INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

UPSKILLING COURSE
FOR CHILDCARE PROFESSIONALS

TRAINING MATERIALS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was developed as joint work of partner organizations from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain conducted within the project **"INDEAR – Inclusion and diversity in early childhood education"** (hereinafter referred to as INDEAR, project number: KA220–BY–23–25–161951).

The project INDEAR aims to <u>promote inclusion and diversity in childcare institutions</u> by equipping childcare professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to address recent societal trends: *heavy migration flows e.g. due to war conflicts (e.g. war in Ukraine), new family forms, etc.*

In particular, childcare professionals should be able to cater for the needs of children in disadvantage situations and convey common European values with a special focus on civic engagement and participation.

Content

INTRODUCTION

The Upskilling Course for Childcare Professionals – Training Materials, is designed as an integral part of the Upskilling Course for Childcare Professionals *Inclusion and Diversity in Early Childhood Education*.

This document provides comprehensive learning materials for the Upskilling Course, aimed at equipping trainers with the knowledge and resources needed to deliver effective training sessions. Learning materials are carefully created to ensure alignment with the curriculum's objectives and structure, offering valuable insights and practical strategies to facilitate an organized and enriching learning experience for all participants.

By aligning with the curriculum and focusing on key areas of professional development, these materials aim to support trainers in delivering high–quality upskilling courses. Through a combination of theoretical insights, further reading proposals, and practical exercises, trainers will be well–prepared to lead effective sessions that enhance the skills and competencies of childcare professionals, ultimately benefiting the children and communities they serve.

STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE OF THE TRAINING MATERIALS

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The learning materials included in this document are organized to cover subtopics within three critical areas: *Culture, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation, and Trauma.*

Each subtopic is presented with a balance of theoretical input and practical application and includes:

- **Theorey Input**
  For each subtopic, the materials offer theoretical insights, helping trainers to become acquainted with the underlying concepts. This foundational knowledge is essential for trainers to effectively convey the importance and nuances of each topic to course participants.

- **Activity Resources**
  Three practical learning activities / exercises are provided for each subtopic. These activities are designed to be used during the course, facilitating interactive and experiential learning. By engaging participants in practical exercises, trainers can help them apply theoretical concepts in real–world contexts, enhancing their skills and competencies.

- **Resources for Further Reading**
  To support ongoing professional growth, each subtopic includes proposals for further reading. These recommendations guide trainers towards additional resources, enabling them to deepen their understanding and stay updated with the latest developments in their field.

IMPLEMENTATION FLEXIBILITY

Recognizing the diverse contexts in which childcare professionals operate, the materials in this document are designed with flexibility in mind. Whether used as part of university and VET school programs, professional development for current practitioners, or training for future professionals, the content can be tailored to meet specific needs and contexts. This adaptability ensures that the course can have a broad and significant impact across various educational and childcare settings.

With a variety of tools and resources available, a trainer can adjust and design upskilling course that will equip professionals with the insights and skills needed to create nurturing and inclusive learning environments.

Trainers are encouraged to adapt the training activities to reflect the national context. This may involve contextualizing activity resources by modifying examples, case studies, and other content to ensure relevance and resonance with local realities. When delivering theoretical content, contextualization should primarily focus on aligning with the national legal framework, policies, and locally accepted definitions.

Additionally, trainers are encouraged to invite subject-matter experts to participate as co-trainers or guest lecturers. Their specialized knowledge and practical experience can significantly enrich the learning process and provide valuable insights tailored to specific topics.

MODULES

MODULE I: CULTURE

TEACHING UNIT 1.1.

RECOGNIZING, UNDERSTANDING AND FOSTERING EQUALITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

THEORY INPUT

From a scientific perspective, cultural diversity is initially clarified by culture. which has numerous dimensions and global connotations. For example, "Sociology generally defines culture as encompassing common characteristics and ideas of self (e.g., belief systems, behaviors, and customs associated with artifacts, symbols, or social norms) within a wider spectrum of a group, community, or nation. Each level of association (e.g., ethnicity, community, national) may represent vastly different and complex cultural mores." (Fiedler, 2020)

Generally, we may say that cultural diversity is about appreciating that society includes many different groups with diverse interests, skills, abilities, talents and needs. In addition to this, it is also about recognizing that people in society can present different religious beliefs and sexual orientations than others (Young Scot Enterprise, 2022).

Impact of cultural diversity on children's development and learning:

Inclusivity and Acceptance

- **Promotes Global Awareness:** Early exposure to different cultures and backgrounds helps children develop a global perspective. It teaches them that there are diverse ways of life beyond their immediate surroundings, fostering curiosity and empathy.

- **Builds Inclusivity:** Encouraging cultural diversity in the classroom creates an inclusive atmosphere where all children feel welcome and valued, regardless of their ethnic, racial, or cultural background.

- **Counters Bias and Stereotypes:** Exposing children to various cultures from a young age challenges stereotypes and biases. When they see that people from different backgrounds are their friends and educators, they are less likely to develop prejudiced beliefs.

Cognitive Development

- **Boosts Cognitive Flexibility:** Exposure to diverse cultures and languages enhances cognitive flexibility—switching between concepts and adapting to new situations. This skill is crucial for problem-solving and critical thinking.

- **Strengthens Language Skills:** Learning about different languages and communication styles enhances language development. Multilingual environments can be particularly beneficial for language acquisition and cognitive growth.

- **Encourages Creativity:** Exposure to diverse cultures stimulates creativity. Children are more likely to think outside the box, develop innovative ideas, and have a broader perspective on problem-solving.

Social Development

- **Fosters Empathy:** Understanding and appreciating cultural diversity helps children develop empathy and compassion. They learn to see the world from different viewpoints, vital for forming healthy relationships.

- **Teaches Respect:** Learning about different cultures instills respect for others' beliefs and practices. It encourages children to treat everyone with kindness and courtesy.

- **Enhances Communication:** Exposure to diverse cultures improves communication skills. Children become more adept at listening, interpreting non-verbal cues, and expressing themselves effectively." (The Nest Schools, 2024)

Preparation for multicultural Society

(The Nest Schools, 2024)

- **Real-world Preparation:** A child's early exposure to multicultural diversity facilitates children's development in a multicultural society.

- **Global Citizenship:** Education that takes into account the multicultural context develops a sense of global citizenship, realizing that we are all part of a larger, interconnected world. This approach encourages people to be involved in global issues and problems and promote positive change.

- **Economic and Workforce Benefits**: Among the skills increasingly required in the labor market are intercultural competencies. Therefore, exposure to intercultural diversity from the earliest years can give children a competitive edge in the future labor market.

Cultural Equality in the Context of Childcare Education (Brightwheel blog, 2024)

During early childhood, children have the opportunity to experience a melting pot of different cultures, genders, religions, abilities, interests and more. Influenced by this multicultural diversity, children are more aware than we might think, considering prejudices and stereotypes.

By the age of five children are increasingly aware of certain traits, stereotypes, social status, and characteristics with race based on what they've learned from the people and environment around them. Children absorb the world they grow up in. They imitate what they see or hear. Therefore, the early education stage plays a significant role in promoting diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environments and in overcoming the racism and prejudice that is prevalent today.

Below are strategies to consider when incorporating values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in your childcare or preschool curriculum (Brightwheel blog, 2024):

- **Create activities that allow children to share details about who they are, their culture, and their background.** Children will get exposed to facts about different ethnicities, cultural traditions, religions, genders, family types, physical abilities, and more.

- **Provide various books, dolls, toys, and learning materials highlighting characters with diverse backgrounds, mental and physical qualities, religions, and more.**

- **Prioritize values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in your lesson plans.** How you structure your curriculum and teaching methods can also influence how children learn about diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, the Reggio Emilia approach aims to ensure that every child feels like they belong. It also aims to strengthen their sense of identity as an individual. This approach can encourage acceptance and inclusion surrounding their unique needs, learning, and physical abilities.

- **Plan celebrations, such as holidays, that reflect the diversity of the children in your program.** Represent and include all backgrounds in everything from the decorations to the food you serve.

- **Incorporate lessons and activities that celebrate and recognize the contributions and achievements of people from different cultural backgrounds." (Brightwheel blog 2024)**

Societal injustices and structural barriers that may hinder equal opportunities for all children related to their cultural background (Lachowicz, 2015, p. 17).

A child, who arrives in a new country usually experiences a phenomenon called: **culture shock.** It is the effect of an encounter with an unknown culture. The change of location usually reveals many difficult emotions. Each member of the family may experience in a different way the loss of a sense of security, the fear of the of the new, the need to find oneself in a new place. This is a natural phenomenon, however, by providing support to the child and the family it is possible to help to go more smoothly through the adaptation process.

Adaptation difficulties of a child coming from a different culture (Wysocka, 2022):

- Language barriers
- Traumatic experiences
- Culture shock
- Lack of motivation to learn
- Feeling of loneliness and confusion
- Different attitude to customs and rules
- Lack of acceptance from peers
- Different attitudes towards educators developed in the previous education system
- Differences in school knowledge and skills

Resources for Further Reading

- Catarci, M. & Fiorucci, M. (2015) *Intercultural Education in the European Context – Theories, Experiences, Challenges*. London: Routledge.
- Baldock, P. (2010) *Understanding Cultural Diversity in the Early Years*. SAGE.
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- Yuko, I. (2013) 'Multicultural children's literature and teacher candidates' awareness and attitudes toward cultural diversity', *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education,* 5(2), pp. 185–198.
- Tharp, R. G. (1991) 'Cultural diversity and treatment of children', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology,* 59(6), pp. 799–812.

Activity Resources

1.1.1. Activity name	Cultural Traditions		
Purpose of the activity	The activity will promote cultural diversity. Participants from different countries or cultures will have the opportunity to present the traditions of the place they come from and to learn about the culture and history of different countries. They will also develop respect for cultural diversity as well as social skills (team work, communication)		
Learning outcomes	■ recognize own knowledge gaps concerning individual cultures ■ engage in open and respectful dialogue to learn from one another and bridge cultural divides ■ foster opportunities for people from different backgrounds to interact and engage with one another ■ identify basic information related to other cultures, traditions, and backgrounds		
Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☒ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☒ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☒ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	40 minutes		
Resources required	Papers, markers		

Instruction:

1. Ask each participant to present a cultural tradition from their country or region. If there are people from the same country, they can do it in groups.
2. Encourage them to talk about how it has been passed down through generations. Invite groups/individuals to be creative in creating the presentation (poster, roll-play, etc.)
3. Invite each group/individual to present their work.
4. Provide time for questions and discussions. Ask all the participants to share their experiences with the group.
   - Moderate the discussion asking the following questions:
   - What did you learn from others that you didn't know before?
   - How can these cultural elements be included in preschool settings?
   - What are the benefits of exposing children to multiple cultures?
   - Why cultural understanding is important?

Comments	■ Think about the importance of valuing diversity in order to promote inclusivity. In addition to this, you can encourage a group to find the ways that they can use various cultural practices in their work with children and adults. ■ If a group does not have cultural diversity, invite participants to choose one cultural tradition, explore about it and present it to the group.

1.1.2. Activity name	Multicultural Arts & Crafts		
Purpose of the activity	The activity will promote cultural diversity and the ability to communicate and cooperate within multicultural group. Participants can learn about the culture and the history of different countries and benefit one from each other.		
Learning outcomes	■ identify basic information related to other cultures, traditions, and backgrounds ■ self–reflect in the context of work in intercultural education community ■ engage in open and respectful dialogue to learn from one another and bridge cultural divides ■ foster opportunities for people from different backgrounds to interact and engage with one another		
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☒ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☒ Other: <u>Artwork</u>
Timeframe for activity	40 minutes		
Resources required	Art supplies for every participant, such as paper, paint, markers, etc.		

Instructions:

1. Divide the participants into groups. You can divide the group in a random way. Prepare cards in three colors. Each participant draws one color and forms a group with people who drew the same color.
2. Give each group art resources and encourage them to create a multi–cultural artwork based on their place they come from. It could be a mural, collage, or another type of artwork.
3. Provide examples of multicultural artworks for inspiration (examples below, feel free to add more).
4. Each group establishes the concept of its work, chooses a technique and a theme for the work – for example, it may include symbols, characteristic monuments, food, specific customs, landscapes. It is important for the participants to tell others about the place they come from, what is so characteristic, what makes it unique.
E.g.
1. Make your own hamsa
https://www.globalmousetravels.com/make-your-own-hamsa-hand-hand-of-fatima/
(Make your own Hamsa hand / Hand of Fatima)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6T_AUdGqN8
(How To Make A Hamsa Decoration From Paper: Free Templates Included)

2. Global Food Map
https://stockcake.com/i/global–food–map_1652960_1216815
3. World Landmarks Collage
https://www.istockphoto.com/pl/zdj%C4%99cie/%C5%9Bwiatowe–zabytki–kola%C5%BC–z–dj%C4%99%C4%87–wyizolowany–na–bia%C5%82ym–tle–podr%C3%B3%C5%BCy–turystyki–i–nauki–na–gm698900018–129472515

5. When the groups finish their work, ask them to present it to the other teams.
6. You may ask each group the following questions:
   - How did you establish the concept of your work? Have you identified the stages in the development of the work?
   - How did you divide the tasks among the participants?
   - What was easy for you?
   - Did you face any difficulties?
   - What caused you the most difficulties?
   - What surprised you while doing the work?
   - What did you learn from others that you didn't know before?

Comments	Share with participants that this activity can be used with children. The following samples of artwork for inspiration can be used: https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/82612974409224154/ (Ward off the Evil Eye with this Hamsa Craft for Kids) https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/82612974409226805/ (Holidays Around the World Craft: Gorgeous Stained Glass0 https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/82612974408610431/ (Make Multicultural Paper Dolls)

1.1.3. Activity name	Something in Common
Purpose of the activity	The activity helps to show that despite our differences, we can have a lot in common. The exercise can be used as a warm-up activity in getting to know each other and in building a friendly atmosphere
Learning outcomes	■ self-reflect in the context of work in intercultural education community ■ engage in open and respectful dialogue to learn from one another and bridge cultural divides ■ foster opportunities for people from different backgrounds to interact and engage with one another

Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☒ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☒ Play ☒ Other: Artwork

Timeframe for activity	40 minutes
Resources required	pictures with different free time activities, additional small cards, large papers for each participant, crayons, pencils

Instruction:

1. Divide participants into pairs (e.g.by choosing the same colors or numbers).
2. Instruct that one participant from the pair should lie down on a large piece of paper. The other participant should outline his/her shape on the paper. And vice versa.
3. Instruct that each participant choose and stick a picture with an activity he or she likes to do on their own drawn shape. The picture of activity must be attached in the part of the body that is associated with the activity. For example: I like eating, so I glue the picture with food on the belly. Multiple pictures can be chosen.
4. Papers with the participants' figures drawn are left on the floor so all participants can view them. Ask participants to write his or her name on small pieces of paper, and attach them to activities presented on other participants shapes, which he/she also likes to do.
5. At the end, ask each participant to show his or her poster and read the names of people with whom he/she shares similar interests.
6. Encourage discussion among participants about the activity by asking:
   ■ Did the exercise help you to make connections with other participants? Especially those you don't know? To what extent?
   ■ What has surprised you about the exercise in relation to yourself and others?
   ■ Are cultural differences an obstacle in establishing relationships?
   ■ How can the exercise be used in working with a multicultural group?
7. Summarize the work of the participants, showing that despite our differences we have a lot in common

Comments	The trainer can give additional cards to draw activities that were not covered with prepared pictures with free time activities.

References

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- Lachowicz, B. (2015) *Uczniowie z różnych kultur w szkole*. Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji, Warszawa.
- The Nest Schools (2024) Embracing Diversity: *The Crucial Role Of Cultural Diversity In Early Childhood Education*. Available at: https://thenestschool.com/blog/embracing–diversity–the–crucial–role–of–cultural–diversity–in–early–childhood–education/ (Accessed: 18 July 2024)
- Young Scot Enterprise (2022) *What is Cultural Diversity?* Available at: https://young.scot/get–informed/what–is–cultural–diversity/ (Accessed: 18 July 2024).
- Wysocka, M. (2022) *Sam w nowym otoczeniu – trudności ucznia przybywającego z zagranicy oraz sposoby ich pokonywania*. Available at: https://epedagogika.pl/uczniowie-bez-orzeczenia/sam–w–nowym–otoczeniu-trudnosci–ucznia–przybywajacego–z–zagranicy–oraz–sposoby–ich–pokonywania–3153.html (Accessed: 19 July 2024)

TEACHING UNIT 1.2.

ASPECTS OF MIGRATION AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CULTURE

THEORY INPUT

Every year many people, families including children leave their homes, country looking for a new, better life, or security.

For some of them migration is a matter of a free choice, whereas others are forced to do so.

Taking into account different circumstances, migration can be: (Internet Geography, n.d.):

- Internal, where people move from place to another within a country
- Rural to urban, where people move from the countryside to an urban area
- Urban to rural, where people move from a built–up area to the countryside
- International, where migrants move from one country to another
- Voluntary, where migrants choose to move
- Involuntary, where migrants have no choice but to move
- Temporary, when the migrant moves for a short period of time
- Permanent, when people do not move back"

Three Stages of Migration Process

In general, the migration process occurs in three stages (Bhugra & Becker, 2005, p. 19):

- The first stage is pre–migration, involving the decision and preparation to move.
- The second stage, migration, is the physical relocation of individuals from one place to another.
- The third stage, postmigration, is defined as the "absorption of the immigrant within the social and cultural framework of the new socjety."

Impacts of Migration

Migration is considered both as a challenge but also as an opportunity for destination countries. Migrants, especially in the short term, are said to be a challenge for local labor markets. For example, they can affect wages and reduce job opportunities for local workers who are competitors to them. However, considering the long-term effect, migrants can help increase production, stimulate international trade.

The benefits of the impact of migrants can be seen not only at the economic level, but also at the cultural and social ones.

Positive Impacts (Vazir Group, 2022, Toppr.Guide)

- Expanding the labour market. It contributes to decrease unemployment, and better job opportunities.
- Increased cultural diversity;
- Skill gaps are filled;
- Boost to the local economy;
- Public services can benefit from an influx of qualified staff (e.g. doctors and nurses).
- Migration promotes the improvement of quality of life of people.
- It is beneficial to improve social life. People have the opportunity to learn about other cultures, customs, language, which has a positive effect on the brotherhood among people.
- Migration of skilled workers leads to a greater economic growth of the region.
- Children get better opportunities for higher education.

The impact of migration can also be considered in the origin location. Among the most important positive effects are (Vazir Group, 2022):

- Unemployment can be reduced because the competition for work is less
- When migrant come back to the country of origin they bring new competences and skills
- There is less pressure on services such as education and healthcare;
- The money is often sent back to family and friends, stimulating the local economy.

Negative Impacts (Vazir Group, 2022):

- Pressure on public services such as schools, housing and healthcare;
- Overcrowding;
- Language and cultural barriers can exist;
- Increased level of pollution;
- Increased pressure on natural resources;
- Racial tensions and discrimination;
- Gender imbalance – usually more men migrate.

Numerous sources also indicate the negative impact of migration on the origin location. Among the most important are (Vazir Group, 2022):

- Migration separates families
- Gender imbalances, because most of migrants are males
- Migration may involve educated, skilled people with desired competencies which may have a negative impact on the economic development of the country
- Migration causes fewer people to pay taxes

Impacts of Migration on Children

We talk about the impact of migration on children when they are left behind by one parent or both parents who decide to migrate. We also talk about the migration experience of children when children migrate with their parents

The impact of migration on children is considered at several levels, as shown in the following table (UNICEF, n.d., p. 2)

Children Migrating with Family	
Domestic & Regional Migration	- Health/educational benefits and disadvantages - Children as Family Labourers Poor and hazardous conditions; Social exclusion - Children seek informal employment At risk on the street Poor and hazardous conditions Social exclusion
International Migration / Asylum Seekers & Refugees	- Access to Education/health care Discrimination/Identity/ Psychosocial problems - Intergenerational Tensions - Transnational Families/Staggered and Chain Migration

Children Left Behind	
When fathers migrate	■ Female headed households and poverty; Effects on children's education and/ or wellbeing; ■ Household vulnerability ■ Remittances role in livelihoods
When mothers mi-grate	■ Psycho-social effects on children ■ Health and education of children ■ Abuse of children ■ Effects on domestic Gender Division ■ Family break up
When both parents migrate	■ Effects on children's well-being; health and education ■ Burden on grandparents/relatives

Adapted by R. Cortes from Whitehead and Hashim (2005)

Cultural Effects of Migration – Key Takeaways (StudySmarter, 2022)

■ Migration is considered as a crucial feature of humanity. The impact of migration is noted not only on migrants, but also on the cultural landscapes occupied by migrants.

■ Migrants can resist assimilation and establish ethnic enclaves and districts in the areas where they have settled.

■ Migrants can accept assimilation and become part of the "cultural melting pot."

■ Some migrants may try to assimilate, but they will never be fully accepted as members of the dominant culture.

■ Xenophobia is link to the idea that migrants can be treated as a threat to culture; cultural separatism rejects the melting pot and it assumes that if the culture wants to survive should be separated from other cultures.

