding their learning by providing them with opportunities for decision-making when it comes to daily tasks or classroom rules. Offering choices, such as a list of "must do" and "may do" tasks, gives them control over their learning journey. "May do" tasks give the sense of freedom to the students regarding future engagement with more advanced learning materials. Students will develop a greater sense of self-motivation in their learning when they feel a sense of control.

#4 Recognize that every student is unique

Each student has its own strengths and needs. Implementing differentiated learning strategies can help students to identify how they learn best. Take notice of the different learning styles in your classroom and create an environment that promotes the individual abilities of the students. When students understand how they learn, they are more perceptive in developing empathy among their peers.

Self-motivation

Self-motivation is the **internal drive that leads us to take action towards a goal.** It empowers individuals to keep going through challenges, seize opportunities, and remain dedicated to their goals. **Students who are self-motivated tend to be more engaged, attentive, and committed, putting in greater effort and showing a deeper interest in their learning.** As a result, these students not only learn more effectively but also make the teaching experience more enjoyable and rewarding.
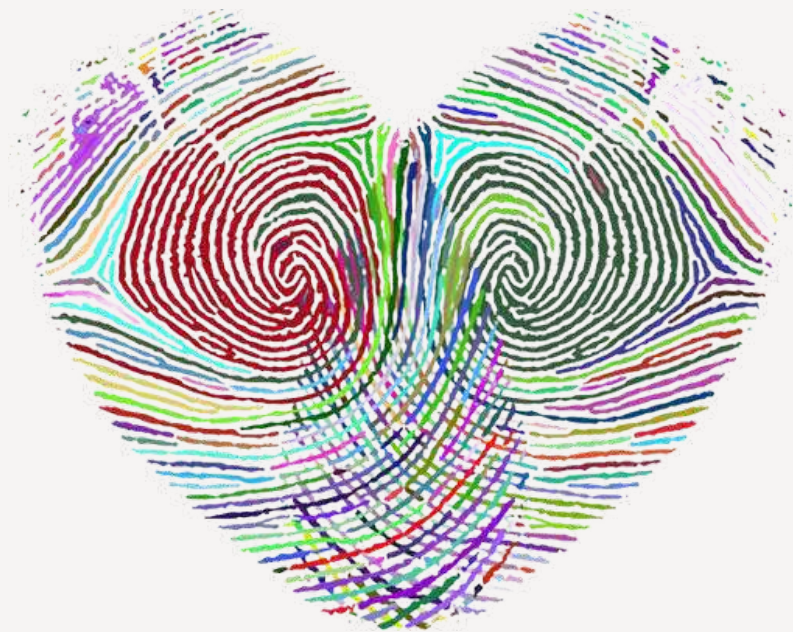
Tips to increase students' self-motivation in the classroom:

#1 Set Clear and Meaningful Goals

Help students set specific, achievable, and relevant goals that are meaningful to them. When students have clear objectives, they are more likely to be motivated to work towards them.

#2 Encourage Intrinsic Motivation

Focus on promoting intrinsic motivation by fostering curiosity and a love for learning. Encourage students to explore topics they are passionate about and provide opportunities for self-directed learning.

#3 Provide Autonomy

Allow students to have some control over their learning process. Offer choices whenever possible, such as selecting projects, research topics, or study methods. When students feel a sense of autonomy, they are more likely to be motivated to engage in their education.

#4 Make Learning Relevant

Connect classroom lessons to real-life situations and demonstrate the practical applications of what students are learning. When students see the relevance of their education, they are more motivated to learn.

#6 Create a Positive Learning Environment

Foster a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere where students feel safe to be exposed by asking questions, and expressing their ideas without fear of judgment.

#5 Use Engaging Teaching Methods

Offer constructive feedback to help students understand their strengths and how they can improve themselves in the future. Feedback should be focused on the effort and strategies students employ rather than solely on the outcome.

#8 Encourage Self-Assessment

Connect classroom lessons to real-life situations and demonstrate the practical applications of what students are learning. When students see the relevance of their education, they are more motivated to learn.

#7 Use Engaging Teaching Methods

Employ a variety of teaching methods, such as group activities, discussions, art-based educational material, hands-on projects, and participatory presentations. Active learning can enhance motivation and retention.

#9 Encourage Peer Support

Promote collaborative learning environments where students can support and motivate each other. Peer encouragement can have a positive impact on motivation.

#10 Lead by Example

Be a role model for self-motivation and demonstrate enthusiasm for learning. Your passion and dedication to teaching can inspire students to become self-motivated learners.

Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation represents all processes used by individuals to decide what emotions they experienced, when to experience them and how to express those by having in mind their personal, interpersonal or social objectives (Gross, 2013).

Teacher emotion regulation has been defined as the ability of instructors to manage their emotional experiences in classroom contexts (Fried, 2011).

Additionally, it was suggested that teacher emotion regulation is "**the ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with the range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reaction as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed**" (Cole & Deater-Deckard, 2009, p. 1327).

The role of emotion regulation is not to eliminate the negative emotions and replace them with positive emotions, it is to influence the dynamic of an emotion to produce a response/ reaction adaptive to the environment experiences in classroom contexts.

#1 Help children to calm down

When a student seems to be upset, sometimes it is helpful to offer your help. For example: "You seem to be upset right now. Let's take a deep breath together". Let your students know you are there to help them, giving them the space and time to relax and be able to verbalize their needs and thoughts.

#2 Help children verbalize how they are feeling

After the student calms down, reinforce feeling talk and problem-solving talk. "You managed to calm down, now you can say how you are feeling and what the problem is. If you wish, i can help you to solve the problem together."

#3 Be the model and think loudly

For example, "I'm feeling frustrated because I can't find the tale I was going to read to you. I'll have to think about where I put it. I had it yesterday on my desk, maybe I put it in the library. I will go there to check out."

#4 Encourage children to share their feelings with their peers

This helps them to calm down, develop their empathy towards the others and augments the possibilities to find a solution to their problem.

#5 Make clear that all feelings are acceptable, but not all behaviors

For example, "It is ok to feel frustrated when you have to wait your turn but it is not ok to push your friend."