Resources for Further Reading

- Eckstein, M., Miklikowska, M., Noack, P. (2021) 'School Matters: The Effects of School Experiences on Youth's Attitudes toward Immigrants', *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 50(11), pp. 2208–2223.
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- Qi,L., Qi,Z,. Meng,H., & Ma, Z. (2024) 'Comprehensive Analysis of International Migration's Impact on Education and Cultural Exchange', *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, 15(2), pp. 17–20.

Activity Resources

1.2.1. Activity name	Influence of Culture on Language and Food
Purpose of the activity	The activity will help to understand how other cultures influence different aspects of our own culture and what are the benefits of this influence.
Learning outcomes	▪ use positive reinforcement and encouragement to help build confidence and support the emotional well–being of migrant children ▪ accept the diversity within the educational environment as a result of migration

Interactive method/tech–nique	☒ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____

Timeframe for activity	60 minutes
Resources required	Pencils, paper, internet connection (mobile phones)

Instruction:	1. Ask participants to think of the words and food that were influenced by other cultures or countries (For example, in Polish the word 'kartofle' (potato) comes from the German language – Kartoffel).
	2. Pass out sheets of paper and ask the participants to write down the words and food that they know, that were influenced by other cultures or countries
	3. Further on, ask participants to try to explain how the words or food were transferred into their culture.
	4. Instruct them to use Internet, if necessary, in search for explanation.
	5. After fifteen minutes, ask each participant to present his/her work.
	6. In conclusion, ask the participants to point out the factors that affect this intercultural transmission, for example:
	  ▪ In your opinion what are cultural conditions of nutrition behavior? (E.g. religious prohibitions and orders, customs of a particular community, the way of serving food, typical for a parti–cular nation, region the selection of food products and the way of preparing dishes)
	  ▪ How are language and culture related?
	  ▪ What historical and cultural connections between nations do you recognize in your native language?
	7. During the second part of the activity divide participants into groups of 5–6. Each group has to work on a proposal (may use the method of mind mapping) to use this exercise in work with children indicating its objectives (to help to build confidence, integration, connection, etc.)
	8. After some time, invite each group to present the proposal and lead a discussion.

Comments	It is optional to design a poster that shows the influence process.

1.2.2. Activity name	New Child in the Group
Purpose of the activity	The exercise is useful in building a safe and friendly atmosphere in a cross-cultural classroom especially at the early stage.
Learning outcomes	▪ provide support to families and children in intercultural interaction for increasing acceptance and respect of a new environment ▪ use positive reinforcement and encouragement to help build confidence and support the emotional well-being of migrant children

Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study
	☐ Work in pairs ☒ Presentation ☐ Role playing
	☐ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz
	☒ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy
	  ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise
	  ☐ Story ☐ Play
	  ☐ Round table ☐ Other _____
	  ☐ Problem solving

Timeframe for activity	50 minutes
Resources required	Pencils, paper, markers
Instruction:	1. Divide participants into 4 teams. Each team receives a children case study. Two teams receive the same case. 2. Instruct the groups is to analyze the cases and describe difficulties that participants encounter: the child, parents, educators, peers and school community. **ALEX' CASE** Alex was born in France. He is 6 now. His parents come from different cultures and speak different languages. This rather peculiar situation of a child growing up in a multilingual family had an impact on the communication problems and the boy's ways of coping in the social environment. Alex's mom is a Nigerian who speaks French and communicates with her husband in English, his dad is Polish and a native speaker of Polish. The parents communicate among themselves mainly in English, while to the child each speaks in their own language. Due to the nature of the parents' work, the family frequently changed their place of residence. Aleks spent the first year of his life in France, the next six months the family lived in Germany (the boy started attending daycare there), the next year he grew up in Austria. As a 2.5-year-old child, he and his parents came to Poland, where for the first six months he was under the care of his grandmother (his dad's mother) who communicated with her grandson in Polish, and from the age of 3 Aleks started attending kindergarten. He spent very little time with his parents – this was related to their work load Alex eagerly comes to the kindergarten, has his own favorite games and interests, often brings his toys and enjoys sharing them with other children. The boy does not communicate with the group in any specific language, his speech is not understood by his peers. Alex does not understand even simple instructions given by the educator, children do not under-stand his speech and could not communicate with him, they also begin to avoid contact with him, so it is difficult for him to find his place in the group.

NATALIE'S CASE

7–year–old Natalie has joined the first–year class of the elementary school. She came to the Polish school with her family from Georgia. Her family is Muslim. They do not speak Polish. Due to the language difficulties, Natalie has problems in making contact with her peers. So does her family, who find it difficult to build relationships with parents' community. She spends school breaks alone, often cries. At first there were also problems with lunches, because sometimes there was a pork dish in school canteen.
Educators noticed difficulties during activities that require physical contact, especially in gym classes where the class is taught together with boys
The other problem was with religious lessons. Natalie did not attend them, which was the reason for the curiosity and questions of the children as well as some parents. Girl did not also participate in religious holidays celebrated at school. Difficulties also accumulate during meetings with parents, at which important decisions are made about the life of the classroom and school, including religious holidays. Natalie`s parents wanted her to participate in these celebrations, but could not agree on the customs of the school and church. Educators were put in a difficult situation and could not solve the problems.

3. After analyzing the situation, instruct each group to develop a support plan that includes the proposals for action at two levels:
   - Actions on micro level: educators, a child, peers
   - Actions on mezo level: Parents of a child, parents' community, school community
4. Groups can use a mind mapping method to collect and organize ideas. At the end, groups present their ideas, discuss solutions, especially of the same cases presented by different groups.
5. At the end, summarize the work of the groups by asking:
   - What difficulties can we face in the adaptation of a child from different culture to the school community, what should we pay special attention to?
6. What general recommendations can be made based on the ideas presented?

Comments	/

1.2.3. Activity name	Journey to my Country
Purpose of the activity	The activity will help to relax and calm participants down. It is also helpful in building safe group atmosphere.
Learning outcomes	■ provide support to families and children in intercultural interaction for increasing acceptance and respect of a new environment ■ use positive reinforcement and encouragement to help build confidence and support the emotional well-being of migrant children

Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☒ Play ☐ Other _____

Timeframe for activity	45 minutes
Resources required	Option A: Room without chairs and desks with carpet. Option B: Sheet of paper and crayons
Instruction:	**Option A:** 1. Ask the group to lie down on the floor (if possible, to form a circle) and close their eyes. 2. Ask participants to think about a place from their country that they like. It can be a memory from the holiday, where they relaxed, e.g by the sea, at the mountains, by the lake. Take time, with calm voice to help them to connect to the image. 3. Ask each participant to talk about the place, name it, tell the others where it is, describe the landscape and what he/she was doing there. 4. At the end, the ask participants how was to share their memory? Ask them how was to hear different memories, where would they like to go (choosing from the places that were mentioned)? Why? **Option B:** 1. Ask participants to think about a place from their country that they like. It can be a memory from the holiday, where they relaxed, e.g. by the sea, at the mountains, by the lake. 2. Participants receive a sheet of paper and crayons 3. Each participant talks about the place, names it, tells the others where it is, describes the landscape and what he/she was doing there. 4. Ask other participants to draw a place based on the stories they hear. 5. At the end, ask participants to make an exhibition of the drawings and ask if the drawings reflect the place that everyone described. Also, ask participants to share how was to tell the story, how was to draw a story, how they felt? Ask them where would they like to go (choosing from the places that were mentioned)? Why? ■ For final discussion, ask following questions: ■ To what extent the exercise can be used in working with children from different cultures? ■ What changes to the exercise would educators suggest to adapt it to the needs and challenges of a multicultural group? ■ Could the exercise also be used to integrate the parents in the community?
Comments	/

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TEACHING UNIT 1.3.

OVERCOMING STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICES AND DISCRIMINATION

THEORY INPUT

Overcoming stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination remains challenging in diverse societies. These ingrained phenomena shape perceptions and behaviours towards individuals based on societal categorizations. Stereotypes, oversimplified beliefs about groups, lead to prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory actions. Addressing these issues is crucial for fostering inclusive environments that value unique identities. In childcare education, confronting biases early is key to nurturing a generation that embraces diversity and social justice.

Understanding social dynamics requires distinguishing between stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination:

- **Stereotype**

  generalized beliefs about a group *(e.g., "All elderly people are bad at using technology")*

- **Prejudice**

  negative attitudes towards a group *(e.g., "I don't like elderly people because they're out of touch")*

- **Discrimination**

  negative actions based on prejudiced attitudes *(e.g., "I won't hire elderly people because I believe they're bad at using technology")*

Recognizing these distinctions is vital for addressing their negative impacts. Stereotypes can lead to prejudice, which can result in discrimination. Combating these issues involves addressing each at its root cause. These phenomena significantly impact individuals on both personal and professional levels, influencing behaviours, attitudes, and overall well–being (Dovidio, Hewstone and Esses, 2010).

The personal and professional impacts of oppression, racism, discrimination, and stereotyping are profound and far–reaching. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts at individual, organizational, and societal levels to foster inclusivity, equity, and justice.

Personal Impact

- **Psychological and Emotional Effects**

  Oppression and racism cause significant psychological distress, leading to stress, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. These issues can become long-term mental health problems, harming one's sense of identity and belonging.

- **Physical Health Consequences**

  Chronic stress from racism and discrimination can result in hypertension, heart disease, and weakened immune function. Racial minorities often face healthcare disparities, worsening these health issues.

- **Social and Interpersonal Relationships**

  Racism and discrimination damage personal relationships, leading to isolation and mistrust. This cultural mistrust hinders the development of healthy relationships and social networks.

- **Economic and Lifestyle Impacts**

  Discrimination affects economic stability, as racial bias can lead to job and promotion denials, impacting financial security. This economic strain limits opportunities for personal and professional growth, adding further stress.

Societal Impact

Discrimination and stereotypes also have pervasive and harmful effects on society, impacting individuals, communities, and institutions in various ways:

- **Social Division and Conflict**
  Discrimination contributes to social division and conflict by creating barriers between different groups, leading to tensions, animosity, and even violence.

- **Inequality and Injustice**
  Discrimination perpetuates inequality by limiting access to opportunities, resources, and services for marginalized groups, resulting in disparities in education, employment, healthcare, housing, and other areas.

- **Undermining Social Cohesion**
  Discrimination erodes social cohesion by undermining trust, solidarity, and mutual respect within society, fostering a climate of suspicion, resentment, and alienation.

- **Undermining Human Rights**
  Discrimination violates fundamental human rights, denying individuals the opportunity to fully participate in society and enjoy their rights and freedoms (Kite and Whitley, 2016).

By recognizing and actively combating these forms of bias, society can create a more supportive environment where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive both personally and professionally.

People often exhibit prejudice (emotional bias), stereotypes (cognitive bias), and discrimination (behavioural bias) against those outside their social group, and these biases can be explicit (conscious) or implicit (automatic). Stereotypes can manifest in various forms: racial stereotypes (such as Asians being good at math or African Americans being athletic), gender stereotypes (like women being nurturing and men being aggressive), and occupational stereotypes (such as lawyers being greedy and nurses being caring).

Prejudices include racial prejudice, where one believes a certain race is inferior or superior; gender prejudice, which affects opportunities based on biased views against women or men; and religious prejudice, involving discrimination based on religious beliefs. Discrimination manifests in various forms, such as racial discrimination in employment or racial profiling, gender discrimination through unequal pay or denial of promotions, and age discrimination in unfair employment practices.

Intersectionality highlights how various social identities intersect and influence experiences of bias. For instance, women of colour face unique stereotypes, and LGBTQ+ individuals experience discrimination based on both sexual orientation and gender identity.

Ambiguous biases arise from natural group categorizations, leading to in-group favoritism and subtle forms of exclusion, such as aversive racism where individuals avoid interactions to prevent discomfort, reinforcing biases. Ambivalent biases involve mixed stereotypes, like ethnic Asians being seen as successful but cold, or older adults being viewed as warm but incompetent. The Stereotype Content Model explains these mixed feelings based on perceived warmth and competence, influencing societal interactions and leading to different forms of discrimination and emotional prejudices.

Modern identities are increasingly complex and multifaceted, intertwining aspects of gender, race, class, age, and more. This evolving complexity challenges simplistic views and underscores the need to recognize individuals beyond stereotypes. In conclusion, understanding stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination is essential for promoting equality and social justice. Recognizing and addressing these biases can help create more inclusive societies (Fiske, 2024).

In childcare education, addressing prejudices and stereotypes is crucial for creating inclusive environments. The goal is to create childcare settings where every child feels valued and empowered. Anti-discriminatory practices involve confronting stereotypes, fostering trust, justice, and cooperation, and promoting curiosity and acceptance of human differences. Educators must reflect on their beliefs, engage in dialogue, and seek knowledge about diversity and anti-discriminatory practices, understanding the lives and experiences of the children and families they serve.

Educators also play a role as policymakers, ensuring that program policies address diversity and inclusivity. The way we evaluate children's behaviour and communication reflects the values we promote – including respect and acceptance of diversity. Inclusive environments should reflect diverse cultures, ages, and interests while avoiding stereotypes. Emphasizing intercultural play and challenging discriminatory practices from an early age is key to combating prejudice.

By implementing these practices, early childhood education can effectively promote anti-discriminatory principles and celebrate diversity, fostering environments where all children feel supported and valued.

Valuing Diversity

Valuing diversity means embracing individual identities and appreciating differences in ourselves and others. It involves expecting, respecting, and accepting these differences.

Childcare Staff and Professional Development

Encourage staff to acknowledge and celebrate the differences among children. Provide ongoing training and reading materials that challenge biases and promote understanding of diverse perspectives. Help staff recognize their own cultural uniqueness to better understand the hidden curriculum in playrooms. Encourage staff to learn about children's diverse backgrounds to enhance their caregiving effectiveness.

Celebrations, Customs, and Food

Celebrate festivals joyfully throughout the year, showcasing diverse cultural experiences. Include everyday aspects of different cultures, such as food and clothing, to highlight their significance beyond traditional holidays. Promote acceptance of diversity through everyday materials and activities like music, art, and play.

Materials and Toys that reflect Diversity

Select and adapt materials that respect and include the values and beliefs of diverse children and families. Enhance materials with inclusive images and representations to promote acceptance of differences. Use a variety of musical instruments and songs from different cultures to celebrate diversity. Display diverse images in materials and toys to reflect various races, cultures, genders, ages, and abilities.

Intercultural Books

Incorporate a diverse selection of books into the curriculum that accurately represent cultures and lifestyles. Choose books that highlight shared humanity while honoring cultural differences. Ensure books are current, accurate, and avoid reinforcing stereotypes. Use illustrations and language that authentically represent cultural diversity and avoid divisive language or stereotyping. Present multiple perspectives on tough issues to promote understanding and empathy.

Respect for Diversity

It is essential to consistently assess our attitudes and behaviours to ensure we avoid prejudice and demonstrate respect for those who are different. Children begin to notice diversity early in life and should learn to respect and appreciate differences rather than fear them. Adults play a crucial role in modeling respect, showing children that customs, languages, cultures, and physical attributes different from their own are valuable and deserving of honour (Jangra, 2023).

Overcoming stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination in early childhood education is essential for fostering inclusive learning environments. Childcare practitioners play a pivotal role in shaping children's perceptions. By reflecting on personal biases, engaging in ongoing professional development, and integrating diverse cultural representations into the curriculum, educators can ensure every child feels valued and empowered. Celebrating diversity and challenging discriminatory practices cultivate empathy and respect among young learners.

In essence, creating childcare settings where all children can thrive, free from stereotypes and prejudices, lays the foundation for a more equitable and inclusive society.

Resources for Further Reading

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Activity Resources

1.3.1. Activity name	European Stereotypes		
Purpose of the activity	Critical examination of stereotypes and prejudices about European countries and their inhabitants.		
Learning outcomes	■ understand and describe how oppression, racism, discrimination and stereotyping af-fect an individual personally and professionally ■ lead by example by challenging stereotypes and prejudices with your own words and actions		
Interactive method/te-chnique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	30 minutes		
Resources required	Attachment 1: European Stereotypes – Europe Is Not Dead!		
Instructions	1. Ask the participants to form small groups, preferably creating three groups. Provide each small group with a printed copy of the text "European Stereotypes – Europe Is Not Dead!" 2. Instruct each small group to choose one of the European countries described in the text. Have the participants in each small group read the text corresponding to their chosen country. 3. Allocate 10 minutes for the participants to discuss the content and stereotypes described in the text. Guide the discussion with these questions: Do the participants agree with the statements? Have they had their own experiences (po-sitive or negative) related to the statements described? If so, which ones? Can they con-firm or refute the statements based on their experience or knowledge? 4. After the discussion, ask each group to choose a spokesperson to present the results of their small group discussion in a plenary session. Encourage all participants to express their own experiences, attitudes, or opinions on the results presented by each group spokesperson.		
Comments	/		

ATTACHMENT 1

European Stereotypes

"Europe has what we do not have yet, a sense of the mysterious and inexorable limits of life, a sense, in a word, of tragedy. And we have what they sorely need: a sense of life's possibilities." James Baldwin, American novelist

Snooty French, stiff Brits, shy Finns and humourless Germans: Europeans love their conceptions about their neighbours to be well-defined, if not necessarily true. Even if stereotypes don't teach us much about who our European neighbours really are, they do teach us a lot about how they are perceived. And sometimes our cliches about the rest of Europe have a story behind them that can reveal something about Europe's rich history — and occasionally even a grain of truth about the national character. Even if sometimes these complaints land a bit close to the bone, we talk about our fellow Europeans precisely because we are interested in them — after all, the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about.

Just remember not to take them (too) seriously...

Portugal	**Lazy, sad and nostalgic?**
	Sunny weather, <u>beaches,</u> *cafés*… When many northern Europeans think of their southern cousins like Portugal, they often think of a life of indolence, if not negligence. There's a reason why the Portuguese word *farniente,* literally "doing nothing," has been exported as a concept to so many other countries. But who would blame the Portuguese for making the most of their generous climate, fancy <u>fish dishes</u> and gorgeous <u>port wine</u> and you'll realise why they don't see anything wrong with the odd afternoon <u>nap.</u> While the stereotype is easygoing, though, it is far from happy-go-lucky. The slow and melancholic *Fado* music contributes to the stereotype of the Portuguese as a sad and reflective people. Their word "saudade" <u>doesn't translate</u> into English but roughly means "nostalgia" or "homesickness".

Spain	**Fiestas, siestas and macho men?**
	Europe seems to have a clear image of what the Spaniards look like: "a nation high on fiestas, with stunning women who can't go to the <u>bullfight</u> dressed in miniskirts lest their boyfriends and husbands (who are so macho) have a fit. And then there's the siestas in the afternoon, and the partying at night" (<u>The Guardian</u>). Elsewhere, Spanish people are said to be as lazy and loud as they are passionate. According to the journalist Carmen Morán, "The sun, the beach, fiesta, <u>noise</u>: these were the goods Spain exchanged abroad, through tourism, to staunch its economic wounds".

France	**Unhygienic, rude, snobbish strikers?**
	It is a known fact that all French people – without exception – wear a beret while snootily riding their <u>baguette-laden </u>bicycle. An unromantic image they somehow manage to combine with being the world's greatest <u>lovers</u>. Who cares if this centuries-old stereotype doesn't fit the facts? If a Frenchman objects to his portrayal with a shrugging *sacrebleu,* you can always just ascribe it to his <u>legendary</u> rudeness. Some historians say it was the post-World War 2 international non-alignment policy instituted by De Gaulle that led to this reputation for arrogance. The French, they say, also suffer from poor personal hygiene, and are <u>always on strike</u> – a <u>tradition</u> that's largely disproved by statistics on the weakness of French trade unions.

Iceland

Unpunctual but irresistible lads?

The Land of Fire and Ice has a very small population of about 320,000 inhabitants. So many people whose-names-shall-be-kept-secret say that, not only does everyone knows everyone, they're probably related to them too. Notwithstanding these allegations of incest, Iceland's women are reckoned to be the world's most beautiful, and its men the world's strongest. Other Nordic neighbours say Icelanders can never show up on time and always procrastinate about simple choices like where to go on holiday or what to have for dinner. According to the Icelandic writer Alda Sigmundsdóttir: "this reluctance to make plans may be exhausting, but it also gives the country a lot of its dynamism. People are flexible and a lot actually gets done at the last minute, which may be one reason why we can recover quickly from economic collapses and natural disasters." Well said, Alda!

Ireland

Bad-tempered, drunk redhead Catholics?

Perhaps it's because of their historical fight for autonomy, from the time of the ancient Celts to the struggle against England and for emancipation as Catholics. For whatever reason, we consider the Irish to be both bad-tempered and deeply religious (even if the number of atheists on the Emerald Isle is in reality growing fast). If not at Church, tradition says the Irishman will be found at the pub binge-drinking Guinness. Oh, and of course, don't expect to meet a blond Irish as everyone knows they are all ginger. This conception of the Irish most likely comes from the popular 1952 film 'The Quiet Man' which starred a fiery Irish redhead and a wide array of other inaccurate Irish stereotypes.

United Kingdom

Class-conscious binge-drinkers?

The Brits are said to be very polite, proper and sophisticated with an unhealthy tendency to be snobbish, unemotional and class-obsessed – only casting off his stiff outer shell when drinking large amounts of alcohol, which is frequently. According to The Guardian, "the European image of the Brit – either pukingly drunk football fan or snooty City gent, both living off past imperial glories, sullenly resenting being in Europe rather than ruling the world – is itself a cliché." Add to that plenty of rain, bad food, double-decker buses and the red telephone boxes which are still common attractions, if only for tourists, and you'll have the full picture of a stereotypical England. Not to mention the regional stereotypes about the Scots and the Welsh...

Norway

Ruddy, wealthy, but enlightened?

Most stereotypes about the Norwegians come from their Scandinavian neighbours – mostly the Danes and the Swedes. For a fellow Scandinavian, the Norwegian is a bit backwards – a rustic, patriotic and unsophisticated fish-eater with lamentable manners and muddy boots. More recently that image has been supplemented with a grudging acknowledgement of the vast Norwegian wealth from crude oil. Elsewhere in Europe, people take a different view of the Norwegian, judging him to be wealthy, enlightened and rational, if rather boring.

Sweden

Tall slender boring blonds?

They are said to be tall, slender, and gorgeous with blond hair and blue eyes. They are also regarded as progressive, feminist and liberal, with good social welfare. In particular people note the country's strong commitment to gender equality: the country where women can easily have a career alongside children. So far so good, but familiarity breeds contempt and nearer neighbours tend to note the Swedes' problem with alcohol. In Sweden you have to be 20 years old to buy liquor, for example – older than the limit of 16 in Denmark – with the result that many young Swedes travel to Denmark to buy alcohol – which they then proceed to consume rather too quickly. Scandinavians would also say that the Swedes are somewhat arrogant, unfriendly, boring, depressed and a little racist.

Finland

Depressed, withdrawn drinkers?

"Don't exaggerate" – a motto which grasps the essence of the Finnish psyche. Rarely one to waste a word with unnecessary small talk, the Finn might be taken as rude, introverted and emotionless. In fact, to the outsider, someone speaking Finnish sounds like they swear all the time, or like they are sad and depressed. Unburdened from the duties of conversation, their stereotype confines them to drinking vodka, living in the woods, hitting themselves with birch branches in the sauna and hunting bears. Others believe that the Finns live in their parents' basement, listen to black metal and entertain themselves with online role-playing games all day.

Denmark

Trusting but reserved environmentalists?

Danes don't have many stereotypes, perhaps because the tiny nation is too often confused with the rest of Scandinavia: to have a stereotype you must first have an identity, after all. The Danes are said to have a great quality of life, and to be helpful, punctual and trusting. While perhaps a little reserved at first, the Danes are seen as open–minded, easygoing and easily humoured. Elsewhere, however, the Danes themselves describe themselves as complaining constantly about everything, especially the weather. And just like their Scandinavian neighbours, they are said to be heavy drinkers.

Netherlands

Liberal, greedy, gay, stoned cyclists?

A lasting image about the Dutch is that they are all tall, blond and blue–eyed and that the typical Dutch shed keeps at least a dozen bikes. Not entirely true, but not without reason either: the country boasts more bicycles than people. A liberal Dutch drug policy on cannabis means the Dutch are also believed to be stoned all the time. The Netherlands was also the first country in the world to allow gay marriage in 2001 – so Amsterdam is sometimes regarded as the unofficial gay capital of Europe, and half the Dutch population assumed to be gay. The Dutch are also perceived as attached to their money – splitting the bill is called 'going Dutch', for a reason which can be confirmed by anyone who went on a date with a Dutchman and ended up having to pay half.

Belgium

Government–less chip and beer lovers?

The Belgians are the butt of a great number of jokes and clichés, especially from France and the Netherlands, with whom they share common languages. The Belgians are said to eat chips, mussels, chocolate and waffles at every meal, have beer running through their veins and only read comic books. The country's political system is also portrayed as a complex mess, mainly because of the constant fight between Dutch and French–speaking Flanders and Wallonia. Belgians even have stereotypes about each other: Dutch speakers consider the Walloons as lazy, monolingual football fans, while the other way round, Flems are viewed as austere and stiff.

Germany

Car lovers and humourless hardworkers?

Contrary to popular belief, not all German men wander around in *Lederhosen* (leather trousers), and nor do they speak a harsh and unromantic language. But this popular image remains in Europeans' mind. According to The Guardian, the Germans are regarded as hard workers who love their cars more than anything, efficient and disciplined, but also stiff and humourless. The German Journalist Rainer Erlinger agrees: "Of course, Angela Merkel is a bit more stiff and formal than Silvio Berlusconi but it could be the other way around with Mario Monti. Seemingly, Germans don't think it is a laughing matter when it comes to their politicians – at least not outside of satirical programmes or carnival. If the Germans do have a sense of humour perhaps it has to be clearly noted in the calendar."

Austria

Humourless hardworkers in Lederhosen?

Europeans often represent the Austrians dressed either in a *"Dirndl"* or in a *"Lederhose"*. Tourists can discover those underlined traditional clothes at summer beerfests or on special occasions, though natives do take them off occasionally. Europeans would depict the Austrians as rather fair-haired, serious, standoffish, hardworking and lacking any sense of humour. They might add that most Austrians are into winter sports and pretty well off financially. Another important aspect of the Austrian soul is the priority given to domestic life. The Austrians love to build, repair, extend, maintain, refurbish or modernise their houses and spend hours in garden centres.

Switzerland

Punctual, reserved individualists?

Unsurprisingly for a nation slap in the middle of Europe, there are many stereotypes about the Swiss. A common one depicts the Swiss as reserved, a place where starting a conversation with a stranger would raise eyebrows. Another widely shared stereotype depicts the Swiss as obsessed with punctuality. This obsession has something to do with watchmaking – a traditional Swiss industry. But it is also the large industry in managing other people's money via banking and offshore funds, which leads their neighbours to think of them as frugal people. Last, some consider the Swiss to be individualists who don't like getting involved in other people's problems – as their common saying states, *"Dirty laundry should be washed within the family"*...

Italy

Football addicts and talkative fashionistas?

According to The Guardian, the Italians are seen as chatterboxes, and bad listeners interested only in the sound of their own voices. It is also said that they are good-looking, fashion-crazy football addicts who never pay tax. Other common associations include the incredible coffee culture, or the love of pizza and pasta, with spaghetti being treated as a near sacred object. The model Italian endlessly repeats "mamma mia!" or "va fan culo!" and lives under the thumb of his beloved Mamma. Another stereotype sees Italian men as dark-haired, olive-skinned plumbers who spend the working day jumping on turtles, eating mushrooms, and saving princesses...

Czechia

Pretty women and absinthe drinkers?

The best-known image for this small country is the Skoda – the well known brand of highly reliable Soviet cars. Czechia is also famous for being the homeland of crystal and *Art Nouveau* style. When it comes to Czech characteristics, Europeans tend to think that Czech women are very beautiful and men all have a moustache. They think that the Czechs love beers and absinthe. They eat dumplings and use their mobile phone a lot. Others consider Czechia a nation of artists, not least given its many famous writers.

Slovakia

Bad–tempered heavy drinkers?

The most common trope about Slovaks is to get confused about European history, and believe they're still part of Czechoslovakia. Another stereotype is that they are bad–tempered and easily offended. Their humor is said to be dark and sadistic, if slow–witted and dumb. They are also seen as sexist and unfriendly to strangers. Slovak people are also often stereotyped as heavy drinkers: Borovicka and Slivovica being just two common local drinks.

Poland

Hard–drinking Catholic zealots?

One of the most significant stereotypes about Poland relates to its staunch Catholic zealotry. But according to Adam Leszczynski, a Polish journalist, the Poles are not deep down bothered by what the Church says. If they don't find solace in religion, they may find it in alcohol: the Poles are also often portrayed as hard drinkers. If it is true that on average the Poles drink 13.3 litres of alcohol per citizens per year and are *de facto* drinking slightly more than Germans (12.8 litres), they however drink almost the same as the English (13.4 litres), and less than the Irish (14.4 litres).

Lithuania

Russian, backward villagers?

Stereotypes about Lithuania originate more from a lack of knowledge about the country than on actual reputation. The most widespread stereotype would be that for some (ignorant) Europeans, Lithuania is part of Russia. Those people sometimes tend to think that Lithuanians don't have their own language and have never created or invented anything, which is not surprising, because Lithuania, in the view of many, did not exist before the USSR miraculously fell apart. Then, according to some Lithuanians, among the first questions they get from foreigners is the funny *"Do you have televisions in Lithuania?"*, *"How many people live in your village?"*, *"Do you have a horse?"* or even the amazing *"Can you teach me how to say something in Polish?"*.

Latvia

Six toes, fish eaters?

Europeans in general do not differentiate Latvia much from its Baltic neighbours, and they consequently don't have any particular stereotype for Latvians. But the Estonians do! And this is all the more surprising: Estonians have a joke about Latvians where they are said to have… 6 toes! They see Latvians as suffering from bad roads, eating a lot of fish, but ultimately as close cousins.

Estonia

Sexy inventers with advanced medical system?

Estonian women are said to be particularly beautiful with light blond hair and their economy is said to be the most advanced among the Baltics. The Latvians and the Lithuanians depict Estonians as slow, but determined and rational. They are said to be particularly successful in business and especially in the IT sector. The Latvians are sometimes jealous about their advanced social and medical system, as well as leisure infrastructure such as an extensive network of spas. In this respect, they are sometimes perceived as half-Baltic, half-Scandinavian.

Belarus

Unemotional Soviet potatoes lovers?

Maybe because of its name, or the fact that it is geographically and culturally close to it, Belarus is mostly associated in stereotypes with Russia. Europeans then tend to assume that Belarusians are profoundly cold, unemotional and unfriendly. They are also noted for permanently glorifying their previous guerilla war against the Nazis: but Europeans also often think that the country is filled with Soviet-era buildings. As Belarus is the last remaining dictatorship in Europe, Europeans tend to see Belarusians as prisoners without freedom or entertainment, with only an endless supply potatoes to cheer up their confinement.

Ukraine

Russian-speaking, radioactive poor people?

Ukraine is a country with outstanding history and traditions, but if you haven't been there, you're unlikely to know that. Since the Chernobyl disaster, many people unfairly regard Ukrainian vegetables and fruits as dangerous to eat. It is also said that Ukrainians don't like foreigners, are gloomy and are always quarreling with each other. A common perception is thinking that they have snow all the year round. Europeans regard women in Ukraine are beautiful but as crafty. Last, it is said that Ukrainians are in love with *salo* – cured slabs of pork fat. Vodka is also a popular spirit for celebrations and welcoming guests, but some Ukrainians prefer *horilka*.

Moldova

Wine drinkers who are beautiful but poor?

The stereotype of Moldovans is that they are beautiful, with fair skin and dark hair (although many people also have fair hair too). It is also said that they are poor (often true), Moldovan women are often stereotyped as sex trafficking victims, as they try to escape from desperate situations with illusions of becoming a dancer, waitress or cleaning girl in a western country. In other cases, parents who work overseas lead to a perception that all the country's children are being raised by their grandparents. Moldova is also depicted as a hospitable nation bring people together with delicious wine, dances and banquets.

Romania

Roma and vampires speaking Russian?

For many foreigners, Romania is the equivalent of a series of common misconceptions. The first common picture associated with Romania is considering the country as the land of vampires. There are no vampires in Transylvania. Also, there's nothing creepy about it and people living there don't have that funny accent you've heard in Hollywood films. Another common misperception is thinking that Romanian speak Russian. Romanian is however a Romance language. People were forced to learn Russian during communism but this was not the case since 1990. Than Europeans tend to think that all Romanian are Roma people. But Roma people make up only 2.5% of Romania's over 22 million people. A surprising number of people seem to think Romanians are the minority. Which is not to say that Roma are not Romanians. And last, a common stereotype is confusing Bucharest, Romania's capital city, with Budapest which is actually Hungary's. This is something that many people get wrong.

Hungary

Bad–mannered goulash eaters?

Stereotypes related to Hungary are always peculiar — and in part relate to their supposedly pushy and intrusive behaviour. A phrase often heard in central Europe goes: *"If a Hungarian passes through a revolving door right after you he will come out before you"*. People from this country will, they say, won't always pay too much attention to good manners and unwritten rules. Another stereotype depicts Hungarians as self–centered, uncooperative, and contrary. Hungarians are also said to adore their own language: They know it is hard for foreigners to learn, but they appreciate if you try. Try to pronounce Hungarian names correctly. Hungarians are also said to complain a lot and are rather pessimistic when expressing an opinion. Last and most obviously, Hungarians are said to eat goulash all the time.

Slovenia

Bilingual and introverted?

Slovenia is often perceived as the first Balkan country to integrate the Western way of life and consumer society, and is now considered a mix of many European nations and cultures. In the common stereotypes, Slovenes are described as somewhat jealous, complaining, cold and melancholic — but also romantic, disciplined and honest. They're known as polyglots — most people speak at least 1 or 2 foreign languages — and like to stay in the same home from the time they marry till they die. That might explain why they put great effort in making their house and surroundings beautiful, with flowers on windows and painted walls.

Croatia

Talkative, loud and quarrelsome patriots?

Croatia is often perceived as a talkative and friendly nation, but also loud, rude and sometimes quarrelsome – perhaps thanks to their history where they often seemed behind modern trends. Following Croatians' fight for independence in 1991, other nations think of them as extremely patriotic if not nationalistic.

Serbia

Workshy superstitious womanisers?

Serbs are seen as having little or no motivation to work in order to improve their living conditions, or lacking in organizational skill or business sense. Those with memories of the Balkan conflict may view them as warlike, while Serbian men are also often painted as womanizers. According to one Serbian blogger, the mentality of Serbian men makes them cheat on their girlfriends or wives — though that's hardly unheard of elsewhere – and as being superstitious.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Pro-American Muslims?

Bosnians often see themselves as tall, blond hillbillies. Others caricature them as people that diligently leave their shoes outside the door of an apartment chock-full of artificial flowers and twee framed prints of waterfalls. Trendy women dye their hair Kool-Aid red while men constantly wear Adidas tracksuit bottoms. Bosnians are considered by Europeans as White Muslims, who love Americans and Turks. In reality, forty percent of the country's population is Muslim — more Muslims live in Paris than in the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Albania

Paprika lovers and heavy smokers?

The more unfair Albanian stereotypes, often formed after mass emigration in the 1980s and '90s, portray the citizens as poor thieves. For their direct Balkan neighbors, Albanians are regarded as patriotic, obsessed with sports (especially football), and lovers of dancing. They are said to know more about Italy than Italians themselves, but to dislike Greeks and Serbians. They are said to be traditional and familiy-oriented, to start smoking at an early age, to eat paprika every day and drink a lot of tea. Last, most of them consider themselves Muslims, while disparaging other Muslim countries.

Bulgaria	**Macho, misogynistic goat cheese eaters?**
	Bulgarian women have a reputation for good looks: not so their menfolk, who are seen as built like a truck, aggressively macho, possessive, and as sensitive as a brick. Bulgarians are also said to survive on a diet of tomatoes, cucumber and goats' cheese.
North Macedonia	**Greeks' worst enemy?**
	The main stereotyping of this small country comes from its neighbour Greece. But Greek worries over supposed Macedonian expansionism seem overblown, given its tiny army seems unlikely to make Athens flinch.
Greece	**Hairy gay gossipers?**
	Leaving aside the many stereotypes of the profligate Greek generated by the euro crisis, many see the people of this nation as hairy, loud and carefree, happy just to smoke and gossip all day. They also have a gay reputation, thanks to the works of Plato and the goings-on in gay-friendly destinations like Mykonos – while the more family-oriented are seen as mummy's boys.
Turkey	**Patriarchal and obsessed with Mercedes?**
	Many tropes about Turkey date back to the Ottoman era, and a fascination with the majority-Muslim empire on Europe's doorstep. Today, Turkish people are depicted as having big families, primitive and collectivist, and with Turkish women obliged to obey husbands. Subsisting only on a diet of kebabs, the stereotypical Turk has an eye for business, but his only obsession is to save enough to buy a good German BMW or Mercedes.

Source Text and Pictures:

- europeisnotdead (2019) *European Stereotypes – EuropeIsNotDead.* https://europeisnotdead.com/european-stereotypes/.

1.3.2. Activity name	The Story Workshop
Purpose of the activity	Encourage creative thinking and actively deconstruct stereotypes.
Learning outcomes	■ identify different types of stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination by using examples ■ lead by example by challenging stereotypes and prejudices with your own words and actions ■ encourage the development of critical thinking skills that enable individuals to question stereotypes and prejudices

Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☒ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☒ Other _____

Timeframe for activity	60 minutes
Resources required	Attachment 1: Stereotypical characters in Europe Attachment 2: Stereotypical characters by categories

Instructions	1. Divide participants into 3 to 4 groups.
	2. Give each group a stereotypical character from an area such as age, gender, profession or ethnicity (e.g. 'the technophobic senior' or 'the greedy lawyer').
	3. Each group should create a short story or a situation in which the character embodies the opposite of the stereotype. For example, the senior could be a tech–savvy mentor.
	How to use these characters:
	a. Identify and reflect on stereotypes: encourage participants to discuss which of these characters they recognize and how such stereotypes originate.
	b. Develop alternative characters:
	  ■ The "cold Scandinavian" could be reimagined as a warm and family–o–riented person.
	  ■ The "passionate cook" might become a successful entrepreneur opening restaurants worldwide.
	4. Ask the groups to present their stories.
	5. As a reflection discuss how these stories break stereotypes and why it is im–portant to think differently.

Comments	■ You can also use stereotypical characters from the previous activity or let the groups find stereotypical characters themselves.

ATTACHMENT 1

Stereotypical Characters in Europe

Germany

"The strict bureaucrat": someone who always follows rules, emotionless, and efficient

"The overly meticulous German woman": a woman who organizes everything perfectly and leaves no room for spontaneity

France

"The romantic Frenchman": a man who is allegedly always charming, cultured, and sophisticated

"The arrogant Parisian": a woman portrayed as fashionable yet conceited

Italy

"The loud Italian": a man who is always gesturing, emotional, and often disorganized

"The passionate cook": a woman who lives solely for her family and cooking

Spain

"The fiery Flamenco dancer": someone always seen as passionate and full of zest for life

"The siesta–loving Spaniard": a woman stereotyped as relaxed but lazy

Greece

"The philosophical Greek": a man who supposedly ponders life deeply but lives chaotically in the present

"The traditional Greek woman": a woman holding firmly to old–fashioned family values

Scandinavia (e.g., Sweden, Norway)

"The cold Scandinavian": someone perceived as distant, calm, and unemotional

"The perfect Scandinavian woman": a woman stereotyped as ultra–modern, independent, and eco–conscious

Russia

"The vodka–loving Russian": someone automatically associated with heavy drinking and excessive partying

"The resolute Russian woman": a woman portrayed as tough and pragmatic

Poland

"The tireless worker": a man seen as hardworking but unambitious, simply focused on survival

"The devout Catholic woman": a woman deeply rooted in religious tradition

United Kingdom

"The conservative gentleman": A man who behaves stiffly, politely, and adheres to tradition.

"The tea–drinking lady": A woman perceived as calm, modest, and always polite.

Ireland

"The cheerful Irishman": someone who is always singing, dancing, and holding a Guinness

"The Irish storyteller": a woman who is charismatic but somewhat disconnected from reality

Portugal

"The melancholic Fado singer": someone seen as emotional and introspective

"The hospitable Portuguese woman": a woman who always cares for others but neglects herself

Hungary

"The proud Hungarian": someone always referencing their culture while dismissing others

"The Hungarian dancer": a woman portrayed as folkloristic and tradition–bound

Balkan countries (e.g., Serbia, Croatia)

"The hot–headed Balkan man": a man quick to anger and highly emotional

"The traditional Balkan woman": a woman who accepts her role in the household and is focused on family

Netherlands

"The liberal Dutchman": someone always seen as tolerant, pragmatic, and straightforward

"The cycling Dutchwoman": a woman who is health–conscious, eco–friendly, and fixated on being "cool.

Switzerland

"The neutral Swiss": someone who never gets involved in conflicts but wants to control everything

"The precise Swiss woman": a woman perceived as perfectionistic and distant

ATTACHMENT 2

Stereotypical Characters by Categories

Age

"The technophobic senior": an older person who allegedly cannot understand or use modern technology

"The insecure teenager": a teenager portrayed as impulsive, disorganized, and immature

Gender

"The caring woman": a woman perceived exclusively as empathetic, loving, and self-sacrificing

"The aggressive man": a man seen as dominant, emotionless, and conflict-driven

Profession

"The greedy lawyer": a lawyer who is only interested in money and lacks moral principles

"The unreliable artist": an artist depicted as chaotic, untrustworthy, and disorganized

Ethnicity

"The Asian math genius": a person from an Asian culture automatically assumed to be highly gifted in mathematics

"The musical African-American": an African-American person stereotyped as talented in music or sports

Social status

"The wealthy snob": a rich person portrayed as arrogant, superficial, and detache

"The lazy poor person": someone from a lower social class allegedly unwilling to work and reliant on government aid

Cultural background

"The fiery Southern European": a person from Southern Europe stereotyped as emotional and loud

"The cold Scandinavian": a person from Northern Europe portrayed as distant and emotionless

1.3.3. Activity name	The Diversity Game
Purpose of the activity	Celebrating diversity and finding common ground.
Learning outcomes	■ understand and describe how oppression, racism, discrimination and stereotyping affect an individual personally and professionally ■ lead by example by challenging stereotypes and prejudices with your own words and actions
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work ☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	Worksheet entitled 'We are all different, but..."
Instructions	1. Form small groups. Give each group a worksheet entitled 'We are all dif-ferent, but...' Ask the groups to note differences between their members (e.g. age, origin, preferen-ces) and at the same time look for similarities. 2. Ask each group to present its results and discusses them: ■ How do similarities and differences help to enrich the group? ■ Why is diversity valuable?
Comments	You can also swap the small groups, create posters or discuss differences and similarities in the whole group.