#6 Congratulate the students when they manage to solve a problem

For example, "John, you calmed down and told Nick how you were feeling. Then you talked to Nick about how to solve the problem so you could both play with the blocks. You were both great problem solvers!" Be specific when reinforcing to children about their problem-solving efforts.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness represents students' **ability to recognize and talk about their feelings, thoughts and/ or actions.** It is influenced by all the actors involved in the education process (teachers, parents, peers etc.); According to Cook (Cook, 1999), **self-awareness is attained when the student develops an understanding of various personal attributes.** The factors encompassed within this category consist of <u>values, attitudes, prejudices, beliefs, assumptions, sentiments, personal reasons and needs, abilities, and limitations.</u> **When individuals have an understanding of nonverbal communication, their ability to attentively interact with others and demonstrate personal involvement, and recognize the potential impact of these factors on others, they have achieved self-awareness.**

Tips to increase students' self-Awareness:

In order to develop self-awareness in students, teachers may promote the following aspects in their classrooms (DeMink-Carthew et al., 2020):

#1 Learner preferences

Consider students` preferences when proposing a learning activity. Let students make the choices that best fit their learning strategies

#2 Recognizing challenges

Give students the opportunity to ask questions that are relevant to them and communicate your own struggles to the students

#3 Identifying emotions and feelings

Ask students how they feel about the proposed activities in the classroom. Are these activities stressful/ enjoyable? Allow open discussion on these topics

#4 Self-efficacy

Strengthen students` confidence in their abilities to make decisions. Ask "What are some similar activities that you successfully solved before?"

#5 Recognizing strengths

Emphasize and share students` personal strengths. Indicate and cherish students` progress in the activity

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Empathy

Empathy stands for being able to **"Sense others' feelings, needs and perspectives, taking an active interest in their concerns and picking up cues to what is being felt and thought"** (Fotopoulou et al., 2021). Studies have found empathy to be positively associated with life satisfaction, well-being, and self-efficacy, lower likelihood of bullying and better peer relationships (Dionigi et al, 2020).
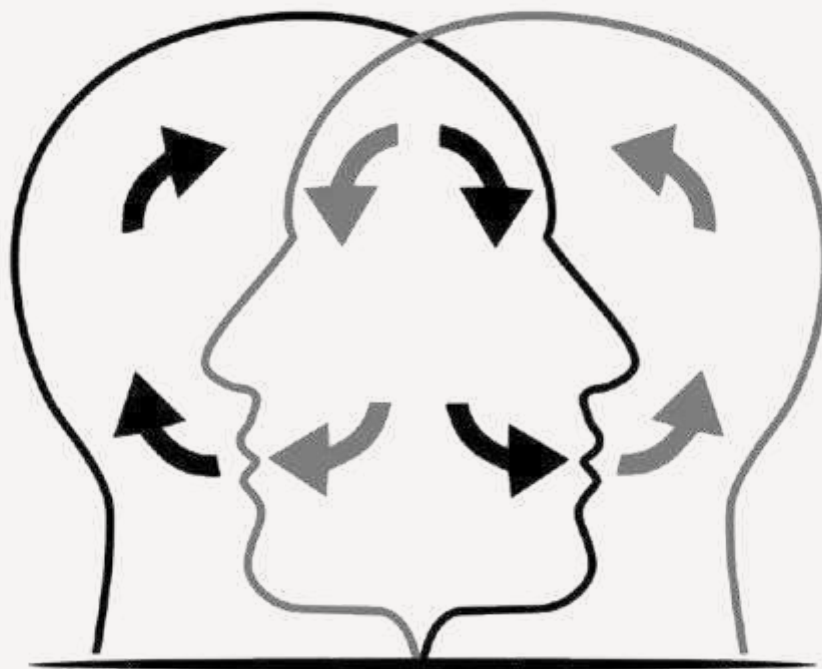
Tips to increase students' empathy in the classroom:

#1 Be a model of an empathetic person

When a problem arises within the classroom and you feel frustrated try to make a pause. It is very important to understand the point of view of your students prior to responding. When a student is upset, it is more effective to understand his/her feelings before trying to guide him/her towards functional actions. Also pay attention to nonverbal communication. Before jumping to conclusions, it is always safer to ask the student if something bothers him/her. Finally involving students in decisions like creating classroom rules or being part of brainstorming tasks promotes an inclusive and empathetic classroom.

#2 Teach what empathy is and why it is important

Explain clearly that empathy means (i) understanding another person's feelings and point of view and (ii) also getting involved into caring actions to help others. Make them understand why this competence is the basis of an inclusive classroom and school. It is also important to clarify that empathy goes beyond immediate friends. Empathy includes those who are different or often are invisible at social level. Finally give specific examples of how students may be empathetic such as helping, being kind and actively listen to their peers.

#3 Practice, practice, practice

Involve your students to evidence-based SEL programs. Create opportunities to practice empathy within the classroom helping your students to take the perspective of the other and try to guess what their peers are thinking. Role playing, reading literature or well selected movies can be great sources of "what you would do" mind projections. Name the barriers of being an empathetic person. Social pressure, stereotypes or stress may stop students from helping the most vulnerable peers. In such cases it is important to encourage them to offer their support privately through kind and supportive words and actions.

#4 Establish explicit ethical guidelines

Be specific about what you expect and you accept as behaviour from your students. Don't create just a poster or do an isolated activity in the classroom. Talk about empathy, model it and remind your students to reflect constantly about their actions. Do an exercise with students to help them define their own circle of friends. How do they behave to the ones outside of the circle? Remind them that they may appreciate who they want but they should respect all the persons. Establish specific guidelines for unacceptable language and behaviors. Aggressive and ironic language should be discarded. Encourage students to think about why such language can be hurtful. Peer mediation when conflict arises is a great strategy to foster the empathy between peers. Stop being the conflict solver of everything that happens in the classroom and delegate such power to your students.

Flexibility

Flexibility is defined as **"modify or adjust one's behavior in meeting different circumstances or different people. The ability to adapt to new environments and conditions"** (Fotopoulou et al., 2021). <u>Resilience is a dynamic and multifactorial concept and it refers to the process by which a person overcomes, adapts and acquires skills, while facing adverse circumstances and maintaining a positive mindset.</u> Resilience can be developed working on protective factors that can be both internal individual skills (e.g. empathy, interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, problem-solving skills) and external contextual aspects (e.g. quality of the environment–family, social and community), leading to mitigation of risk factors' effects.