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TEACHING UNIT 1.4.

VALUING CULTURAL SAFETY

THEORY INPUT

One of the main objectives of the school/carecenter is to promote the learning of its children, but in order to do so it must first be a safe space for all its members. When saying safety, we mean safety in all its facets, including cultural safety.

Cultural safety can be defined as a continuous process of creating an environment in which people feel safe, respected and included, regardless of their cultural, racial or social background. In a culturally safe learning environment, children feel safe to express their opinion, feelings or share with their peers or educators relevant aspects of their culture, without fear of being rejected or judged. It is about valuing and respecting diversity and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in society.

The aim of any school/carecenter that aspires to achieve and value cultural safety in its educational community is to promote respect for cultural diversity, to prevent discrimination, harassment and violence on cultural grounds, and to foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding among members of the educational community.

In such a way that a childcare professional encourages and establishes an emotionally, physically and socially safe learning environment for children of all cultures. A professional respects each child's cultural background and enables all children to form their cultural identity and cherish their own uniqueness, without the fear of judgement and discrimination.

A safe learning environment has many benefits for all members of the educational community:

- Greater involvement and participation of all members of the community
- Development of critical thinking
- Sense of freedom to express ideas and feelings
- Greater development of childrens' individual potential
- Improving the working and classroom climate
- Collaboration and peer feeling among children

Strategies for Valuing Cultural Safety

- Educator training: It is important that educators receive training on the importance of cultural safety and how to create inclusive environments. It is important for the educator or potential educator to be familiar with the concepts of culture, cultural identity or cultural diversity; besides, analyzing one's own prejudices and establishing strategies to avoid them; as well as developing empathy in their relationship with children and families.

- Intercultural approach in curriculum: through active and participative teaching methodologies that promote intercultural dialogue, using content from different cultures or encouraging project–based experiential learning and cultural exchange.

- Consultation and participation: Consulting with people from different cultural backgrounds can help ensure that services and programs are culturally appropriate. For example, inviting families to participate in classroom activities such as workshops, presentations or cultural events.

- Fight against bullying and discrimination: It is important for educator to be aware of the concept of bullying, to detect the signs of bullying and to know how to act effectively. In order to do this, it is essential to involve the whole educational community. In relation to this, communication is a key element in dealing with such cases, conducting an investigation and, if necessary, imposing disciplinary measures are also important parts of the process.

- Cultural awareness: The school/carecenter promotes cultural awareness among all members of the school/carecenter community through educational activities and cultural events. Cultural awareness and cultural appreciation activities can help children learn about different cultures and develop an attitude of respect and understanding.

- Employ a variety of teaching and learning methods that are relevant to the different cultures of my children.

- Work with my childrens' families to understand their cultures and needs and use every occasion or every member of our educational community as a valuable part that can enrich our teaching practice.

- Celebrating diversity: perceiving cultural diversity as a positive element in our classroom is very beneficial for the teaching work. It enriches learning and promotes tolerance and respect.

How can a commitment to cultural safety be conveyed to the educational community?

A. The school's/carecenter's code of conduct or regulations: A code of conduct that includes specific expectations for behavior that promotes cultural safety, such as respecting the diversity of the community, avoiding discriminatory language and intervening when discrimination is present.

B. All members of the educational community must create a environment where all children feel safe and respected, irrespective of their cultural background; and promote intercultural learning and understanding.

C. A protocol for action in cases of discrimination or bullying.

D. The social services of the municipality also contribute to the cultural safety of the educational community. For example, by offering translation and interpreting services or support with documentation procedures.

Resources for Further Reading

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Activity Resources

1.4.1. Activity name	Reinventing Games
Purpose of the activity	Adapt traditional board games to promote cultural safety in the classroom.
Learning outcomes	■ organise activities enabling participants to express and share their emotions towards multicultural learning environment ■ demonstrate a belief in the importance of cultural sensitivity in creating a nurturing and inclusive environment for all children
Interactive method/te–chnique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work ☒ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☒ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☒ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	Mobile phones, computer
Instruction:	1. Initiate a brainstorming session with the participants, focusing on traditional board games commonly used in educational settings or fami–liar from their own cultural backgrounds. You can start by asking: What board games did you play as a child? What board games are commonly used in classrooms? Write down the games mentioned in the brainstorming on a flipchart or in a document sha–red with the participants. You can accompany the name of each game with and explana–tory image of the game if necessary. As a preparation do a research of various traditional board games and have some materials, descriptions available. Encourage participants to think broadly and consider games from various cultures. This discussion should also touch upon the potential for games to unintentionally perpetuate stereotypes or exclude certain group. 2. Divide participants into small groups (3–4 participants) and allow each group to select a board game to work with. Groups can choose from the brainstormed list or introduce a game of their own. Ensure a diversity of games chosen across the groups. Task each group to adapt their chosen game to promote cultural safety and inclusivity. Provide specific examples and prompts to guide the adaptation process:

	Cooperative Elements: ■ Incorporate storytelling elements that reflect diverse cultural narratives ■ How can the characters or playing pieces be redesigned to represent a wider range of cultures, ethnicities, …? ■ Could the game board or playing pieces incorporate symbols, patterns, or motifs from different cultures? ■ Could elements of different languages be incorporated into the game, such as greetings, numbers, or simple phrases? 3. Invite each group to present their adapted game to the larger group, explaining the changes they made and the rationale behind them. The trainer facilitates a reflective discussion, asking questions like: ■ "What are the challenges and opportunities in adapting the game?" ■ "How does your adapted game promote cultural safety and inclusivity?" ■ "How could you use this adapted game in your classroom?"
Comments	/

1.4.2. Activity name	Cultures of our Group
Purpose of the activity	The purpose of the activity is to share through a playful activity the cultural aspects of the different cultures present in the classroom. On the one hand, increasing knowledge of other cultures, on the other hand, learning about other perspectives of other social and cultural groups promotes tolerance and respect among the participants where everyone feels valued by sharing elements of their own culture.
Learning outcomes	■ create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all cultures ■ appreciate (respect) the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of the children and families in the childcare setting

Interactive method/tech-nique	☐ Individual work ☒ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☒ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____

Timeframe for activity	45 minutes
Resources required	Paper, pen, mobile phones
Instruction:	1. Explain the activity's purpose: to celebrate the rich–ness of cultures present in the room. Ask participants to write on a piece of paper not just their country of origin, but also aspects of their cultural background they feel comfortable sharing. This could include: ■ Country of origin (if applicable) ■ Region or city of origin ■ Languages spoken at home or by ancestors ■ Cultural traditions or celebrations they participate in ■ Foods or dishes that are important to their culture ■ Any other element that defines their cultural identity 2. Collect the papers and redistribute them randomly, ensuring that no one receives their own paper back. 3. Ask participants to form pairs. Give each pair two pieces of paper describing two of the cultural backgrounds shared by their partners in the previous step (they cannot receive their own). The pair must choose one of them to continue the activity. Their task is to collaboratively write a short story inspired by the cultural information on the paper. The story should incorporate cultural, geographical, or gastronomic elements of the culture described.

	Example: Imagine you get a paper that says, "My family is from Ireland. We love to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and my grandma makes the best Irish stew!" Your story could be about a little leprechaun getting ready for St. Patrick's Day. Maybe he's helping to paint shamrocks on the windows, practicing his Irish dancing, or even trying to catch a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow! Story Sharing: Invite ach pair to share their story with the larger group. After all the stories have been shared, facilitate a group discussion using the following questions (and others that may arise): ■ What new things did you learn about the cultures represented in our classroom?Point out specific details shared in the stories and highlight the diversity of experien–ces and perspectives. ■ Do you think that learning more about a culture makes you more tolerant and under–standing towards it? Why or why not? ■ How do you think it makes someone feel when their culture is acknowledged and appreciated by others? Do you feel more valued when your classmates know about your culture?
Comments	If a group of participants is not culturally versatile, it is recommended to have previou–sly prepared papers available (similar as in example: "My family is from Ireland. We love to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and my grandma makes the best Irish stew!"), so you can distribute to participants and have variety of cultures to explore

1.4.3. Activity name	Looking through other Eyes
Purpose of the activity	The purpose of the activity is to invite reflection on the different attitudes that can be found in the classroom, as well as to promote skills such as active listening, empathy and intercultural communication.
Learning outcomes	■ identify possible learning and socialization barriers of children with different cultural background ■ recognize learning and socialization barriers the children with different cultural back-ground are facing, when they appear ■ modify the childcare environment to accommodate diverse cultural practices (e.g. dietary needs) ■ accept the responsibility to create a classroom environment that is welcoming and in-clusive of all cultures ■ demonstrate cultural sensitivity in interactions with children, families, and staff

Interactive method/tech-nique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☒ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____

Timeframe for activity	60 minutes
Resources required	Notebooks and pens

Instruction:	1. Script development (group work):
	
	■ Explain participants they will work in groups of four to write and perform a short role-play. The role-play will focus on a classroom scenario where children are sharing important celebrations from their cultures.
	
	■ Character development: Each group must include the following characters in their script:
	  1. The culturally aware educator: This educator demonstrates genuine cultural awareness and respect. They actively promote a safe and inclusive classroom environment where all children feel valued. Example: This educator might use inclusive language, acknowledge diverse perspectives, and address cultural misunderstandings with sensitivity.
	  2. The child from a different cultural background: This child comes from a cultural background that is different from the dominant culture in the classroom. Example: This child might be a recent immigrant, a child who speaks a different language at home, or a child whose family practices different traditions.
	  3. The curious and open-minded child: This child is genuinely curious and open to learning about other cultures. They ask respectful questions and demonstrate a willingness to understand different perspectives. Example: This child might ask the child from a different cultural background about the meaning behind their celebrations or express interest in learning more about their culture.

4. The child with prejudices/stereotypes: This child may have preconceived notions or stereotypes about other cultures. Their comments or actions might unintentionally cause harm or discomfort. *Example:* This child might make generalizations about a culture, express doubt about the validity of another culture's traditions, or make a joke that is culturally insensitive.

- Example scenarios:
  Children are giving short presentations about upcoming holidays or festivals in their cultures.
  The educator has organized a "cultural sharing day" where children bring in food, music, or artifacts representing their cultures.
  A discussion arises about a cultural event that has recently occurred in the community or world.

- Script elements:
  The script should include:
  - Clear dialogue that reflects the characters' personalities and perspectives.
  - Actions or behaviors that demonstrate cultural sensitivity (or lack thereof).
  - A clear beginning, middle, and end to the scenario.
  - A resolution to the conflict or misunderstanding (if one arises).

- Key elements to focus on:
  - Clear Dialogue and Character Perspectives: Each character should express their thoughts clearly, showing different levels of understanding or ignorance, which allows for teaching moments.
  - Actions Demonstrating Cultural Sensitivity: For example, a educator stepping in to redirect or clarify misunderstandings, or children showing respect when trying something new or learning about different traditions.
  - Resolution to Conflict: In all examples, misunderstandings are addressed with open communication and respectful discussion, leading to greater cultural understanding.
  - Enthusiasm and Curiosity: The role-play scenarios demonstrate how curiosity and respect help foster a safe cultural environment.

2. Invite each group to perform their role-play in front of the class.

3. After each performance, facilitate a debriefing session using the following questions (and others that may arise):
   - What did you think of the educator's performance?
   - What specific actions or words did the educator use that were effective (or ineffective) in promoting cultural safety?
   - Would you have acted differently in that situation?
   - How do you think the child from a different cultural background felt during the interaction?
   - Did they feel valued and respected? Why or why not?
   - How did the educator address the child's prejudices or stereotypes? Was it effective?
   - What are some practical strategies you can use in your own teaching practice to ensure that all children feel welcome, respected, and included?

Comments	/

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TEACHING UNIT 1.5.

PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN PRACTICE

THEORY INPUT

The Importance of Diversity and Multicultural Awareness in Childcare

For many years, intercultural diversity in childcare has been increasing. That is why it`s more important than ever for educators to take into account the cultural context in the classroom. Children can benefit a lot if schools/carecenters support inclusion and awareness around multicultural education. Culturally responsive approach helps children from different countries and cultures to achieve success and to live in multiculturally diverse world. It is very crucial from schools/carecenters and educators' perspective to prepare children to be adaptable to an evolving world and be accepting of people who are different from themselves (Drexel University School of Education, n.d.).

Benefits from Promoting Opportunities provided by Cultural Diversity (Positive Action, Inc; Better Up.Blog)

- Encourage More Tolerance
- Build Better Thinkers
- Build Stronger Communities
- Trust and respect
- Creativity and innovation
- Develops new skill sets
- Reduced discrimination and harassment
- increase of intercultural sensitivity

Diversity in Education

Diversity is understood as everything what can differ people from each other. It includes the following factors (Positive Action, Inc):

- Ethnicity
- Race
- Social–economic status
- Religious beliefs
- Political convictions
- Age

Factors that should be considered in Promoting Opportunities provided by Cultural Diversity (Deer, 2025)

- Challenging negative attitudes amongst children
- Avoiding stereotypes in curricular resources and examples
- Setting clear rules regarding how people treat each other
- Treating all children and staff equally and fairly
- Creating an all–inclusive environment for children and staff
- Actively using resources that have multicultural themes
- Working to promote multiculturalism in lessons
- Creating lessons that reflect and promote diversity in the classroom
- Making sure that all children have equal access to participation and opportunities
- Using a variety of assessment methods
- Using a range of teaching methods
- Ensuring that all procedures and policies are non–discriminatory
- Making sure that classroom materials never discriminate against anyone and are accessible to all even if this means adapting to audio, large print, or video."

How to promote Opportunities provided by Cultural Diversity – Tips and Starters
(Continental, 2023; University of San Diego, n.d.)

In this part you can find several suggestions for promoting cultural diversity in the classroom.

- **Get to know the Children**
  Once the year begins, you can send a survey to the childrens' parents to find out more about their backgrounds, customs, holidays they celebrate, food and cultural habits. Remember to make sure the questions are phrased in a thoughtful and non–offensive way. In that way, you show interest in the child's' culture and create a space for building relationships based on trust and openness.

- **Holiday Celebrations**
  Together with the children, design and make a calendar that includes holidays celebrated by children from different cultures. On the day the holiday falls, the children who celebrate it will introduce the rest of the children to its significance and prepare a chosen way to celebrate it with the class (food, making a craft, etc.).

- **Guest Speakers and Interviews**
  The best way to learn is from the source. Therefore, set a schedule of meetings with representatives of different cultures – parents, grandparents and children. Ask them to introduce the children to the culture of the country they come from. They can prepare some interesting facts and bring items that are typical of their country. Prepare in advance with the children questions for the guest speaker. It is recommended at the end of the meeting that children would have time to share something they learned from this person with the class.

- **Show and Tell**
  Set up a schedule for the action with the children – "I'll show you something" During the scheduled meetings, each child brings one thing related to his culture. The child presents this item to the class, explains what it is used for and why it is important. Inform parents about the action in advance, so that each child gets permission before bringing the item.

- **Games From Around the World**
  Collect information about various children's games from the countries the children come from. You can also ask the childrens' parents about characteristic games from their countries of origin. During a meeting with parents, you can offer to practice them. Play these games during some breaks or other activities. Ask the children if they know them, what their favorites are.

- **Multicultural Fair**
  The fair is certainly one of the most colorful and interesting ways to promote intercultural diversity.The educator should present the idea of organizing a fair to parents and children. Children together with their parents, prepare a stall with characteristic products of their culture. They can put on costumes and decorate their stall. Participants of the fair can taste the food and see characteristic items related to the specific culture. They can also talk with other participants to learn more about their culture.
  Educators can also invite children from another school or carecenter to the fair.
  It is optional to prepare questions about different cultures. The answers will be hidden at the intercultural stalls.

Resources for Further Reading

- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2023) *Promoting diversity and inclusion in schools in Europe*. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://saltoinclusion.eu/wp–content/uploads/2023/10/Promoting–Diversity–and–Inclusion–in–Schools–in–Europe.pdf. (Accessed: 2 December 2024)
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Activity Resources

1.5.1. Activity name	Multicultural Calendar of Holidays
Purpose of the activity	This exercise will be helpful in learning about holidays and festivals related to a particular culture
Learning outcomes	■ develop constructive social relations between groups and individuals representing ■ design projects fostering cultural diversity and exchange

Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study
	☐ Work in pairs ☒ Presentation ☐ Role playing
	☒ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz
	☐ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy
	    ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise
	    ☐ Story ☒ Play
	    ☐ Round table ☐ Other _____
	    ☐ Problem solving

Timeframe for activity	45 minutes
Resources required	Markers/crayons, pencils, paper (A4 for each participant) rulers, scissors colored paper

Instruction	1. Pass out blank paper card to each participant.
	2. Ask each participant to write down all the important festivals and holidays for his/her country.
	    Ask participants to choose only those holidays that are related to their country, region and culture. You can also suggest a maximum number of holidays that participants will describe, for example, up to seven.
	3. All the festivals should include: the date, the name and the symbol of the festival (e.g. Christmas – Christmas Tree).
	4. Invite participants to introduce their festivals to the group. After the introduction, in–struct the group to place the cards on the floor chronologically.
	5. Divide participants in smaller groups (2–4 participants, depending on the size of the group) and pass out the following items: large bristol board, markers, rulers, scissors colored paper.
	6. Explain to the group their task is to design a calendar that includes all the holidays men–tioned, with the date, the name and the symbol of the festival and the flag of the country.
	7. After each group has completed the task, invite them to present their calendars.
	8. After each group has presented, make a gallery view of the calendars and discuss with participants:
	    ■ How do they feel about this diversity of festival and holidays?
	    ■ What new have you learnt about different customs and festivals? Has anything sur–prised you?
	    ■ What similarities and differences do you recognize?
	    ■ Do you perceive any benefits from this cultural diversity? What are they?
	    ■ How can intercultural diversity (but also cultural equality), with the example of different holidays, be used in educational work?

Comments	- It is optional to listen to the specific music related to the national festival during each presentation. - If in the group there are not participants from different cultures, trainer may prepare the table with the name of different festivals (in the language of the country and the dates). The group has to find information about the festival and put it in order in the calendar. - Since the time for the exercise is 45 minutes, depending on the number of the groups, you can limit the number of holidays presented by the groups. Sample of the table:

THE NAME OF THE FESTIVAL IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE COUNTRY	DATE OF CELEBRATION
Rizdwo Chrystowe	January 7–9
Vánoce	December 24, 25 and 26
Festa della Repubblica	June 2
Santo Stefano	December 26
l'Epifania	January 6
Dan nezavisnosti	March 1, 1992
Reyes Magos	January 6
Fiestas de Mayo	Between April 30 and May 2
Eikosti Pempti Martiou	March 25
Theophaneia	Juanuary 6
Imera tou Ochi	October 28
Sveriges nationaldag	June 6th
Juldagen	December 25
Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı	April 23
Cumhuriyet Bayramı	October 29
Giorgoba	November 23

1.5.2. Activity name	A Story from my Culture
Purpose of the activity	This activity will be helpful in learning about the culture based on the folk stories
Learning outcomes	■ use creative techniques (e.g. drama, art) to encourage cultural understanding and sharing among children in an engaging way ■ develop constructive social relations between groups and individuals representing different cultural backgrounds ■ recognize elements of the education programme that are flexible and enable the integration of cultural topics and activities
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work · ☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☒ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving · ☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	60 minutes
Resources required	Markers/crayons, papers
Instruction:	1. Ask participants to choose a story, or a fairy tale related to the culture of the country from which they come from. The story should take into account the cultural context and the moral. 2. If the participants are not people from different cultures of countries, they can prepare a story with a moral from their childhood (heard from family), school, a story that contains an important message. 3. Participants make drawings that will illustrate the story. They can prepare some elements of decoration related to the story (e.g. the main characters of fairy tales, symbols, specific images, ect) 4. Each participant presents the story. After each story, the trainer asks participants: what they learned about the culture and what is the moral that comes from the story. The exercise can be also done in groups of people that would present the same story from their region. 5. All participants sit in a circle. The trainer asks everyone the following questions (e.g): ■ What role do stories play in preserving cultural history and traditions? In what way we can use them in educational context? ■ Did anything surprise you about the stories presented? ■ What do stories say about cultures? ■ What universal values are represented by stories from different cultures, what can we learn from the stories?
Comments	The exercise can be split into several meetings during which each story will be discussed separately.

1.5.3. Activity name	Proverbs of my Country
Purpose of the activity	This exercise will be helpful in learning about different cultures from local proverbs.
Learning outcomes	- develop constructive social relations between groups and individuals representing - promote cultural exchange and learning opportunities that facilitate the sharing of knowledge, skills, and experiences across cultural boundaries - recognise elements of the education programme that are flexible and enable the integration of cultural topics and activities
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☒ Group work ☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	50 minutes
Resources required	Markers/ Pens, Paper (A4 for each participant), hat
Instruction:	1. Ask participants to think of a proverb related to the culture of their country of origin, or the region they come from. 2. Pass out sheets of paper and ask participants to write down the proverb 3. The written proverbs are thrown into a hat 4. Then, each participant draws proverb out of the hat and reads it aloud 5. The rest of the participants try to guess which country the proverb comes from. 6. The authors of the written proverb explain its origin and message. 7. Trainer may also prepare proverbs that come from different countries and asks participants to find explanation. Samples of proverbs:

	Still waters run deep. | Latin Proverb
	Measure a thousand times and cut once. | Turkish Proverb
	The most beautiful fig may contain a worm. | Zulu Proverb
	Change yourself and fortune will change. | Portuguese Proverb
	In love, there is always one who kisses and one who offers the cheek. | French Proverb
	Who begins too much accomplishes little. | German Proverb
	Whoever gossips to you will gossip about you. | Spanish Proverb
	Don't sail out farther than you can row back. | Danish Proverb
	Age is honorable and youth is noble. | Irish Proverb
	Before you score, you first must have a goal. | Greek Proverb
	Big fish eat small fish./ Chinese Proverb
	The way it came is the way it will go./ Croatian Proverb
	Do not wake sleeping dogs./ Dutch Proverb 8. Final discussion. ▪ Ask participants the following questions: ▪ What can we learn from proverbs? ▪ Has any particular proverb, proverbs influenced your attitudes, values? To what extent? ▪ What is your source of knowledge about proverbs, are they part of family education (passed down from generation to generation?) How much importance is attached to proverbs in your countries, the places you come from? ▪ What knowledge do proverbs provide about a country, or culture? ▪ What differences and similarities do they notice from the proverbs presented? ▪ What opportunities or risks do you see for using proverbs in intercultural education or in other areas of education?
Comments	The activity can be done individually or in groups depending on the number of participants.

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MODULES

MODULE II: GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

TEACHING UNIT 2.1.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Early childhood education professionals must have a meaningful understanding of the differences between gender identity and sexual orientation in their educational practice in order to create emotional environments where all children feel supported in their unique identities and experiences.

By working on these topics, educators can achieve fundamental goals for the holistic growth of the individual:

- Create learning environments where all children feel accepted and valued.

- Challenge stereotypes and promote empathy, reducing bullying and fostering a supportive community (Kosciw et al., 2020).

- Respect and understand diverse family structures, providing appropriate support to children and families with LGBTQIA+ members.

- Assist children in forming their unique identities, contributing to higher self–esteem and resilience (Ryan et al., 2010)

- Effectively address questions from families, children, or colleagues, providing appropriate responses and resources.

Definitions and Key Terms

Knowing key terms and definitions, as well as the main theories on the development of sexual orientation and gender identity, is crucial to providing a bias–free intervention. Childcare professionals must be thoroughly familiar with the appropriate scientific definitions for each term used when referring to gender identity and sexual orientation and the differences between the two, in order to have a positive impact on young people's lives and their families.

Biological Sex: refers to the set of biological, anatomical and chromosomal characteristics individuals are born with. It is assigned at birth as male or female.

Gender: is the set of psychological, social and cultural characteristics that society associates with being male, female or another identity. It is a social construct that varies across different cultures and time periods (World Health Organization, 2024).

Gender Identity: refers to a person's internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not align with the sex they were assigned at birth (World Health Organization, 2024).

Gender Expression: the way in which a person outwardly presents their gender identity. It is typically manifested through name and pronouns (i.e., 'she/her', 'he/him', 'they/them') and/or the way people choose to dress, speak or conduct themselves socially. It does not necessarily reveal a person's sexual orientation or gender.

Gender Roles: are the behaviors and expectations considered appropriate for individuals based on their gender in a culture or society (Connell, 2002).

Sexual Orientation: is the emotional, romantic or sexual attraction a person feels towards others (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Gender Socialization: is the process through which individuals learn societal norms and expectations associated with their gender (Bussey and Bandura, 1999).

In order to work in the field of education, in a society that is constantly changing and that presents us with new challenges, professionals must be aware that children increasingly do not recognize themselves in the biological gender assigned to them at birth and that they can be reflected in different gender identities whose exact definition is necessary.

Cisgender: a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth.

Transgender: a person whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. It includes trans men (people who identify as male but were assigned female at birth) and trans women (people who identify as female but were assigned male at birth).

Gender–Nonconforming: a person whose gender identity or expression don't match societal expectations for the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender–Fluid: a person who identifies with a certain gender at a certain time and with other genders at other times.

Agender: a person who identifies as having no gender or being gender–neutral.

To better accompany children in their process of growth and self–definition, it is also necessary to know the different sexual and emotional orientations in which they could identify or that describe the members of their families.

Heterosexual: a person who is physically, emotionally or romantically attracted to people of the opposite sex or gender.

Homosexual: a person attracted to people of the same sex or gender.

Queer: a broad term used to describe people with gender identities or sexual orientations that deviate from cisgender and heterosexual norms (see definitions above).

LGBTIQA+: acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Asexual/Agender/Allies people, where the "+" represents any other identity or orientation not listed.

Pansexual: a person attracted to individuals regardless of their sex or gender.

Asexual: a person who is not attracted to people of any sex or gender.

Intersex: a person born with physical sexual characteristics (chromosomes, gonads, hormones, genitals, etc.) that do not match typical definitions of male or female bodies. This term is not directly linked to sexual orientation.

Theories on Gender Identity Development

To accompany children in their path of development and growth, in addition to understanding the definitions of the terms used when approaching the topic of gender, one can refer to the literature regarding the main theories on the development of gender identity in children.

1. **Biological Theories**: According to these theories, genetic and hormonal factors significantly influence the development of gender identity. It is thought that hormones (such as testosterone and estrogen) shape the brain structure and, consequently, gender identity (Bao & Swaab, 2011). Researchers have found correlations between hormonal variations, brain structure and gender identity, rooting the development of gender identity and its related behaviors in biological and neurological foundations (Berenbaum & Beltz, 2011).

2. **Social Learning Theories**: They assign a crucial role to the environment and observational learning in the development of gender identity. In fact it is thought that, as supported by Bandura in his Social Learning Theory, people learn by observation and imitation, especially from the people they take as role models. Therefore, children tend to imitate the behaviors observed in same-sex parents or attachment figures, building and reinforcing specific gender roles. Social learning theories also focus on the influence of the cultural context, societal expectation and mechanisms as reinforcement or punishment of certain behaviors by society, which influence the likelihood of adopting and repeating such behaviors.

3. **Cognitive-Developmental Theories**: these theories suggest that children actively construct gender identity through interaction with their environment and through definite stages of cognitive understanding (Kohlberg, 1966).
    According to these, there are three main phases in children's understanding of gender:

    -   Gender Identity (2–3 years): children start recognizing themselves in a particular gender, based on superficial characteristics like appearance.

    -   Gender Stability (3–4 years): children start to understand that gender is stable over time (girls become women and boys become men), still basing their understanding on stereotypes and appearance.

    -   Gender Constancy (5–7 years): children realize that gender is intrinsic and not just about external features and remains constant regardless of changes in activities, clothes or behavior.

4. **Psychoanalytic Theories**: in these theories, and especially in Sigmund Freud's work, a dominant role in shaping gender identity is given to early childhood experiences and unconscious processes, such as the Oedipus and Electra Complexes and the process of identification with same-sex parent. The successful elaboration of these phases is thought to mark the development of a stable gender identity. More recently, Freud's work has faced criticism for its rigidity and gender biases, while modern psychoanalytic perspectives reflect a broader, more inclusive understanding of gender identity, moving beyond rigid frameworks to embrace diversity and fluidity (Bell, 2018).

Main Theories on Sexual Orientation

In early childhood education, when educators approach the topic of sexual orientation, whether it refers to the future development of children's sexual and emotional interests or to the current interests of family members, they can refer to theories and research that explain the complexity and uniqueness of this experience.

1. **Social Constructionist Theories**: They explain how sexual orientation is not innate or established by biological sexual traits, but is influenced by historical context and social and cultural expectations. They focus on key aspects that are thought to have a great influence on the concept and development of sexual orientation, such as the language used in a certain society (the way we talk about and label sexual orientation influences how it is understood and experienced by individuals), the historical context (the understanding and acceptance of different sexual orientations can vary greatly across different historical periods and societies) and cultural influences (the norms and values shared in a certain culture play a significant role in defining what is considered acceptable or taboo in terms of sexual orientation). Recent theories view sexual orientation as a multifaceted and socially situated phenomenon and avoid simplistic or deterministic explanations, underlining how other factors (i.e., race, gender, class, heteronormativity and other systems of oppression and privilege) influence the construction of sexual identities and behaviors.

2. **Biological Theories**: As for gender identity, these theories focus on the correlation between genetic, hormonal and neurodevelopmental aspects and sexual orientation. Studies on identical twins, prenatal hormone exposure and brain structure and activity, among others, attribute a great influence to biological factors and the development of sexual orientation (LeVay, 2011). As stated by LeVay, these lines of research have great importance as they foster a change of mindset: from seeking to discover "what went wrong" in the lives of gay people or attempting to develop "cures" for homosexuality to increasingly seeing sexual variety as something to be valued, celebrated, and welcomed into society (APA, 2016).

3. **Psychoanalytic Theories:** Sigmund Freud, the founding father of psychoanalytic theories, provided an explanation for the development of sexual orientation, investigating and exploring the unconscious desires that in his view characterized the psychosexual phases and early childhood experiences. While Freud considered all individuals as intrinsically bisexual (Freud, 1905), post–Freudian theorists often pathologized homosexuality by attributing it to the consequences of family influences on the evolution of the individual. Today these views are obsolete, as modern psychoanalytic perspectives (Fonagy et al., 2002) emphasize how the complexity of sexual orientation must be considered in terms of the interaction of biological, psychological and social factors.

Resources for Further Reading

- American Psychological Association (2015) 'Guidelines for psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming people', *American Psychologist*, 70 (9), pp. 832–864. Available at: https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/transgender.pdf (Accessed: 12 November 2024).
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Activity Resources

2.1.1. Activity name	Genderbread Composition
Purpose of the activity	Understanding the main aspects of gender identity and sexual orientation using a visual representation.
Learning outcomes	▪ understand gender identity as an individual's deeply–felt sense of being male, female, both, neither, or somewhere along the gender spectrum. ▪ understand sexual orientation as the enduring pattern of romantic or sexual attraction. ▪ distinct between gender identity and biological sex, recognizing that gender identity is internal and may or may not align with assigned sex at birth.

Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study
	☐ Work in pairs ☐ Presentation ☐ Role playing
	☐ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz
	☐ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy
	  ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise
	  ☐ Story ☐ Play
	  ☐ Round table ☐ Other _____
	  ☐ Problem solving

Timeframe for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	Genderbread worksheets (Attachment 1), Genderbread Person (Attachment 2), pencils.
Instruction:	1. Give each participant a Genderbread Worksheet (Attachment 1). Give each participant a pencil. 2. Ask each person to fill out the worksheet. After five minutes collect all the worksheets. 3. Illustrate all the combinations chosen by the participants. Have participants comment on what they notice about similarities and differences on these combinations. 4. Read Attachment 2 and provide the exact definitions of the terms and their correct positions. 5. Ask participants about which terms they had the most difficulty with. Ask participants if they ever encountered or used these words in their work practice. 6. Illustrate the main erroneous combinations referring to stereotypes and personal expectations. 7. Proceed by asking if anyone would like to share what they learned from this activity.
Comments	It is possible to broaden the discussion of stereotypes and expectations by connecting them to the historical and social context.

Resources:

▪ Killermann, S. (2017) The Genderbread Person. Available at: https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2018/10/the–genderbread–person–v4/ (Accessed: 6 December 2024).

ATTACHMENT 1

GENDERBREAD WORKSHEET
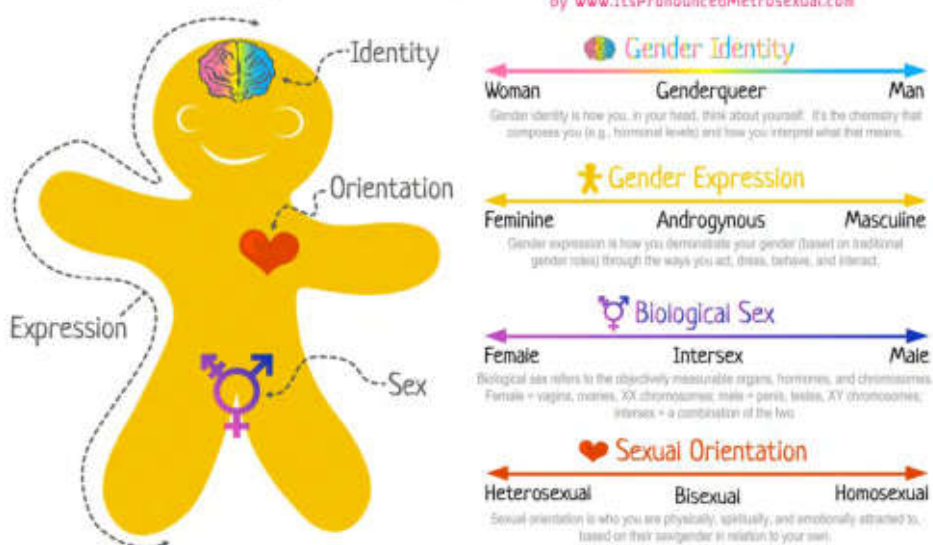
Place the following words in the right place: Biological sex, Gender identity, Sexual Orientation, Gender Expression.
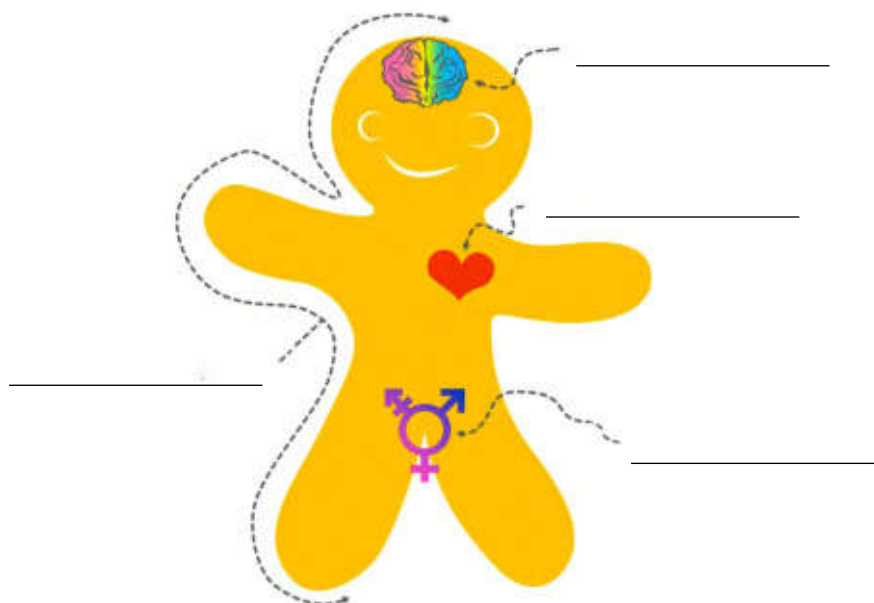
ATTACHMENT 2

2.1.2. Activity name	Word Puzzle
Purpose of the activity	This activity will help participants familiarize themselves with the main terms, theories and definitions regarding gender identity and sexual orientation.
Learning outcomes	■ actively work to overcome knowledge gaps. ■ explain and differentiate terms such as gender identity, biological sex and sexual orientation. ■ list diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, beyond the binary male/female and heterosexual/homosexual.

Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☒ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☒ Play ☒ Other: <u>Puzzle</u>

Timeframe for activity	30 minutes		
Resources required	A4 paper (approximately 10 sheets), scissors, flipchart, glue sticks, marker, A3 cardboard, Attachment 1, Attachment 2		

Instruction:	1. Print "Attachment 3", counting one copy for every three/four participants.
	    Cut out the boxes containing the words and then the boxes containing the definitions.
	2. Have participants form groups of three or four.
	3. Randomly arrange the cut-out squares on a small table or desk in front of each group, a sheet of A3 cardboard and a stick of glue.
	4. Ask each group to match each word or term with its definition and glue it on the A3 sheet.
	5. After 10 minutes, go to the flipchart and explain to participants that you will glue the correct definition next to each term and they will have to count how many points they have accumulated: each correct answer is worth one point.
	    Start and glue the first term on the flipchart.
	6. Ask a representative of the first group which definition they chose to match with the first term.
	7. Glue the correct definition next to the term.
	    Comment on the choices and give explanations on the correct definitions.
	8. Have participants write down their score: 1 point for each correct match.
	    Repeat the process for each term, alternating the groups.
	9. Have participants calculate their total score: the group that scored higher wins.
	10. Celebrate the winners. You can give an applause or a rainbow trophy (Attachment 3.1)
	    Ask participants if they feel like they learned something new and if they need further clarification.		

Comments	The printing and cutting out must be done before the training begins.		

ATTACHMENT 1

GENDER	The set of psychological, social and cultural characteristics that society associates with being male, female or another identity. It is a social construct that varies across different cultures and time periods (World Health Organization, 2024).
GENDER EXPRESSION	The ways in which an individual communicates their gender to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, etc.; not an indication of gender identity or sexual orientation.
CISGENDER	A term that describes a person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth align (e.g., a person identifies as a man and was assigned male at birth by a doctor).
GENDER ROLE	The behaviors and expectations considered appropriate for individuals based on their gender in a culture or society.
INTERSEX	An umbrella term that describes people with variations in sex characteristics. This could include mixed chromosomes, elements of male and female reproductive systems, or genitalia that do not appear clearly male or clearly female at birth (for example, a baby born with a vulva and testes).
TRANSGENDER	Someone whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. They can have various gender expressions and may or may not choose to undergo medical procedures to align their physical appearance with their gender identity.
BISEXUAL	A sexual orientation that describes a person who is attracted to people of their own gender as well as other genders.
ASEXUAL	A person who is not attracted to people of any sex or gender.
GENDER BIAS	The preferential treatment or discrimination against individuals based on their gender. It's often subtle and can manifest in various ways, impacting people differently depending on their gender identity. It is often unconscious.
GENDER GAP	Any disparity between the situation of boys and girls, men and women. This may be in terms of knowledge, attitudes or behaviours. It can be attributed to differences in terms of perspectives, economic and social preferences, experiences and autonomy.
GENDER IDENTITY	A person's internal sense of their own gender, whether that is male, female, a blend of both, neither or something along the gender spectrum. It is distinct from biological sex, which is based on physical attributes. Many people face harassment, stigma and exclusion if the expression of their gender identity, for example through dress, speech and mannerisms, is different from what others might expect.
GENDER NEUTRAL LANGUAGE	The language that avoids bias toward a particular sex or gender and therefore is less likely to convey gender stereotypes.
INTERSECTIONALITY	The way in which different forms of discrimination and disadvantage combine and overlap. Characteristics such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity, geography and socio–economic status can intersect with each other, causing multiple levels of disadvantage and marginalization.
SEX	The set of biological, anatomical and chromosomal characteristics individuals are born with. It is assigned at birth as male or female.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	The emotional, romantic or sexual attraction a person feels towards others.

GENDER – BASED VIOLENCE	The violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering, against someone based on gender discrimination, gender role expectations and/or gender stereotypes, or based on the differential power status linked to gender.
GENDER – RESPONSIVE	The attitude of addressing and responding to the different needs, aspirations, capacities and contributions of people of different genders.
GENDER – SENSITIVE	The attitude of acknowledging that differences and inequalities between people of different gender identities require attention. This term refers to the awareness and consideration of socio–cultural norms and discriminations related to gender.
AGENDER	A gender identity that describes a person who does not identify with any particular gender or who identifies without gender.
COMING OUT	The process of acknowledging one's sexual orientation or gender identity to oneself and/or individuals in one's life. Often incorrectly thought of to be a one–time event, this is a lifelong and sometimes daily process.
GAY	A sexual orientation most commonly used to describe men who are exclusively attracted to other men. This term may also be used by people of any gender who are attracted to people of their same gender.
GENDER DYSPHORIA	The complex and nuanced psychological, physical, and emotional suffering emerging in response to the internal and external (e.g., social/societal) experiences which highlight a disconnection between one's internal understanding of self and one's external presentation of self.
GENDER – FLUID	A gender identity that describes an individual whose gender identity may continually change throughout their lifetime. These individuals may not feel confined within the socially and culturally expected gender roles and may identify differently from situation to situation or day to day.
HETEROSEXUAL	A sexual orientation that describes a person who feels romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to people of the opposite sex. Historically used as an antonym for "homosexual".
QUEER	A broad term used to describe people with gender identities or sexual orientations that deviate from cisgender and heterosexual norms.
NON–BINARY	An umbrella term for gender identities that are outside of the gender binary, meaning not exclusively either boy/girl or man/woman. Individuals who identify in this category may have more than one gender, not identify with a gender, or something else altogether.
PANSEXUAL	A sexual orientation that describes people who are attracted to others regardless of sex, gender identity, or gender expression.