#1 Encourage students to overcome their barriers

Students are faced with obstacles on a daily basis. Encourage the students to think differently and develop critical thinking through exercises that aim to detect positive outcomes from difficult situations.

#2 Help your student to remain curious

Students with high adaptation skills use to be more curious because they are not afraid of the changes they may face. Curiosity is the basis of finding new ways of doing things and making new discoveries.

#3 Put special attention in teamwork skills

Being part of a team requires being flexible. Teamwork tasks help students adjust to ever-changing team dynamics, which will support them well beyond high school.

#4 Being happy

Children suffer when they can't adapt to change. Negative emotions like anger, frustration, and irritability can take them over. Sharing happy moments with your students makes them strong and resistant to possible adversities.

Influence

Influence is **the power to have an important effect on someone or something**. If someone influences someone else, they are changing a person or thing in an indirect but important way. In the school context, influence means **guiding and inspiring others** through one's actions, ideas, and values rather than relying solely on authority or position. It involves building strong relationships, credibility, and trust. Students should be encouraged to perceive influence as a skill of good collaboration and empowerment rather than as the capacity to dictate orders or enforce compliance.

#1 — Be a model

Be a model for you students with your actions and words. Try to stay calm and face every day problems following transparent problem solving techniques.

#2 — Inspire you students with positive examples

Encourage your students to read literature, history, movies and biographies to highlight character virtues and use of positive psychology. Follow these activities with conversations about the characters and try to relate them with personal moments and students' experiences. Highlight examples of kindness and caring students in and around the school. Discuss real-life and fictional dilemmas and the values they require. Promote ethical decision-making and critical thinking mostly in situations where the social pressure may be heavy.

Emotional Expression

Emotional expression is the process by which individuals communicate their internal feelings to the outside world. I**t's a complex interplay of verbal communication, body language, facial expressions, and even physiological responses.** (Modern Recovery Services, 2025). One way to foster emotional expression is through the emotional vocabulary, which is essential to be able to name and recognize what we are feeling. Emotional vocabulary enhances further understanding of emotions: if we don't know how to name something, that thing isn't fully characterized and, therefore, it can't be as easily identified (Gomis, García, Filella y Ros, 2022).

#1 Ask on a daily basis your students how they feel

Help them understand that their feelings change throughout the day and negative emotions are also functional and useful. Help them to express themselves being a model. Express how you feel at some point by giving specific details and thinking loudly. Also direct children to look at your facial expressions and body language and try to guess how you are feeling.

#2 Use the literature

When reading books or stories to the children, try to label the characters' emotions and point out the facial expression and body language of the characters in books. Talk about how people might feel in different situations to help children understand the different contexts of feelings and that all people have feelings.

#3 Label and define feelings for children when they do not have the words to express how they are feeling

For example, "It looks like you might be concerned that you won't get a turn on the swings today. That feeling is called worried. Let's see how we can fix this if you are feeling worried."

Optimism

Optimism is expecting good things to occur in your life. **Such positive expectations are associated with higher levels of subjective well-being, better physical health, and a higher quality of social relationships.** The benefits of optimism are partially attributable to the manner in which optimists and pessimists cope with adversity. Optimists tend to cope with adversity actively, attempting to solve problems when they can, accepting problems that they cannot resolve, and focusing on the positive aspects of their experiences. In addition to coping with adversity better, **optimists also appear to engage in proactive efforts to prevent problems in the future, including taking actions to minimize various kinds of risks**. (Mens et al, 2021).

#1 Talking positively to yourself

Engaging children in simple conversations about what they enjoyed during the day, what made them feel down, and their plans for the next day can be a straightforward yet powerful way to cultivate positive thinking in them.

#2 Show empathy to children worries and efforts

When children feel heard at home and school, they are more likely to develop into empathetic individuals. Parents and teachers can use simple phrases like 'I understand how you feel' or 'I would have felt the same in your situation'. Focus on effort rather than results fosters the right attitude in building optimism (Seligman, 2006). Encouraging children to participate in activities without highlighting who wins and who loses is a great message for nurturing optimism. When parents appreciate their children's efforts, it instills belief in their abilities and encourages them to persist and never give up.

#3 Recall happy memories

Negative thinking might lead a child to believe that bad moments are never-ending. As teachers and parents, we can motivate children to recall past experiences where children initially felt sad but later overcame the challenges.

#4 Changing from a negative to a positive perspective

Such change can be both a cause and a result of optimism. Helping children understand that things are not always white or black is a significant step toward developing optimism. Once they learn to manage their expectations, they can more easily tap into their optimistic selves.

Today is a beautiful day to be Happy

Relationships

Relationship skills is the **capacity to establish constructive connections, particularly with individuals and collectives from diverse backgrounds**, through the use of various techniques such as <u>active listening, effective communication, and dispute resolution abilities</u>. Some components of relationship skills in students may include demonstrating **empathy and compassion towards others; being attentive to others` feelings – identifying, labeling them and adapting their behavior in accordance to the situation; Showing gratitude; being able to actively listen to others, asking for and sharing effective feedback; Identifying strengths in others; integrating social norms and being interested in the wellbeing of others** (family, fiends, colleagues, community).
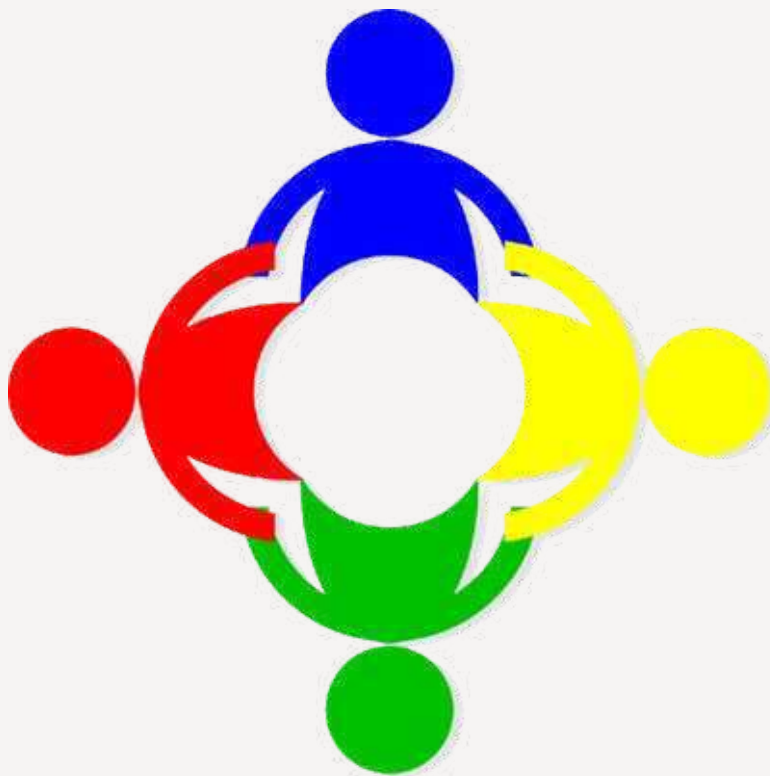
#1 Practice active listening