2.1.3. Activity name	True or False
Purpose of the activity	Understanding the differences between gender identity and sexual orientation and their correlation with children's development, bringing to light knowledge gaps.
Learning outcomes	■ Understand gender identity as an individual's deeply felt sense of being male, female, both, neither, or somewhere along the gender spectrum. ■ Continuously check own knowledge on these topics and actively work to overcome knowledge gaps through research and education. ■ Identify the social and cultural factors that influence the development and expression of gender identity and sexual orientation, including norms, stereotypes, and discrimination. ■ Distinct between gender identity and biological sex, recognizing that gender identity is internal and may or may not align with the assigned sex at birth.
Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Presentation ☐ Role playing ☐ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☒ Questioner/quiz ☐ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy 　　　　☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise 　　　　☐ Story ☐ Play 　　　　☐ Round table ☐ Other _____ 　　　　☐ Problem solving
Timeframe for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	Printed True or False Worksheet (Attachment 1), printed Answers & Explanations sheet (Attachment 2), 3 sheets of red cardboard, 3 sheets of green cardboard, paper, pen, a prize (optional), a scoreboard (flip chart or digital).
Instruction:	1. Have participants stand up and tell them you are going to play a "Find Your Tribe" game. 　Choose 3 tribe names (one per group), i.e. "Snake, Gorilla, Bird". 2. Prepare as many small slips of paper as the number of participants, with the "Tribe" name on them (each tribe should represent ⅓ of the total number of participants). 3. Pass through the participants and secretly hand them one slip of paper. 　Make the following announcement: "Now you have to find your tribe… but you can't talk! You can only use gestures or movements that match your creature". 4. Ask everyone to walk around acting out their creature, until they find their tribe. 7. When the 3 groups are formed, check to see if they are equally divided. 8. Hand each Tribe a green sheet and a red sheet and then tell them you are going to play a "True or False" game, where you read out loud a sentence and they will only have 15 seconds to raise the red sheet if they believe it's false, and the green one if they believe the sentence is true. 9. Start the game by reading out loud the first sentence in Attachment 4. 　Set a timer to 15 seconds. 10. When the bell rings, have one spokesperson quickly explain their answer (maximum of 30 seconds) 11. Give the correct answer with a short clarification. 12. Assign 1 point to each tribe for each correct answer. 　Repeat the same process for each sentence. 13. At the end of the sentences, give a symbolic prize to the tribe with the highest number of correct answers. 14. Lastly, ask if there are any terms, definitions, or aspects they want to discuss or clarify. 　Thank participants and ask them if they feel like they learned something new from the activity.
Comments	/

ATTACHMENT 1

TRUE OR FALSE WORKSHEET

1. Biological sex corresponds to gender identity.

2. As we grow up, our gender identity aligns with our biological sex.

3. People become transgender because of genetics.

4. Children are too young to know their gender.

5. There are only two genders

6. Children learn norms and expectations about their gender from society.

7. Agender and Gender–fluid are the same thing.

8. "Intersex" and "bisexual" have the same meaning.

9. Relationships within the family can influence gender identity.

10. Children of couples with a homosexual parent are more likely to become homosexual.

11. Gender identity refers to the sexual characteristics we are born with.

12. Gender socialization is tied to the sex of the people you spend the most time with.

13. Gender roles are assigned at birth.

14. Testosterone deficiency may affect the development of male gender identity.

15. Children begin to have a perception of their own gender around the age of 2.

16. Homosexuality can be cured or corrected.

17. These themes are not applicable to children.

ATTACHMENT 2

TRUE OR FALSE WORKSHEET – ANSWERS & EXPLANATIONS

Biological sex corresponds to gender identity.
x False
While this is true for many people, it's not true for everyone. Transgender and non–binary individuals experience a gender identity that doesn't align with their assigned biological sex.

As we grow up, our gender identity aligns with our biological sex.
x False
Many people do identify with the gender assigned at birth, but not all. Gender identity can remain consistent, change, or become clearer over time.

People become transgender because of genetics.
x False
There's no single cause for being transgender. It's likely influenced by a complex mix of biological, psychological, and social factors.

Children are too young to know their gender.
x False
Research shows that many children have a sense of their gender identity as early as age 2 or 3.

There are only two genders.
x False
Gender is a spectrum. Cultures around the world recognize multiple gender identities beyond ''male'' and ''female''.

Children learn norms and expectations about their gender from society.
✓ True
Gender socialization is shaped by family. media, school, and cultural expectations.

A–gender and Gender–fluid are the same thing.
x False
A–gender people may feel they have no gender. Gender–fluid individuals may shift between genders over time.

"Intersex" and bisexual" have the same meaning.
x False
Intersex refers to a person born with biological traits that don't fit typical definitions of male or female. Bisexual refers to sexual attraction to more than one gender.

Relationships within the family can influence gender identity.
✓ True
Family dynamies can influence how a child expresses or understands their gender, though it doesn't determine identity.

Children of couples with a homosexual parent are more likely to become homosexual.
x **False**

There is no evidence that having LGBTQ+ parents affeets a child's sexual orientation.

Gender identity refers to the sexual characteristies we are born with.
x **False**

That describes biological sex. Gender identity is how someone personally experiences and identifies their gender.

Gender socialization is tied to the sex of the people you spend the most time with.
x **False**

Gender socialization comes from many sources–parents, peers, educators, media–not just from same–sex role models.

Gender roles are assigned at birth.
✔ **True**

Societies often begin assigning gender roles (e.g.. colors, toys, behaviors) based on the baby's perceived sex from birth.

Testosterone deficiency may affect the development of male gender identity.
x **False** (with nuance)
While hormones play a role in development, gender identity is not solely determined by hormone levels.

Children begin to have a perception of their own gender around the age of 2.
✔ **True**
Children often begin expressing a stable gender identity between 2 and 3 years old.

Homosexuality can be cured or corrected.
x **False**

Homosexuality is not an illness and cannot (and should not) be "cured". So–called conversion therapies are harmful and widely discredited.

These themes are not applicable to children.
x **False**

Understanding gender and diversity helps children develop empathy, self–awareness, and respect for others from an early age.

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TEACHING UNIT 2.2.

MAKING DIFFERENT SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS AND GENDER IDENTITIES LEGITIMATE WITHIN FAMILIES

THEORY INPUT

In order to help families, legitimize differences in gender and sexual orientation, different principles and perspectives must be addressed and understood.

First of all, it is necessary to address with families the issue of the **fundamental rights** that each member is entitled to: everyone has the right to respect, dignity and freedom to express their gender identity and sexual orientation, especially within the family.

Families must be encouraged and supported in achieving the ability to respect and honor the **inherent dignity** of their members and should be trained to treat all members with fairness and justice, promoting **equality and non–discrimination** in all interactions.

This climate helps family members exercise their **freedom of expression** regarding their gender identity and sexual orientation, confident that their personal experiences are listened to, recognized and validated by their family members and that, after sharing aspects of their identity, each person's **right to privacy** is respected.

Families should create a supportive atmosphere where all members feel accepted and valued because everyone has the right to live in a family that supports them.

The first goal of childhood professionals is to make families aware of the importance of welcoming and respecting children, regardless of their gender identities and sexual orientations, to promote their **holistic development** and the achievement of their full potential, in accordance to each child's individuality.

Furthermore, families must be educated on the necessity of combating and preventing the **negative consequences of inequality and discrimination**. They must understand that the way in which children assimilate their gender identity and sexual orientation will condition:

- Their self–concept and **self–esteem**
- Their **socialization** with people of the same gender and with others
- Their **life goals**
- Their **social role** as individuals

Another fundamental goal of professionals is the **prevention of violence**: families need to understand that discrimination (implicit or explicit) on different genders and sexual orientations leads to the creation of a hierarchy, where some people feel superior to others, leading children and future adults to be possible victims or perpetrators of **gender and homotransphobic violence**.

To achieve the goals mentioned above, professionals must provide families with a **comprehensive education** around the topic, ensuring support to family members who might need it. In doing so, they must make sure to use **respectful communication strategies,** such as:

- T ctive listening
- f howing empathy and being patient
- h sing a calm tone of voice
- e especting turns in conversations
- e especting different points of view
- Y inding common ground
- c racticing self–control

It is also useful to be aware of possible **defense mechanisms** families could enact during difficult conversations, such as:

- T voidance
- c rojection
- e epression
- W enial
- e ationalization
- e egression
- [umor

It is, indeed, necessary to increase the **cultural sensitivity** of the family members to allow them to read differences considering their own culture of origin, fostering a greater understanding and respect for diversity, and to consider the process of **gender socialization:** parents and families are the primary influence on children's understanding of gender, gender roles, expectations, stereotypes and inequalities (i.e., fathers' involvement in domestic duties and childcare is associated with a lower likelihood of violence in children's present and future lives).

Theoretical Frameworks

When legitimating different identities and orientations with families, professionals can refer to the following frameworks:

- **Intersectionality Theory:** Proposed by Kimberlè Crenshaw, it illustrates how identity, being a construct composed of various aspects such as race, gender and sexuality, is the result of the intersections and influences of each of these aspects on the others. Understanding the multifaceted nature of identity helps us to interpret the experience of individuals based on the various aspects that influence it (race, social class, age). This theory explains the complexity of identity as opposed to the simplistic views that underlie stereotypes. Families that work to understand and apply this theory acquire a holistic understanding of their members' identities in their totality. Showing empathy towards members who experience changes in some aspects of their identity leads to a more resistant and resilient family system, able to fight and overcome stereotypes.

- **Family Systems Theory:** This theory explains that families are systems in which each member influences the others. The identity of each member is therefore part of a larger and interdependent family system. Working on the aspect of **interconnection** between members, one can understand how to support the individual in integrating different identities and orientations and support the family as a whole. **Open communication** within the family encourages individual members to have an honest dialogue about their gender identity and sexual orientation, reducing misunderstandings. Families that are able to acquire the ability to **adapt to change** are able to welcome the new system dynamics that arise from changes in the identity of individuals. This also implements the **flexibility of roles** within the family system. In fact, the roles within the family are not fixed and can change to best support the true identity of each member and consequently support the entire family.

- **Social–constructionist Approach:** This approach explains the influence that social and cultural norms have on the understanding and perception of gender identity and sexual orientation. Such norms, being strictly linked to the cultural and social context, cannot be immutable. What is considered "normal" or "appropriate" in a given period or society can actually be remodeled or changed within the various cultures and over the years. Working to make families aware of contextual flexibility helps them acquire a cultural awareness that can free them from the influence of traditional norms. Also, working on the use of **inclusive language**, and paying attention to the way of communicating, helps family members recognize and validate the different experiences of the other members.

-

An additional resource is represented by **support networks** in which families are connected by similarity of lived experience and support each other, providing guidance and assistance. Sharing experiences within the support network, participating in workshops and role-playing exercises or reading materials can help to understand and accept the individual's experience.

The exchange of experiences between families can also help the exchange of information about the tools and resources active in supporting the LGBTQIA+ community, such as **policies and laws** that support and protect the rights of each individual and institutional support that promotes the increase of inclusive policies within the education system, workplaces and organizations.

Additional Tips

To foster healthy development in children, professionals can encourage families towards the following behaviors:

- Offer a wide range of toys and activities to their children, avoiding stereotypic categorizations, paying attention to the details (i.e., the choice of colors/images on packaging).
- Foster play opportunities with children of all genders.
- Counteract any stereotypical belief expressed by children to prevent discrimination.
- Expose children to counter-stereotypical role models (i.e., women in firefighting).
- Introduce family members to positive role models from the LGBTQIA+ community through media, literature, and everyday life.
- Show unconditional love, regardless of gender or orientation.
- Talk with children, ask and answer questions without fear or shame, hear their points of view and support their feelings.
- Ask for support from the educators and/or professionals.
- Read inclusive books to children, making gender diversity normal starting from early childhood.
- Be aware of possible signs of distress in children who are worried about gender or orientation (i.e., depression, anxiety, poor concentration).
- Start talking about bullying or intimidation from early on and ask children to report any incidents.
- Avoid pressuring children to change who they are.

Resources for Further Reading

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Activity Resources

2.2.1. Activity name	New Scenarios, old Fears
Purpose of the activity	This activity helps educators address parents' major fears about gender, sexual orientation and education around these issues.
Learning outcomes	- identify appropriate communication strategies when interacting with families. - identify main defense mechanisms and resistances that families could enact. - Open a mental and physical space with family members to provide relevant information and discuss different gender identities and sexual orientation. - support parents and caregivers in affirming and validating their children's gender identity and sexual orientation and providing resources and guidance for fostering positive communication and acceptance within the family. - act as a mediator during the interaction between a child and family members around the topic of gender identity and sexual orientation.
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work ☒ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	90 minutes
Resources required	Sheets with printed individual situations that frequently worry parents (Attachment 1), pencils
Instruction:	1. Divide participants into small groups. 2. Give the various groups the sheet containing the first scenario (available in attachment) in which a parent asks the educator a question on how to deal with a situation regarding gender identity or sexual orientation in the family. 3. Give 10 minutes for discussion within the small group. 4. Ask each group to provide a proposal to address the given scenario. 5. Repeat the procedure for all subsequent scenarios. 6. Provide feedback regarding the appropriateness of the solutions adopted and further response options. 7. Ask participants if they have ever faced similar situations. 8. Ask participants if they feel able to respond adequately and functionally to common parental concerns. 9. Ask participants if peer comparison helped them learn new strategies. 10. Ask participants if they feel like they learned something new and if they need further clarification.
Comments	This activity can be expanded with considerations about the new work challenges that educators are facing compared to the past, due to changes in society and within families, which require flexibility, upskilling and continuous adaptation.

ATTACHMENT 1

Scenario 1:
A parent asks you how to deal with their child who has a gender expression that does not align with their biological sex assigned at birth.

Scenario 2:
A parent asks you how to deal with family members who are unwilling to recognize the gender their child identifies with (not aligned with their biological sex).

Scenario 3:
A parent tells you that they don't think it's right to talk about different gender identities at school/carecenters because they fear that it could create confusion, that they could end up discussing sexuality and reproduction and that these are topics that go against the values taught in the family.

Scenario 4:
A parent asks you for advice on how to behave because they are uncomfortable with the questions their child asks about gender identity and are uncomfortable providing answers to the questions their child asks about sexual orientation.

Scenario 5:
A parent asks you how they can correct the impression they have given their child about gender because it has negatively impacted their child's freedom of expression and emotional health.

For example, a father has long realized that his child has had a preference for gender expressions that do not conform to the sex assigned at birth.

Over the years, he has attempted to align his child's gender expressions with their biological sex, but now he realizes that these attempts have negatively affected the child's emotional well–being, and he asks how he can correct his influence and support his child.

ATTACHMENT 2

FOR TRAINERS

Key concepts to keep in mind to guide the discussion (GenderLens, 2024)

Scenario 1:

There is nothing problematic or wrong with children expressing themselves in a way that society deems inappropriate for the gender assigned at birth.

We live in a social context where what is considered feminine and masculine is classified in an extremely rigid way. But it is this rigidity that constitutes a problem, not the children. Let them express themselves freely and work on the context in which they move (school, carecenter, sports center, group of friends, etc.) to make it as welcoming and safe as possible.

Try to keep the conversation as open as possible, placing yourself in an attitude of attentive listening to what the child's main needs are, without anticipating them.

Some children who persistently and consistently state that they are a gender other than the one assigned at birth may ask to be socially recognized with the gender with which they identify.

This may require family members to use the person's chosen name, request an alias career and/or a legal correction of the name and gender, and socialization of the child with the gender with which he or she identifies in the various environments in which he or she moves.

Scenario 2:

Recognizing and affirming a person of a different gender is not a simple and immediate thing for anyone.

Prejudices towards trans* people and that way of understanding and managing childhood as if children were beings incapable of understanding and making sensible decisions, causes some people to demonstrate hostility towards children of creative gender or invalidate their feelings.

While it is certain that each person has different times to be able to understand and accept gender diversity, it must also be said that in no way can we allow violence (verbal, physical and psychological) to be used against them. **Respect for the little person must always be guaranteed.**

If we understand that family or friend figures have difficulty recognizing an d af firming our children's gender and make no effort in that direction, it is better to distance ourselves.

Scenario 3:

Children are already learning about it. Messages about gender are everywhere, and children receive very clear messages about the "rules" for boys and girls, as well as the consequences for violating them. By learning about the diversity of genders, children have an opportunity to explore a greater range of interests, ideas and activities. For all children, the pressure of "doing gender correctly," is greatly reduced, creating more space for them to discover new talents and interests.

Whether in or out of professional care, children will encounter other children exhibiting wide ranges of gender expression. This is normal and, with a little reflection, we can all recognize it as something we encountered during our own childhoods. Tomboys or shy, sensitive boys, are commonly recognized examples of children who buck societal expectations of gender expression. These children, and all children, deserve a safe, supportive learning environment in which they can thrive and empower themselves.

When we discuss gender, we talk about what people like to wear, the activities they engage in, and how they feel about themselves. This is not sexuality. Sexuality involves physical intimacy and attraction. Gender is about self identity. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of where they fit on the gender spectrum. This includes all kids, "typically" gendered or not.

If responding to questions that arise about physical sex, the discussion uses phrases such as "private parts," and even if anatomical terms come up, nothing specific to human reproduction or sexuality is taught. For the most part, children simply do not raise these questions. While as adults, we struggle to separate the ideas of gender and sexuality (primarily because many were taught that they are one and the same), children have an ability to grasp the complexity of gender diversity because sexuality does not factor in to complicate their understanding.

Our children encounter people with different beliefs when they join any community. While one aim for learning about diversity is to become more accepting of those around us, not everyone is going to be best friends. That does not mean, however, that they can't get along and learn together. The purpose of learning about gender diversity is to demonstrate that children are unique and that there is no single way to be a boy or a girl. If a child does not agree with or understand another child's gender identity or expression, they do not have to change how they feel inside about it. However, they also do not get to make fun of, harass or harm someone either! Gender diversity education is about teaching children to live and work with others; it comes down to the simple agreement that all children must be treated with kindness and respect.

Scenario 4:

Explain that you are learning about this, too. It is important, however, to monitor and understand your own feelings before you initiate this kind of conversation. Children can pick up on your feelings towards a subject. So, if you are still feeling uncomfortable about the concept of gender diversity and sexual orientation, then consider taking additional time to increase your understanding. Read, talk to others, and further educate yourself. When you have a greater understanding and increased awareness, then you will likely feel more confident to talk with your children.

Answer children's questions simply, and let them take the lead in how deep the conversation goes. Most children are satisfied with this approach. They will guide the conversation from there and rarely ask the complex questions that occur to adults. You may be surprised at how simply children navigate this terrain. Some parents have found responses such as, "Hmmm, I am just learning about that myself. Let me tell you what I know, and then if you would like to learn more, maybe we could do that together," to help open up pathways for further discussion.

Scenario 5:

It is powerful to share with children when we don't know the answer to something, and to let them know that adults as well as children are always learning. Having conversations with your children that reflect your growing understanding is wonderful. It does not undermine your parenting. If you were to discover that you had unknowingly taught your child another form of misinformation about other people, you would correct the impression you had mistakenly given them. With gender, it is no different. Gender diversity is something that both society and science are just beginning to explore and understand.

| 2.2.2. Activity name	Sam's Story
Purpose of the activity	This activity helps educators understand the importance of family support for children of non-conforming gender identities.
Learning outcomes	■ explain the impact of family dynamics, cultural norms, religious beliefs, and so–cietal attitudes on the acceptance and affirmation of diverse sexual orienta–tions and gender identities within families ■ understand the potential challenges, barriers and consequences that LGBTI–QA+ individuals may face within family and social systems ■ support parents and caregivers in affirming and validating their children's gen–der identity and sexual orientation, and providing resources and guidance for fostering positive communication and acceptance within the family ■ promote equality, dignity, and respect for all family members, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and advocating for inclusive family envi–ronments that celebrate diversity

Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study
	☐ Work in pairs ☐ Presentation ☐ Role playing
	☐ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz
	☒ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy
	    ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise
	    ☒ Story ☐ Play
	    ☐ Round table ☐ Other
	    ☐ Problem solving _____

Timeframe for activity	60 minutes
Resources required	Activity sheet for each student (Attachment 1), projector and laptop (or Interacti–ve Whiteboard), pens, internet connection, link to "Sam's Story" YouTube video, guidelines for the trainer (Attachment 2)
Instruction:	1. Introduce the activity explaining that you will watch a short video together and to pay close attention. 2. Watch the video and pass an activity sheet (Attachment 1) to each participant. 3. Ask them to fill in the activity sheet. 4. After 10 minutes, ask if there is anyone who would like to share their answers, making sure to ask for explanations (i.e., "Why is that an event that made you sad?") to bring to light possible prejudices on the topic. 5. Thank them and proceed to play the video again, informing participants that this time you will stop it to comment on each segment associated with a ver–sion of Sam and with a reality that may be experienced by a gender–noncon–forming child. 6. Stop the video following the sequences indicated in Attachment 2 and com–ment on each sequence. 7. At the end of the video and after explanations, ask participants if they would be able to support a family through similar experiences. 8. Ask participants if they feel like they learned something new and if they need further clarification.
Comments	Link to YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdl9SIjy8sc The attachments for this activity were extrapolated from the Pedagogical Guide for Elementary School "Hi Sam – Sensitizing Youth Through Play", from Gender Creative Kids (www.gendercreativekids.com).

ATTACHMENT 1

| What I've seen…	What made me happy…
What made me sad…	**Tonight, I will remember…**

ATTACHMENT 2

Happy [0:00 to 0:25]

- The first step is Sam's birth.

- In this step, Sam is given what we call a "sex assigned at birth".

- When Sam is born, just like you and me, the doctor assigns them a sex based on their physical characteristics: the vulva or the penis. The doctor therefore tells the parents whether Sam is a boy or a girl. Sam is given what we call a "sex assigned at birth".

- Sam, being a baby, does not have a say over this decision.

- However, their life as a baby is happy because Sam has everything they need: they have food, a roof over their head and their family loves them.
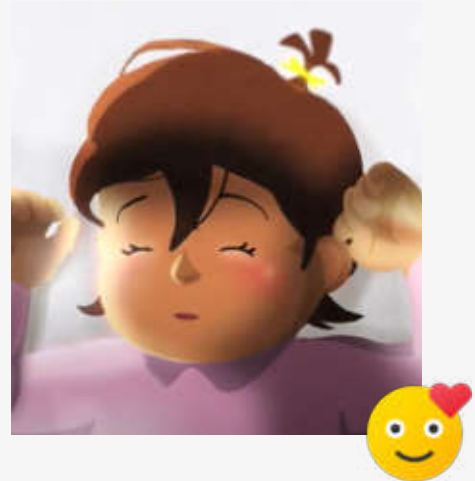

Exploring [0:25 to 0:57]

- This step is where Sam is curious and starts exploring their interests, their identity and their gender expression.

- During this stage, just like all children do, Sam starts exploring their interests and building their identity and their gender expression through clothes, behaviours, toy preferences and their appearances. As we have seen in previous activities, there are endless ways to express one's gender. In addition, what is associated with boys and with girls changes from one culture to another.

- Some children, like Sam, can be gender creative and have certain interests and/or a gender expression that do not follow the feminine or masculine gender stereotypes.

- Generally speaking, it is Sam's parents who decide on the gender that Sam can express in public by choosing Sam's clothes and hairstyle for them. For example, Sam's parents want Sam to wear dresses, but Sam prefers wearing a construction worker costume and to draw a moustache on.
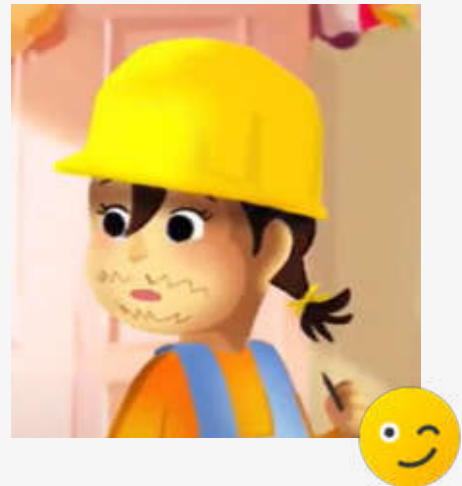
Questioning [0:57 to 1:35]

- In the video we can see that Sam is going through a rough situation with their school peers. Sam, who would like to participate in an activity with boys their age, is not picked to be a part of any of the teams. Sam is confused when other students laugh at them because from Sam's point of view, it's absolutely normal to want to participate in those activities. Sam feels sad and angry. Sam ends up in a fight and the principal calls in their parents.

- While we may be tempted to assume that this is a common conflict that happens between students, such a situation can sometimes be a manifestation of a child going through internal questioning related to their gender identity, meaning the strong feeling inside them that tells them if they are a girl, a boy, or non-binary, which is a person who is neither a boy nor a girl, or a mix of both. Here, it is the exclusion from a group that Sam wants to be a part of that causes this emotion.

- As we may see, Sam is questioning themselves about their gender identity: is their gender identity really what was assigned to them at birth? Could everyone around them be wrong?

- These questions can leave a child confused and can sometimes be very distressing: Sam's emotions are boiling, a little like boiling water overflowing out of a pot. Sam starts feeling like something's wrong and they can't seem to fit in with their classmates because their gender expression is viewed as "different" from the others.

- All this questioning is distressing to Sam. While some children in the same situation might tend to withdraw and isolate themselves more and more, others will express their emotions through so-called aggressive behaviour, like insults, screaming, physical violence, etc.

- Other tough situations may contribute to the negative feelings felt by children who are in the same situation as Sam: bullying, harassment in bathrooms, rejection, being forced to wear clothing that doesn't reflect their identity, receiving gifts that are the opposite of what their tastes and interests are, etc
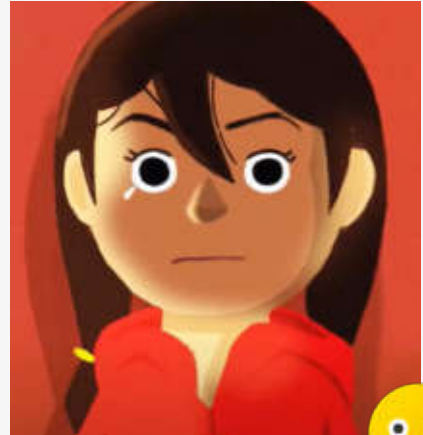
Conflicted [1:35 to 1:58]

- Questioning one's gender identity can often lead to feeling internally conflicted. In Sam's case, they feel different from their friends at school. They are asking themselves questions not only about their gender identity, but also about their gender expression, meaning the way they express their identity through their clothes, their haircut, etc.

- Sam is asking themselves whether the gender identity they feel like expressing every day really corresponds to what was assigned to them at birth. Sam therefore feels conflicted because they know, inside their heart, that the identity that was assigned to them at birth does not exactly correspond to the way they feel inside. Sam doesn't understand why they can't live their life as their authentic identity and express themselves however they choose.

- This is something that happens to all trans children and youth. Essentially, a trans person is someone who's gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. For example, a trans girl was assigned boy at birth, and a trans boy was assigned girl at birth.

- Sam doesn't know who to talk to and thinks that no one will understand them. They start questioning everything and hiding their feelings.

- Sam, like many other children, tries to alter their appearance to make it correspond to their authentic identity. We see Sam cutting their hair.
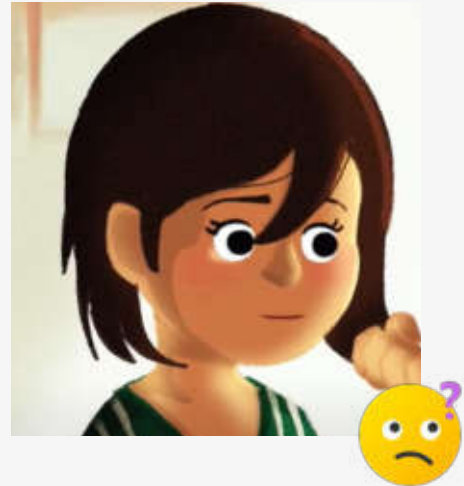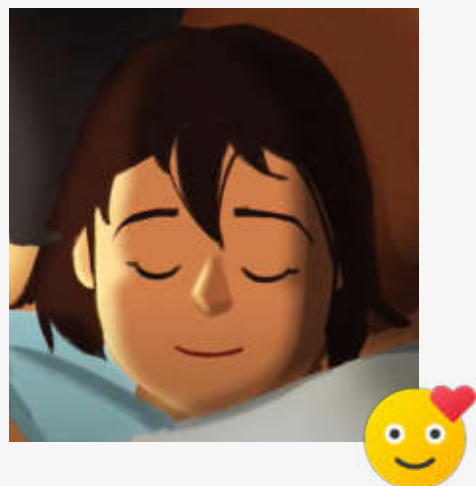
Isolated [1:58 to 02:35]

- As we can see, Sam is isolated and rejected by the friends at school.

- Sam is bullied and excluded by the others. Sam feels lonely and a lot of other negative emotions. It is very difficult.

- Sam experiences what a lot of trans people unfortunately experience: transphobia. Transphobia refers to any kind of hatred of, prejudice against or rejection of trans people. For example, insulting or rejecting a friend because they are trans or gender creative is an instance of transphobia.

- Sam tends to isolate themselves and avoid talking about their emotions to other people. Deep inside, Sam is uncomfortable with the idea of growing up. Sam feels like nobody can understand them and that they will never be able to be who they really are. Sam would like things to be different.

- Thankfully, there is something that could help Sam: Sam talks to people they trust to better understand what's happening. Their parents also get help to better understand and support their child.
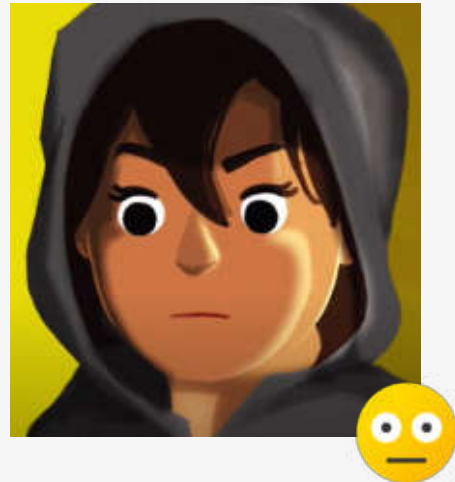
Supported [2:35 to 3:05]

- In this step, we see that Sam can finally be whole. Thanks to their parents' love, Sam feels comfortable living and expressing their authentic gender identity and expression.

- Sam now knows that everyone is allowed to express themselves freely and that they are entitled to respect from everyone, including their classmates, their family and the school staff.

- During this stage, the support Sam gets from their family and friends is very important to their wellbeing. Sam is happy to have had people listen and support them and they feel good inside their heart.

2.2.3. Activity name	Rainbow Shadows
Purpose of the activity	This activity helps professionals understand the emotions of children and families going through gender-related experiences and gain practical strategies to support families on their path.
Learning outcomes	▪ identify appropriate communication strategies when interacting with families ▪ identify the main defense mechanisms and resistances that families could enact ▪ explain the impact of family dynamics, cultural norms, religious beliefs, and societal attitudes on the acceptance and affirmation of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities within families ▪ support parents and caregivers in affirming and validating their children's gender identity and sexual orientation, and providing resources and guidance for fostering positive communication and acceptance within the family ▪ act as a mediator during the interaction between a child and family members around the topic of gender identity and sexual orientation ▪ empathize towards family members who may be struggling to accept or understand LGBT-QIA+ identities, recognizing that change and growth require patience and support ▪ promote equality, dignity, and respect for all family members, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and advocating for inclusive family environments that celebrate diversity

Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☒ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☒ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other: Video

Timeframe for activity	60 minutes
Resources required	Projector and laptop (or Interactive Whiteboard), internet connection, link to "My Shadow is Pink" YouTube video, flipboard, notes for the trainer (Attachment 1).
Instruction:	1. Introduce the activity explaining that you will watch a short video together and to pay close attention. 2. Ask participants their first impression of what they saw. 3. Ask them to list the emotions of the child and the father and write them on the flipboard. 4. Ask participants what they think the message conveyed by the video is. 5. Ask them what messages they think educators should convey to families to support them in their experiences related to gender diversity. 6. Provide participants with examples of best practices to guide families in achieving gender equality (Attachment 1) 7. Ask participants if they feel like they learned something new and if they need further clarification.
Comments	Link to YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIwaQGHB1LU This video is inspired by the book "My Shadow is Pink" by Scott Stewart. The text can be used for early childhood education activities or as a reading suggestion for families.

ATTACHMENT 1

FOR TRAINERS

Concepts to keep in mind while conducting the activity

Games and toys are tools that teach values:

- There are no toys for boys or girls, only social labels that limit creativity.

- Children learn by playing.

- The choice of toys must reflect the diversity of each person: we are all the same, we are all different.

- By guiding in a good choice of toys you are also educating (both families and children).

- Choose toys that favor children's cooperation and space sharing, at daycare and at home.

- Toys, games and activities must help promote the full spectrum of personal competencies (cognitive, social–emotional, physical, etc.), supporting both quiet games and those that require physical activity for children of all genders and sexes.

- Look for games and toys that promote equal participation.

Gender education objectives:

- To encourage and promote mutual respect between all children, recognizing that all people are unique, with their own abilities and potential.

- To live with values of equality, avoiding discrimination based on sex.

- To highlight the need to modify sexist models and prejudices based on the idea of inferiority or superiority of one sex or the other.

- To develop skills for coexistence, educating towards tolerance and promoting attitudes contrary to violence.

- To teach how to resolve conflicts without violence.

- To promote the development of emotional intelligence.

- To strengthen self–esteem, recognize one's own emotions and develop empathy towards other people.

- To develop assertiveness. It is important to know how to say "no."

To educate a "new masculinity":

- Integrate emotional education with a gender perspective so that all children can show and manage their emotions in a free and healthy way (freeing little boys from unrealistic expectations of strength and emotional control).

- Facilitate cooperative, co–responsible, peaceful and liberating models of masculinity.

- Invite children to be free in choosing toys, colors, leisure activities and life expectations.

- Teach children to collaborate in domestic work and care from the first years of life. Educating from co–responsibility favors children's autonomy and self–care.

- Promote the creation of spaces and activities shared with children of all genders so that they learn to create bonds based on equality, affection and respect (instead of choosing "things for boys" and "things for girls").

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TEACHING UNIT 2.3.

A SHIFT OF UNDERSTANDING: FROM PREJUDICES, STEREOTYPES AND DISCRIMINATION TO RESPECT

THEORY INPUT

This theoretical framework outlines a multi-faceted approach to transforming societal attitudes from prejudiced and discriminatory perspectives to one characterized by respect and understanding. It integrates theories from social psychology, education, and conflict resolution, aiming to foster inclusive environments that celebrate diversity. In general, a shift from prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination to respect involves a transformative journey that emphasizes empathy, education, and open dialogue.

Having understood the differences between gender identity and sexual orientation described in teaching unit 2.1., it is important to focus on the origin of prejudice. On the one hand, according to the **Social Identity Theory**, individuals derive part of their identity from the groups they belong to, leading to in-group favoritism and out-group bias. On the other hand, regarding (referring to) **Cognitive Dissonance**, people experience discomfort when their beliefs do not align with their actions, leading to rationalizations that reinforce prejudices.

In this sense, the theoretical foundations for change have been seen from different perspectives. Firstly, the **Social Learning Theory** emphasizes that behaviors, including prejudiced attitudes, are learned through observation and reinforcement; so, by promoting positive role models and inclusive narratives, individuals can adopt more respectful attitudes. Then, the **Contact Hypothesis** proposes that under appropriate conditions, direct contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice; key conditions include equal status, cooperation, and common goals. Finally, the **Transformative Learning Theory** focuses on critical reflection and experiential learning; encouraging individuals to question their assumptions and engage in dialogue can promote a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives.

Consequently, setting certain (specific) strategies for change in different fields is crucial.

Education and Awareness

Implement educational programs that address biases, stereotypes, and discrimination. Curriculum should include history, culture, and contributions of marginalized groups.

Workshops on emotional intelligence and empathy can help individuals understand and respect diverse experiences.

Empathy Building

Encouraging individuals to step into others' shoes can create deeper connections and understanding.

Storytelling, shared experiences, and personal narratives can help break down barriers.

Encouraging Dialogue

Facilitate structured dialogues that bring together individuals from different backgrounds. Use mediators to guide discussions and ensure that all voices are heard.

Create safe spaces for sharing personal narratives, fostering empathy and understanding.

Policy and Structural Change

Advocate for policies that promote diversity and inclusion in workplaces, schools carecenters, and communities. This includes anti–discrimination laws and affirmative action initiatives.

Establish accountability measures for organizations to ensure they foster inclusive environments.

Challenging Stereotypes

Actively confronting stereotypes in everyday situations—whether in media, workplace dynamics, or personal interactions—can help dismantle harmful assumptions.

Celebrating Diversity

Recognizing and appreciating the strengths that come from diverse backgrounds fosters a culture of respect.

Celebrations of different cultures, traditions, and perspectives can enhance community bonds.

All in all, shifting from prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination to respect requires a comprehensive and sustained effort involving education, dialogue, and structural change. By applying these theoretical foundations and strategies, individuals and communities can cultivate a culture of respect that values diversity and fosters understanding. Through collective action, society can move towards a more inclusive future.

Anyway, moving towards a more respectful society requires commitment and collaboration from everyone. It's about creating an environment where all individuals feel valued and understood

Resources for Further Reading
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Activity Resources

2.3.1. Activity name	Identity Swap
Purpose of the activity	The activity will help to understand the impact of prejudice and discrimination by experiencing a different identity and reflecting on how respect should transcend differences.
Learning outcomes	■ create affirming and inclusive environments for children to explore and express their gender identity and sexual orientation without fear of judgment or discrimination

Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study
	☐ Work in pairs ☐ Presentation ☒ Role playing
	☒ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz
	☒ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy
	  ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise
	  ☐ Story ☐ Play
	  ☒ Round table ☐ Other _____
	  ☐ Problem solving

Timeframe for activity	75 minutes
Resources required	Paper and pens, a comfortable space for group discussion, and printed cards with different sexual orientations and gender identity traits.
Instruction:	1. Provide participants with printed cards with different sexual orientations and gender identity traits. 2. Ask them to write down one or two aspects of their gender identity that they feel define who they are. This can include things that might be visible (e. g. gender) or invisible (e. g. sexual orientation). 3. Explain to the participants they will have to "swap" their identities with other partici-pants in the room. To do this, they will write a card (either pre-made or from the cards provided) describing a specific identity different from their own. 4. Participants will pretend to be that person for 10–15 minutes, reflecting on how society might perceive them and how others might treat them based on that identity. 5. After the role-play, encourage participants to discuss their feelings and thoughts.
Comments	Reinforce the message that respecting people without prejudice or discrimination requi-res ongoing effort, self-awareness, and empathy. An optional extension could be to create a diversity wall, where participants can write down their contributions to a respectful and inclusive community.

2.3.2. Activity name	What Would You Do If...
Purpose of the activity	The activity will help participants to practice empathy and active listening when engaging with people about gender identity and sexual orientation. Additionally, it will foster under-standing and respect for diverse sexual orientations without judgment or discrimination.

Learning outcomes	▪ evaluate personal biases including linguistic bias to ensure that interactions with children are fair, equitable, and respectful ▪ challenge gender norms and address instances of gender-based discrimination or bias in children's interactions, using teachable moments to promote empathy, understanding, and respect

Interactive method/technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study
	☐ Work in pairs ☐ Presentation ☒ Role playing
	☒ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz
	☒ Group work ☐ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy
	  ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise
	  ☐ Story ☐ Play
	  ☐ Round table ☐ Other _____
	  ☐ Problem solving

Timeframe for activity	60 minutes
Resources required	A set of "situation cards" with various scenarios related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and social interactions (attachment 1); notepads and pens for reflection; and a comfortable and quiet space for small group discussions and role-playing.

Instruction:	1. Divide participants into small groups (3–4 per group) and provide each group with a set of scenario cards. These cards will contain different situations where participants have to engage with others about their gender identity or sexual orientation. Examples of scenario cards could include:
	  ▪ A friend confides in you that they are coming out as bisexual and feel unsure about how to share this with their family.
	  ▪ You overhear a colleague making inappropriate jokes about someone's gender expression.
	  ▪ Someone asks you if you know anyone who is 'gay' and what that means to you.
	  ▪ You meet a new person who introduces themselves as non-binary, and you feel unsure how to address them.
	  ▪ A person discloses that they are in a same-sex relationship and asks for your opinion."
	2. Assign one participant in each group to act as the "individual" in the scenario (who may be coming out, being discriminated against, or sharing their identity), while the other group participants role-play as people interacting with them. The group should act out the scenario, practicing respectful communication, active listening, and inclusive language. For instance, when someone discloses their sexual orientation, the role-playing participants should focus on responding with support and without making assumptions.
	3. After each role-play (5–7 minutes per scenario), participants switch roles, so everyone has a chance to play different parts.
	4. Once all the scenarios have been role-played, bring the group back together for a facilitated discussion. Possible questions for reflection could be:
	  ▪ What was your initial reaction to the scenario, and how did you navigate your feelings or assumptions during the role-play?
	  ▪ How did it feel to be in the position of the person disclosing their gender identity or sexual orientation?
	  ▪ What kind of language or behavior helped make the conversation more respectful and supportive?
	  ▪ Did any part of the activity challenge your beliefs or assumptions? How so?
	  ▪ What strategies can you use in real life to ensure you are creating inclusive and non-judgmental environments for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?