Make activities where the students can practice active listening among them. You will be surprised by the information they may reveal to their peers. Active listening activities promote the bonding of the classroom and create opportunities for new friendships.

#2 Give positive and constructive feedback

Help students to provide positive and constructive feedback to their peers as a way to protect their relationships with them and at the same time being assertive about their needs and thoughts.

#3 Prioritizing good relationships and friendship

Friendship and good relationships means to care about each other. Encourage students to understand the value of friendship and put it as a priority in their lives.

#4 Promoting extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities give great opportunities to make new friends and be part of more social groups apart from the classroom.

#5 Developing collaborative classroom activities

Promote collaborative activities that involve both the classroom as well as the parents and the local social community. Community building fosters the sense of identity and can be a catalyst in creating new relationships of high quality.

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Teamwork

Considerable researchers have pinpointed teamwork as **one of the most esteemed and necessary skills for having success in professional life** (Hughes & Jones, 2011). Furthermore, **teamwork also plays an essential instrumental function in teaching**. (Kuh, 2008) indicates that cooperative tasks and projects are compelling in positively impacting student development. Thus, performing and solving issues actively with others is not just a desirable consequence of student evolution; it is also an **educational practice with a demonstrably high developmental impact.**
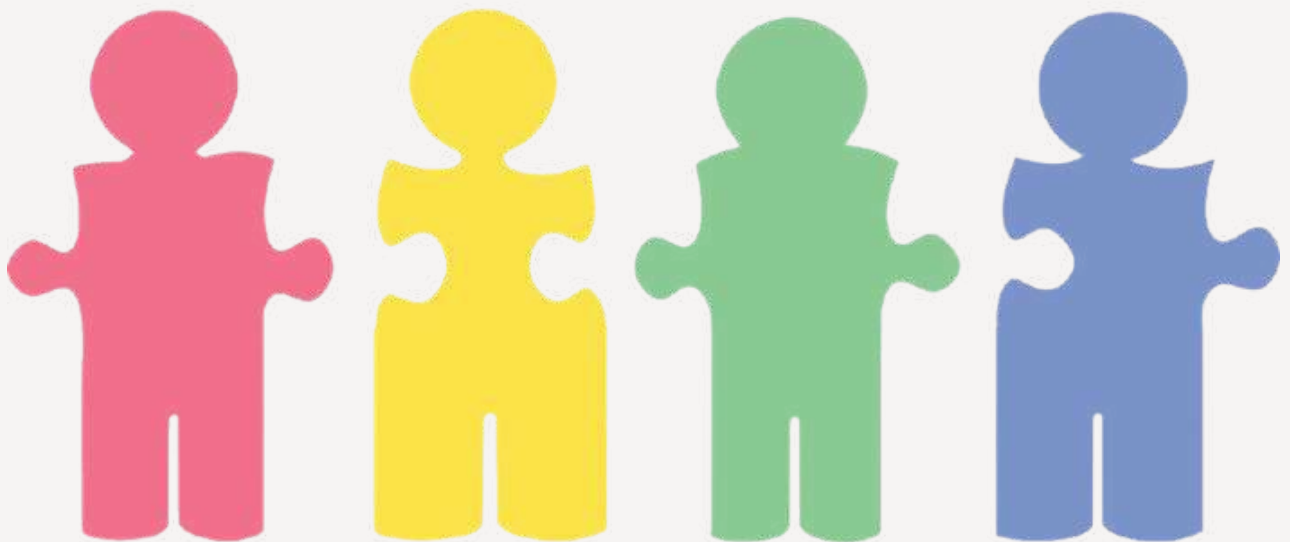
Tips to increase students' self-motivation in the classroom:

#1 Understand the Goal

Each team member should be aware of the shared objective and their individual responsibilities. This clarity ensures that nothing is overlooked and everyone comprehends their contribution's significance to the bigger picture.

#2 Define Roles Clearly

By having a clear understanding of each team member's responsibilities, potential conflicts due to boundary overstepping can be avoided.

#3 Foster a Positive Mindset

Cultivating a caring and supportive environment promotes positive mindsets, empowering team members to address challenges constructively.

#4 Efficient Time Management

Proper time management and effective communication of deadlines are crucial, considering interdependence among team members' tasks.

#5 Share Enthusiasm

Positive feedback and celebration of achievements boost team spirit and morale.

#6 Engage in Team Activities

Engaging in activities outside the usual work setting, such as exercising together, can strengthen teamwork and encourage a positive mindset.

#7 Establish Team Rules and Purpose

While encouraging open communication, establishing guiding rules enables constructive discussions and interactions.

#8 Avoid Complaining

Instead of complaining, focus on finding solutions to problems, as complaints waste energy.

#9 Share Credit

Acknowledge and celebrate all achievements, no matter how small, as giving credit where it is due fosters a collaborative atmosphere.

Chapter 6

Teachers' soft skills (competencies)

As stated before, the primary focus of emotional education is teachers, as they play a crucial role in promoting emotional development within the classrooms. **The successful implementation of any SEL program relies heavily on well-trained educators who possess the necessary expertise and understanding to integrate these practices into their teaching.** Following, we list four competencies we believe teachers should possess to effectively support the emotional growth of their students. Empowering teachers with these competencies (**active listening, empathy, constructive feedback and assertiveness**) ensures the effectiveness and long-term impact of emotional education initiatives.

6.1 Active Listening

Active listening means to focus fully on what the other person says. It also includes showing him/her verbal and non-verbal signs of listening. Carl Rogers and Richard Farson developed the concept of active listening in the 1950s (Rogers, 1979). Active listening is the opposite of passive listening, where a listener may be distracted or note critical points to develop a response. **Active listening promotes a positive classroom culture with better quality of both teaching and learning**. It also fosters better teachers-students relationships. Students feel that they are in a safe environment where they are willing and able to express concerns, ask questions, ask for help, and take risks.

Verbal Signs of Attentive or Active Listening (Rodat, 2019)

Positive Reinforcement
Encourage the speaker to continue expressing his/her ideas and show that you're engaged. Although some positive words of encouragement are welcome to the speaker, the listener should use them wisely so as not to distract from what is being said. The best positive reinforcement is when the listener elaborates or explains briefly why he/she is agreeing with a certain point with the speaker.

Remembering
Try to remember a few key points (eg. the name of the speaker), helps to reinforce that the messages sent have been received and understood. Remembering details, ideas and concepts from previous conversations proves that attention was kept and motivates the speaker to continue.

Questioning
The listener can demonstrate that they have been paying attention by asking relevant questions and/or making statements that build or help to clarify what the speaker has said. By asking relevant questions the listener also helps to reinforce that they have an interest in what the speaker has been saying.

Reflection and Clarification
Reflecting is closely repeating or paraphrasing what the speaker has said in order to show comprehension. Reflection is a powerful skill that can reinforce the message of the speaker and demonstrate understanding. Clarifying involves asking questions of the speaker to ensure that the correct message has been received. Clarification usually involves the use of open questions which enables the speaker to expand as necessary.

Summarisation
Repeating a summary of what has been said back to the speaker is a technique used by the listener to repeat what has been said in their own words. Summarising involves taking the main points of the received message and reiterating them in a logical and clear way, giving the speaker a chance to correct if necessary.

Non-Verbal Signs of Attentive or Active Listening - (Rodat, 2019; SkillsYouNeed, 2019)

Smile
Smiling can be used to show that the listener approves the ideas of the speaker and is paying attention to what is being said.

Eye Contact
Combine eye contact with smiles usually encourages the speaker. However, you should have in mind that eye contact may be intimidating for shy speakers. Sometimes having a conversation while walking or doing a relaxed activity, facilitates the emotional expression for some persons.

Posture
It is common for attentive listeners to lean slightly forward or sideways when sitting. Active listening may also be indicated by a slight tilt of the head or resting the head on one hand.

Mirroring
Mirroring the facial expressions of the speaker is a sign of attentive listening. Mirroring can help to empathize with the speaker in more emotional situations.

Distraction
The active listener should avoid being distracted during the conversation. For example by looking at a mobile or watch etc.

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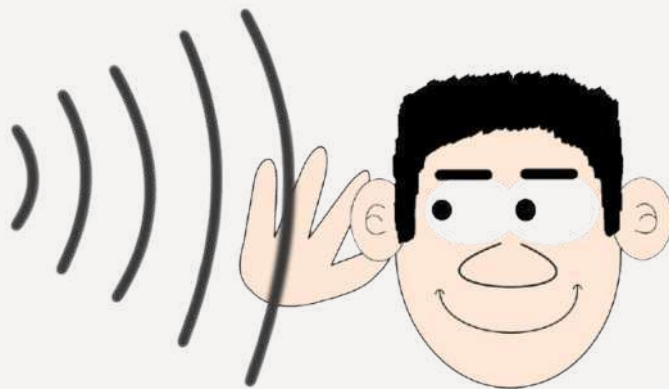
If you answer "Yes," to two or more of these questions, then maybe you should consider improving your listening skills.

Tips for being an active listener:

1.   Do you frequently interrupt students while they are speaking?

2.   Do you use nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions or gestures, to rush conversations with students?

3.   Do you multitask, like grading papers, while talking to students?

4.   Do you listen to a student's full question or response before answering in class?

5.   Do you think about other things during conversations with students?

1.   Listen to the students without thinking about how you should respond to them.

2.   Use body language that shows a focus on what is said.

3.   Try to maintain informal conversations with your students and encourage them to talk about non-school related topics.

4.   Summarize what your students are saying before responding.

5.   Reflect back to the students what you believe to be the thoughts and feelings behind their words.

6.   Ask open-ended questions, to encourage your students to provide further information.

6.2 Assertive communication

Assertiveness is a style of communication where a person expresses clearly his/her thoughts and feelings without neglecting others' beliefs and emotions. Assertive communication represents the middle way between the two extreme behaviors: passivity and aggression. Own feelings, needs and desires are neither less nor more important than those of others; they are equal. A polite and assertive "no" to excessive requests from others will enable you to avoid overloading your schedule and balance your professional and personal life. Several studies demonstrated that **assertiveness represents one of the essential markers of the effectiveness of a team or the quality of the decision-making** (e.g., Cannon-Bowers et al., 1995; Smith-Jentsch et al., 1996). **The school environment promotes teamwork; thus, this is a supplementary argument that communicating assertively must be a desiderate for teachers.**

Assertive communication can help you to:

Control anger
Assertiveness allows one to express negative emotions like anger, sadness or disappointment adequately.

Minimize conflict
Assertiveness helps to express thoughts and feelings calmly and clearly without attacking others' ideas. Assertiveness is the most effective way to solve interpersonal problems.

Have own needs better mets
Assertiveness permits refusing excessive requests from others and helps concentrate on owning priorities.

Have more positive relationships with friends, family, colleagues, students and others
Assertiveness helps positively communicate with colleagues, friends, and family and adequately manage the contradictory conversation. Direct, open and sincere communication allows messages to be received without blockages and distortions, which maintains and improves relationships with others.

Tips for practicing being assertive:

1. **Share your point of view in a clear way,** making sure that your body language is the appropriate. Your listener will get mixed messages if you speak while looking at the floor. Try to look the other person in the eye, stand tall, and relax your face.

2. **Put special attention to the tone and volume of your voice.** What you say is as important as how you say it. Speak at an average volume, rather than a shout or whisper, and make sure you sound firm but not aggressive.

3. **Avoid exaggerating with words like always and never.** For example, "You are 20 minutes late, and it is the third time this week," rather than "You are always late!".

4. **Try to speak with facts rather than judgments.** For example, "This report has important information missing" rather than "You have done a bad job again."

5. **Practice often –** assertiveness is a skill that requires you to practice in many different situations. Don't forget to praise yourself for your reasonable efforts.

Passive   Assertive   Aggressive

6.2 Assertive communication

The XYZ* formula for Assertive Communication

The goal of the **XYZ* formula** is to **express one's own feelings** (internal word) **in response to others' behavior** (external world) **in specific situations.** Before applying the XYZ* formula, the person should know that he/she is the only person with access to their own feelings. **Others have no access to different inner worlds. They will only know what a person feels if he/she tells them.**

For example:

Name, I feel X	when you Y	in situation Z	and I would like*
I feel disappointed	when you say nasty words to each other	during school breaks,	and I would like you to solve your problems using appropriate language.

6.3 Giving effective feedback

Definition and conceptualization of Giving Feedback

Giving effective feedback is one of the most important aspects in building effective communication in the classroom. **Feedback helps both students and teachers enhance their way of communication by making sure both parties receive the same message, which in turn leads to improving the learning process.** It does **not** represent giving advice, praise or evaluation. It represents the information students get on how their efforts in reaching a goal is seen by the teacher.

Giving feedback – the sandwich technique

The sandwich technique is a method of feedback where **positive feedback serves as a cushion to negative feedback.** Feedback is received effectively if it is **introduced with some positive comment on students progress followed by constructive feedback and finalizing by another positive comment or reiterating their strengths for that assignment** (Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, & Hartman, 2009).Teachers may also be an example for their students and receive feedback and work on their own behavior and attitude, thus making students more responsive to feedback in the future.

According to Brookhart (Brookhart, 2011), there are also some important characteristics of effective feedback:

Clear - the message the teacher intends to send should be as clear as possible. A clear message contains only the information relevant to the respective task and is organized in shorter phrases.

Well-timed - effective feedback should be given during the completion of a task in order to enhance students` chances of improving their work.

Specific - teachers should hesitate to use general affirmations as „good work" and replace them with specific suggestions representative for the task at hand.

Bearing the right attitude - refers to having a positive attitude towards students` progress, even when they make mistakes. Mistakes are part of the learning process and should not be met with guilt.

Truly representative - the message should contain the information linked to the specific objective of a task.

Informative - Teachers should explain the feedback and why the chosen suggestions are relevant to the task whenever necessary.

Impersonal - the information teachers share with their students should refer to their behavior, their efforts, and not some personal characteristics.

6.4 Empathy

Definition and conceptualization of Empathy

Empathy is a core teachers' characteristics which influence the interactions between teachers and students. Thus, in educational contexts, empathy consists of **teachers' ability to perceive and understand students' emotions and needs** (Zins et al., 2004). Empathy is a powerful tool that can help you better understand what's driving your students' behavior. Empathy enables teachers to bond with their students and also helps to manage difficult behaviors of students. Empathic teachers understand that students may feel concerned when faced with difficult tasks, or ashamed and frustrated when they are consistently unable to answer questions asked by them. **Teachers' affective empathy could encourage them to respond attentively to their students' emotional needs, provide comfort, and encouragement after recognizing negative affective states in their pupils** (Batson, 2009; Weisz et al., 2021).

Tips for practicing empathy in the classroom (based on Brown's research):

1. Taking perspective
Perspective taking will help you to understand what a student may feel. Try to adopt a different viewpoint by setting aside your personal reactions and feelings and consider the problem from your students' point of view.

2. Stay out of judgements
Avoid the quick judgements. Take a moment to think about what other pieces of information you need to understand each situation. It is always easy to draw assumptions about the circumstance based just on what you observe. But it's crucial to take a step back and ask yourself: "What else do I need to know about this situation?"

3. Recognize emotions
Emotion recognition is defined as the particular ability to recognize nonverbal expression in face, voice, or body (Schlegel et al., 2014). Being aware of your students' anger or sadness can guide you to regulate his or her actions by comforting the sad student. Try to reflect on your own experiences to help you understand the student's emotions or recall a time when you experienced a similar emotion. But be careful not to overdo it. Saying "I know how you feel" can seem fake because each person's experiences are unique.

4. Communication
Communicating that you understand where they are at and validate what their feeling and experience is. When discussing situations with your students, try using reflective language such as:
- **It is clear that this has impacted you deeply.**
- **It sounds like you had a very stressful time.**
- **It's no surprise you are upset.**
- **That sounds frightening.**
- **You look like you are feeling a bit sad.**
- **You seem to be in a happy mood.**

Chapter 7

Good practices and requirements for the application of SEL methodologies

The effective implementation of a SEL program that aims to foster the development of social-emotional competencies requires considering **a series of organizational and pedagogical aspects that guarantee its positive impact on students and the educational community**. These good practices not only ensure the sustainability of the project in the short and long term, but also make it a transformative tool within and outside the school environment. The following are the most relevant aspects that should be considered to ensure the effectiveness of the EduCardia methodology:

1. Sequential and continuous approach
An effective SEL program should start at an early age and be developed in a progressive and continuous manner throughout the student's education. This approach allows socioemotional competencies to be acquired and consolidated at each developmental stage, responding to the specific needs of each age group.

2. Ensuring transversality
It is essential to integrate socioemotional competencies in a cross-cutting way in all curricular areas. This implies that emotions are only tackled by specific activities, but that they are addressed as part of everyday life in other subjects such as language, mathematics, science or physical education.

3. Consistency in teachers' attitudes and behaviors
Teachers play a key role in any emotional education project. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to be coherent models of the social-emotional competencies they wish to teach. Their attitude and behavior should reflect empathy, emotional regulation, active listening and respect, becoming positive role models for students.

4. Be based on a solid theoretical framework
Any intervention must be based on a clear and validated theoretical framework that guarantees its coherence and effectiveness. In EduCardia, the activities and objectives are formulated taking as a reference various research contributions in the field of emotional intelligence and social-emotional competencies. This ensures that the practices implemented do not fall into improvisation or malpractice, strengthening the legitimacy and effectiveness of the proposed activities.

5. Communication and shared objectives
It is essential that the objectives of the EduCardia methodology and the proposed activities are clearly communicated to all the people involved: students, teachers, families and other professionals. This transparency fosters the construction of a cohesive learning community, where all educational agents feel part of the process.

6. Use of a plethora of didactic strategies
The use of a plethora of didactic strategies is essential to promote a meaningful social and emotional learning focused on the students as the protagonist of the educational process. These methodologies, such as project-based learning, cooperative learning, role-playing, relaxation or mindfulness, among others, encourage the direct involvement of students in dynamic and practical activities.

7. Diverse contexts and transfer of learning
Educational activities should go beyond the classroom and the school center, promoting the transfer of socioemotional competencies to different contexts of daily life. Working with local entities and volunteering in community organizations are examples of how students can apply and transfer their social-emotional competencies in real environments, participating in solidarity activities that foster a sense of belonging and social responsibility.

8. Training and mentoring of educational staff
The success of any SEL program depends, to a large extent, on the preparation of teachers and counselors, as well as on the involvement of families. Therefore, it is necessary to offer training and counseling alternatives that provide those involved with adequate tools and knowledge to address socio emotional competencies in an effective manner.

9. Coordination and programming
For a project to have coherence and continuity, it is essential to ensure coordinated programming between all educational levels and stages. This ensures that activities are harmoniously integrated and that there are no disconnections in their implementation.

10. Rigorous evaluation
Finally, it is essential to evaluate the project in all its phases: before, during and after its implementation. To this end, valid and reliable instruments must be used to measure the impact of the activities on the emotional development of the students and on the educational community as a whole.

As an EduCardia team, we consider that any emotional education project that integrates these good practices not only promotes the integral development of students, but also reinforces the cohesion of the educational community. In addition, it guarantees its sustainability, ensuring that the learning acquired has a lasting impact both in the school environment and in daily life. These principles not only guide the design of the EduCardia methodology project, but also make it a reference model for future educational interventions.
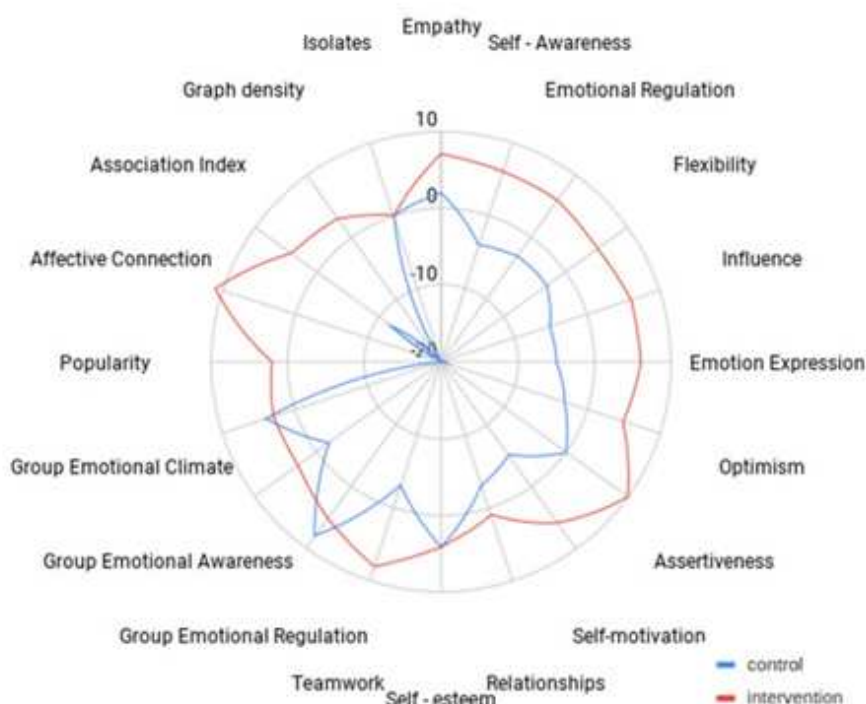
Chapter 8 The EduCardia Impact

EduCardia Impact

The EduCardia SEL assessment methodology has been applied to more than **160 classrooms in Greece, Spain and Romania** during the academic year 2023-2024 with the participation of **more than 2500 students.**

We provide some results based on the application of the EduCardia SEL methodology in primary and secondary education schools in Greece. The results are inline with relevant works in the literature related to the positive impact of SEL initiatives.

The following figures depict the percentage change observed in each of the EmoSocio metrics for the various age groups. In the vast majority of emotional competencies and sociometric indexes, better results are achieved in the intervention groups (red line) than in the control groups (blue line). **This result is promising and validates the positive impact that can be achieved through the application of the EduCardia methodology.**

In the age group of 6 to 8 years, **improvement is noticed in almost all the competencies** considered in the intervention groups. In the case of emotional competencies, the improvement ranges from **1%** (in the case of **Relationships**) to **10%** (in the case of **Assertiveness**). This is not the case in the control group where many competencies have deteriorated. **A more positive effect is observed in the competencies of self-awareness, influence, emotion expression, assertiveness, self-motivation and teamwork.** In the case of sociometric indexes, the results achieved in the intervention groups are much better compared to the control groups. This is especially evident for the metrics of association index, popularity, affective connection, and graph density.
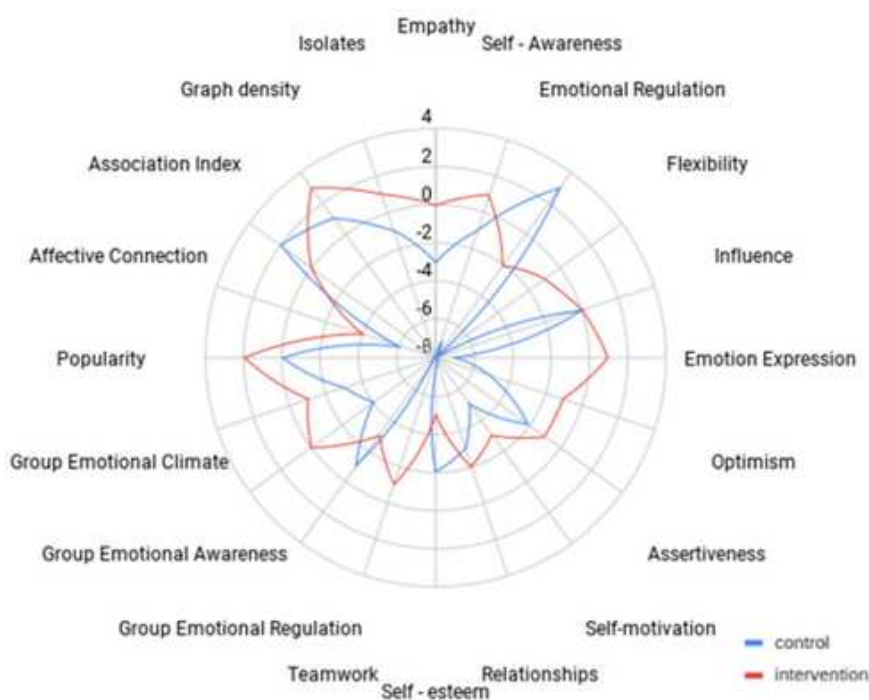
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In the age group of 9 to 12 years

In the age group of 9 to 12 years, there are cases where the competencies are improved and cases where the competencies are deteriorated. However, better results are obtained in the intervention groups than in the control groups. In the intervention groups, **students improved their emotional competencies in emotional expression and self-awareness**. Regarding the sociometric indexes, the indexes of graph density, association index, and isolates are improved in the intervention groups, while this is not always the case in the control groups.
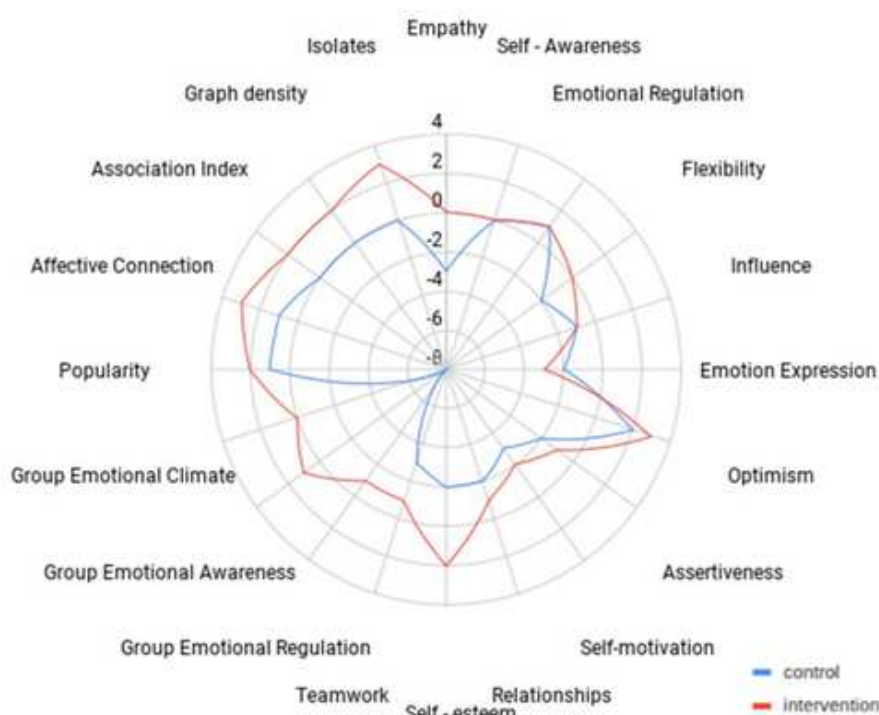
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In the age group of 13 to 18 years

In the age group of 13 to 18 years, we also see a **considerable improvement in the competencies** considered in the intervention groups. **The competencies that have mostly improved are self-esteem, optimism, and group emotional awareness.** Based on the comparison between the intervention and control groups, the performance achieved in the intervention groups is better in the vast majority of the emotional competencies and especially in the group emotional competencies. In the case of sociometric indexes, the indexes of graph density, affective connection, association index, popularity, and isolates are improved in the intervention groups.

In a nutshell

the conclusions upon the implementation of the EduCardia methodology are the following (Fotopoulou et al., 2025):

In most cases, the intervention groups have managed to improve their individual and group socioemotional competencies.

The improvement seems to be higher in the case of sociometric indexes (in comparison with the emotional traits of the students), which leads to the understanding that the social dynamics can be considered as easier to change within a group. Students' emotional competencies are changing slower than the classroom social dynamics.

The most positive results are achieved in younger ages. This highlights the importance of introducing SEL programs into the school curriculum from the early ages of the students.

Based on the results, it is also noticed that the improvement in the majority of socio-emotional competencies is in the range of 1-12%. These numbers validate that to support the development of social and emotional competencies, SEL education has to be considered as a long-term process. A schoolwide systemic SEL strategy that can be applied throughout all the school years is required.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

Conclusions

In conclusion, the EduCardia methodology serves as a comprehensive framework that underscores the importance of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as a pivotal tool for educational growth and emotional well-being. By integrating theoretical insights into emotional training and emotional education with practical tools such as the EmoSocio EI Model and the EmoSociograms psychometric tool, EduCardia bridges the gap between assessing the emotional profile of students and fostering focused interventions to improve them. The EduCardia SEL activities repository further exemplifies this by offering adaptable activities that cater to diverse age groups and developmental needs, ensuring that emotional education is both accessible and impactful.

The emphasis on teachers' soft skills, such as active listening, empathy, assertive communication, and effective feedback, highlights the central role educators play in modeling and nurturing these competencies. Additionally, the inclusion of best practices and guidelines provides a roadmap for sustainable implementation, amplifying the program's long-term benefits. Collectively, EduCardia demonstrates a profound impact by equipping students, educators, and institutions with the tools necessary to navigate the complexities of emotions, fostering resilience, empathy, and emotional intelligence for a more emotionally aware future.

Chapter 11

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EduCardia

EDUCARDIA
HANDBOOK

" Educating the mind
without educating the heart
is no education at all ."

Aristotle