Comments	Encourage participants to commit to at least one action they will take to support gender and sexual orientation diversity in their personal or professional lives.

ATTACHMENT 1

SCENARIO 1

"A friend confides in you that they are coming out as bisexual and feel unsure about how to share this with their family."

SCENARIO 2

"You overhear a colleague making inappropriate jokes about someone's gender expression*."

* Gender expression is the way in which a person outwardly presents their gender identity. It is typically manifested through name and pronouns (i.e., 'she/her', 'he/him', 'they/them') and/or the way people choose to dress, speak or conduct themselves socially. It does not necessarily reveal a person's sexual orientation or gender.

SCENARIO 3

"Someone asks you if you know anyone who is 'gay' and what that means to you."

SCENARIO 4

"You meet a new person who introduces themselves as non-binary, and you feel unsure how to address them."

SCENARIO 5

"A person discloses that they are in a same-sex relationship and asks for your opinion."

2.3.3. Activity name	Case Studies in Gender and Sexuality
Purpose of the activity	The aim of the activity is to engage participants in a deep exploration of the concepts of justice, fairness, and equity, focusing on gender identities and sexual orientations, while considering how these principles apply in diverse social and educational contexts.
Learning outcomes	▪ support critical thinking about justice and fairness in the context of diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☒ Group work ☒ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☒ Problem solving ☒ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	45 minutes
Resources required	Case study handouts (real–life or fictionalized scenarios), whiteboard and markers, and computers or tablets (optional).
Instruction:	1. Distribute different case study handouts that describe situations in school/carecenters or workpla–ce that involve issues related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and fairness. Exam–ple scenarios could include: ■ Case 1: A transgender student faces bullying after coming out and requests to be ad–dressed by their correct name and pronouns. The educator struggles with how to handle the bullying and how to engage other students on respect and inclusivity. ■ Case 2: A school/carecenter policy requires all students to wear gender–specific uniforms. A non–binary student challenges the policy, seeking a uniform option that aligns with their identity. ■ Case 3: A lesbian educator is excluded from a professional development event due to the school's/carecenter's conservative stance on LGBTQ+ issues. The educator feels that this exclu–sion is discriminatory and seeks support from colleagues. 2. Ask participants to work in small groups (3–4) to discuss the case, identifying the justice and fairness issues involved; and brainstorm potential actions or solutions, considering how to address these issues equitably and respectfully. 3. After small group discussions, reconvene as a whole group to share the main justice/fairness issue identified, the action(s) proposed and why.
Comments	An optional extension could be to conclude by inviting participants to reflect on the activity: What new insights did you gain about gender, sexuality, and fairness?

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TEACHING UNIT 2.4.

METHODS OF PROVIDING AN EMOTIONALLY SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

THEORY INPUT

Emotionally supportive environments in early years education are settings where children feel safe, valued and nurtured. These environments promote positive emotional and social development by providing children with the security and support they need to explore, learn, and grow.

Key characteristics of emotionally supportive environments include:

1. **Safe and Secure Atmosphere**: Ensuring that children feel physically and emotionally safe. This involves creating a stable and predictable environment where children know what to expect and feel protected from harm or distress, implementing consistent daily routines and clear expectations.

2. **Positive Relationships and Responsive Care**: Building strong, positive relationships between educators and children. This includes showing warmth, affection, and responsiveness to children's needs and emotions. Educators should be approachable and attentive, fostering trust and connection. This involves recognizing and accommodating each child's unique emotional and developmental needs, providing personalized support when necessary.

3. **Emotional Validation**: Acknowledging and validating children's emotions. Educators should listen to children, empathize with their feelings, and help them understand and express their emotions in healthy ways.

4. **Social Skills Development**: Teaching and modeling positive social skills. Educators should help children learn how to interact respectfully with others, resolve conflicts, and build friendships. Modeling empathy and compassion in interactions. Educators should demonstrate caring behavior and encourage children to be kind and understanding towards others.

5. **Inclusive Practices**: Creating an inclusive environment where all children feel accepted and valued regardless of their background, abilities, or identities. This includes celebrating diversity and fostering a sense of belonging for every child.

6. **Supportive Communication**: Using supportive and constructive communication. Educators should use positive language, avoid criticism, and provide guidance in a way that encourages children.

7. **Parental Involvement**: Engaging parents and caregivers in the educational process. Strong partnerships with families help reinforce a child's sense of security and continuity between home and care environments.

By fostering emotionally supportive environments, early years educators can help children develop a strong foundation for emotional well-being, resilience and social competence, which are crucial for their overall development and future success.

Some of the most forward–thinking approaches which support this kind of environments are:

1. **Reggio Emilia Approach**
2. **Montessori Method**
3. **Forest Schools**
4. **Waldorf Education**
5. **Emergent Curriculum**
6. **Loose Parts Theory**
7. **Play–Based Learning**
8. **Attachment–Based Approach**

These innovative theories share a common belief in the importance of nurturing a child's natural curiosity, creativity, and intrinsic motivation to learn.

In order to create a gender–responsive, emotionally supportive environment, professionals should reflect on the following aspects (UNESCO, 2019):

- **Gender Biases**
  They reinforce stereotypes and thus influence expectations and learning outcomes. Being conscious of own beliefs, attitudes and practices is important for improving educational processes.

- **Implicit and Explicit Curriculum**
  Professionals should keep in mind the importance of dismantling gender prejudices and stereotypes in their everyday practice to prevent inequalities. For instance, through the use of thought–provoking questions on gender roles, by checking the implicit messages present in books, songs, posters and rhymes and modifying them when necessary and by planning emotional education activities.

- **Seating Arrangements in Class**
  The way in which the learners and the classroom are arranged influences learners' involvement and learning outcomes. Working in groups is believed to encourage the equal participation of all learners. When children get the chance to play and learn with their peers, they develop skills for interacting effectively and comfortably with any gender. Girls and boys should be mixed, their participation encouraged, and their specific needs and interests should be considered.

- **Play Areas and Materials**
  Their set-up influences how attractive they are to different genders and which activities children engage in. Areas and materials should be gender neutral and encourage exploration and discovery of different skills, they should be strategically positioned to encourage the use of every area (e.g., construction area next to symbolic play area). However, advertisements, companies and shops often make toys gender specific, causing some children to avoid playing with materials advertised for the other sex. When play materials appeal to one gender only, all learners miss out because a variety of experiences with different materials will help them learn a wider range of skills and develop holistically. Gender-specific play materials may also influence learners' understanding of stereotyped male and female roles.

- **Gender-Responsive Language**
  The use of language, including non-verbal body language like gestures and facial and eye expressions and the use of preferred pronouns, can make all learners feel respected and valued, which will serve as encouragement and can improve learners' performance. On the contrary, inappropriate use of language can transmit negative gender biases and messages that may prevent learning.

- **Interpersonal Interactions**
  Studies have shown that children prefer to mix with their own gender. However, in most cases, they do not dislike or want to avoid other genders but instead simply favor their own. Young learners begin to believe that some activities are for girls and others for boys through observing older learners and other people who unconsciously pass on their beliefs and behaviours about gender roles. As crossing the gender barrier often takes courage for children, adult encouragement and support in this direction are very important: when children have many different playmates and try different activities, they build skills to interact and function successfully in other situations. Changes in school/carecenter organization and culture towards gender sensitivity and equality require the action and commitment of all educators, guided by the leadership of the school/carecenter. Educators' interactions with each other should also be considered as they can either reinforce or reduce stereotypical behavior: the way educators interact with different genders influences children's perceptions of gender roles in educational environments and in society.

- **Assessment**
  It is useful to gather and provide educators, parents and families critical information about a child's development and growth. The information coming from assessment can also be used to adapt the environment and learning activities to the child's specific needs. Doing so can result in more efficient teaching and, eventually, in better learning outcomes. Observation and assessment also offer a chance to positively address gender interactions and to note and praise desired behaviors such as gender-sensitive play behavior: it is important to keep in mind that receiving encouragement can further motivate children towards equality, empathy and respect.

Resources for Further Reading

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Activity Resources

2.4.1. Activity name	Tina's Dilemma
Purpose of the activity	The activity will help to create gender–sensitive and emotionally supportive environments by finding possible solutions to real work challenges in early years education.
Learning outcomes	■ understand the role of childcare professionals in establishing emotionally supportive and safe environments where children can be themselves without fear of judgment or discrimination. ■ embrace diversity and challenge own biases in relation to LGBTIQA+ individuals and families. ■ engage childcare professionals in open, non–judgmental, and gender–responsive conversations, both with children and colleagues.

Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☒ Case study
	☐ Work in pairs ☐ Presentation ☐ Role playing
	☒ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz
	☐ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy
	  ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise
	  ☐ Story ☐ Play
	  ☐ Round table ☐ Other _____
	  ☒ Problem solving

Timeframe for activity	45 minutes
Resources required	Printed case study with four intervention options for each participant, Printed "A" "B" "C" and "D" letters each on A4 paper
Instruction:	Give each participant a sheet with the following case study and four intervention options: "Clara is an early years educator and works in a nursery. One day, an almost 3 years old little girl, hugging a female friend in class, tells Clara that she loved her friend and that she was her girlfriend. Clara, after having listened to the little girl, stiffens and corrects her, qualifying that statement as nonsense and telling her that at most she could have a boyfriend when she grew up. During lunch break, the incident is told to other colleagues in the form of a funny anecdote and is dismissed with general laughter at the absurdity of the little girl's statement. Clara also comments that "it's crazy how they start so young". Tina, her colleague, asks herself how to approach the situation. What do you think Tina should do? A: Tina does not have to intervene in any way because she was not present when the situa–tion occurred. (If you agree, go to corner A) B: Tina should talk to the little girl about the beautiful gesture of affection she had had for her friend, tell her that love can be directed towards everyone and that she could love who–ever she wants, as long as they treat her well. (If you agree, go to corner B)

| | C: Tina should discuss with her colleagues that spontaneous gestures of affection have no reason to be slowed down or corrected. (If you agree, go to corner C)

D: Tina should suggest a group supervision with an expert to learn how to deal with these situations in the future. (If you agree, go to corner D)
1. Place each printed letter in four different corners of the room.
2. Give participants 5 minutes to read the case study and to picture themselves in the situation.
3. Ask each participant to place themselves in the corner of the room corresponding to the option chosen.
4. Note the most chosen option and explain that it is quite natural for people to have different points of view in the same situation, and that is why we need to educate ourselves on the competences needed to create emotionally supportive environments.
5. Ask participants to discuss and write down the reasons for their choice within their group.
6. Ask participants to discuss and write down which possible problems could arise from their choice.
7. Ask each group, starting from answer "A", to present the results of their choice and discussion.
8. Facilitate the discussion of different points of view and act as a mediator between opposite opinions.
9. For more clarity, note the keywords emerging from the discussion on a flipboard.
10. Note that option "D" is the most suitable to create emotionally supportive environments.
11. Explain how, according to recent studies and theories, emotionally supportive environments must satisfy certain characteristics.
12. Show the following characteristics implied in the choice of option D:
   ■ be aware that the individual's beliefs and mental patterns influence the holistic development of the child
   ■ be aware that your educational approach can deconstruct or reinforce stereotypes and prejudices, impacting the child's vision of itself
   ■ reflect on own competences and those of the group
   ■ know when to turn to external experts
   ■ structure interventions shared by the whole team
   ■ acquire and share good practices and gender-responsive conversation methods |
| **Comments** | Ask the participants how they felt during the exercise, if there was anything that surprised them and if they empathized with any of the characters and if they feel the need to receive more information on the topic.
End the activity by asking participants if any of them want to move to another corner in the room. |

2.4.2. Activity name	The Worried Parent
Purpose of the activity	This activity helps participants learn how to provide emotionally supportive environments and face challenging situations with families that can arise in everyday educational practice.
Learning outcomes	■ explain different ways of how children may explore and express their gender identity ■ showing empathy to family members who may be struggling to accept or understand different gender identities or sexual orientations ■ identify appropriate communication strategies when interacting with families ■ explain the role of childcare professionals in establishing an environment that values gender diversity
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☒ Case study ☒ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	60 minutes
Resources required	Case study (Attachment 1), solution of case study (Attachment 2), projector, flipchart, markers.
Instruction:	1. Project the case study (Attachment 1) on a screen or wall. Give participants a few minutes to read it. 2. Divide participants into three groups through a quick game: ask them to choose an ideal coffee to start their day (strong espresso, calm cappuccino, long americano). Those who don't drink coffee can choose the "mood" that represents them. 3. Ask each group to divide in half: one half plays the role of the worried parent and the other half plays the role of the educators facing the situation. 4. Ask participants to start a dialogue within their group, impersonating the two roles, inviting them to ask questions and answer them as if they were living the situation in that moment. 5. Ask them to write down any suggestions on how to solve the educators' challenge. After 10 minutes, thank the groups and go to the flipchart. 6. Ask each group how they felt during the role playing, which competencies, strategies and possible solutions they felt the educators needed in order to face the challenge and write them on the flipchart. 7. Ask participants if they would feel able to take on this challenge with the skills they currently have if they feel the need to increase their training on this topic. 8. Project the solution adopted in the case study (Attachment 2) Ask participants if they feel like they learned something new and if they need further clarification.
Comments	This activity can be implemented by asking participants to reflect on how these issues are influenced by the cultural context (i.e., reflecting on the phenomenon for which the masculine traits of girls are more accepted than the feminine traits of boys).

ATTACHMENT 1:

Case Study

During dress-up play in a daycare, a child preferred to wear typically feminine clothes and accessories. After sending photographs to parents through a management app, an educator encountered resistance from a family, who asked to inhibit their child's free choice, directing him towards the selection of clothing items that conformed to his biological sex.

Question

How would you intervene to create an emotionally supportive environment?

ATTACHMENT 2:

Solution

To face this educational challenge, the daycare educators organized a meeting open to all parents in which they brought to light the stereotypes associated with gender that are commonly applied to the choice of colors, clothing, games, activities and future aspirations of children.

They also underlined the influence that culture and society have in reinforcing these biases, for example, they questioned the motivation for the greater acceptance of these behaviors when performed by children who were assigned the female biological sex at birth, therefore they discussed why in our society the "tomboy" behavior of a girl is more culturally accepted than the "effeminate" behavior of a boy.

After a discussion, the educators also expressed the need for examples of literature easily accessible to parents and interventions by psychologists to deconstruct stereotypes and help parents intercept and read the fears they develop when they encounter behaviors in their children that do not conform to the gender assigned at birth, as they very often interpret them as predictors of a future non-heterologous sexual orientation.

They thought the combination of these strategies ensured an environment in which children's freedom of expression was respected and parents' fears and difficulties addressed, making sure children and the entire family system received emotional support for growth and development.

2.4.3. Activity name	Video Surprise!
Purpose of the activity	Help educators foster gender-inclusive environments by deepening their knowledge of gender roles and their impact on children's lives.
Learning outcomes	- stay up to date with gender vocabulary and inclusive teaching methods - apply strategies to make children feel comfortable with themselves and each other and be able to develop friendships based on their shared interests - explain the role of childcare professionals in establishing an emotionally supportive and safe environment that values gender diversity
Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☐ Group work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☒ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☒ Other: video
Timeframe for activity	60 minutes
Resources required	Projector and laptop (or Interactive Whiteboard), internet connection, A4 paper, flipchart, markers, crayons, link to YouTube video "A Class That Turned Around Kids' Assumptions of Gender Roles!"
Instruction:	1. Start the activity by inviting each participant to draw a picture of a professional (surgeon, fighter pilot, firefighter, teacher, nurse, etc.). 2. Ask them to also write a name and a short description of the life of the professional that they are going to draw. 3. Give participants 10 minutes for the drawing and description. When they are finished, invite each of them to quickly present the character they drew to the group (depending on the space available, they can also place each drawing on the floor, next to each other, to create a big collage of professionals) 4. When each drawing is presented, tell participants you are going to watch a video together and ask them to pay close attention. 5. Start playing the video "A Class That Turned Around Kids' Assumptions of Gender Roles!" (see link in the Comments section) 6. Stop the video at min 0:50. Ask participants about their thoughts and what is coming to their minds watching this video. After listening to their impressions, resume the reproduction of the video. 7. When finished, invite participants to share their opinions, ideas and doubts on what they saw. 8. Note how, among 66 drawings, only 5 represented women. Ask if they see a similarity with the professionals they drew and reflect on internalized gender roles and stereotypes. 9. Question participants about their role as educators in making a difference and write the keywords on the flipchart. 10. Ask if they can think of similar activities to present to children and try to adapt them for children of different ages and school grades. 11. Lastly, ask if they have any practical examples or real life experiences to share with others.
Comments	Link to YouTube video: https://youtu.be/G3Aweo-74kY?feature=shared The scenario presented in the video can be reproduced in kindergartens or primary schools, as already done by many schools in different countries, among the "#RedrawTheBalance"

campaign and the "Inspire The Future" project run by the "Education and Employers" charity (https://www.inspiringthefuture.org).

When teaching younger children, suggest replacing the drawing part with the reading of a picture book about professions, then invite professionals from the local community to play with children and talk about their jobs in a friendly language. The same could be done with books about LGBTQIA+ families, non–binary children, and so on. Another option could be asking children to draw a family instead of a professional and use the drawings as a starting point for discussion on different kinds of families.

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MODULE III: TRAUMA

UNDERSTANDING OF TRAUMA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES, PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR AND SYMPTOMS DEVELOPED BY CHILDREN

THEORY INPUT

Trauma refers to an emotional response to an event or series of events that disrupt a child's sense of safety, stability, and wellbeing. These events can be physical, emotional, or psychological in nature, and include events, referred as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and maltreatment, violence, household adversity such as parent mental illness, family violence, substance abuse, divorce and the loss of a caregiver. **Other events described as potentially traumatic are accidents, disasters such as floods, fires and earthquakes, bullying and community violence, trauma from illness or exposure to war**. Trauma can be categorized into four main types:

- **Acute Trauma** results from a single, specific event such as an accident, injury, or assault.

- **Chronic Trauma** refers to traumatic experiences that are repeated and prolonged, such as ongoing exposure to family or community violence, abuse and neglect within families, chronic bullying, or a long-term medical issue, poverty, racism, discrimination.

- **Complex Trauma** arises from prolonged or repeated exposure to traumatic events from an early age, such as ongoing abuse or neglect, often occurring within the home or other intimate settings, war events exposure.

- **Transgenerational/Historical Trauma** is explained as cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma.

Understanding Trauma

Trauma is not solely about the event itself but how a child perceives, processes, and reacts to it. The impact of trauma can be profound and long-lasting, influencing a child's development, emotional regulation, and behavior. The brain is responsible for the stress response, which helps the body react to perceived threats. However, trauma overwhelms the system's ability to manage stress, causing children to feel helpless and vulnerable. When a child cannot fight or flee from danger, they may "freeze" or shut down, which is a common response in younger children who are unable to cope in other ways. In the aftermath, the brain's stress response system remains heightened, making everyday situations feel threatening, even when they are not. This leads to long-term effects on a child's ability to regulate emotions and maintain balance, affecting their daily functioning.

Consequences of Trauma in Children

Children process trauma differently from adults, and the impact can vary based on factors like age, cognitive development, previous experiences, the presence of supportive relationships, and the child's resiliency. Trauma in childhood can interfere with brain development, particularly in areas responsible for emotional regulation, impulse control, and social processing, leading to consequences like emotional dysregulation (e.g., outbursts, anxiety, depression, cognitive difficulties (e.g., impaired focus, decision-making, academic struggles, attachment issues (e.g., difficulty trusting caregivers and problems in healthy attachment, behavioral problems (e.g., aggression, withdrawal, defiance, physical symptoms (chroinic aches or sleep disturbances) and risk for future mental health issues.

Patterns of Behavior in Traumatized Children

Children whose families and homes do not provide consistent safety, comfort, and protection may develop ways of coping that allow them to survive and function day to day (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). These coping strategies are generally unconscious responses to perceived threats, and can include: hypervigilance (constant alertness for danger), regression (reverting to earlier developmental stages), avoidance (avoiding trauma reminders), dissociation (emotional detachment from experiences and others), and aggression (anger or violence stemming from fear or powerlessness).

Symptoms of Trauma in Children

The symptoms of trauma can be both emotional and physical and they vary based on the nature and severity of the trauma. Common symptoms include:

1. **Anxiety and Fear**: Frequent worry, nightmares, or intense fears related to the traumatic event.
2. **Depression**: Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and withdrawal from activities or relationships.
3. **PTSD**: Post-traumatic stress disorder may develop in children who have experienced significant trauma. Symptoms include flashbacks, nightmares, and avoidance of reminders of the traumatic event.
4. **Difficulties in Cchool**: Trauma can affect a child's concentration, memory, and ability to engage in academic tasks.
5. **Increased Sensitivity**: Children may become overly sensitive to stimuli, including loud noises or crowded spaces.
6. **Physical Complaints**: Unexplained physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, or chronic fatigue without any identifiable medical cause.

Key Considerations for Professionals Working with Children

Preschool educators who are informed and have sensibility about child trauma are better equipped to create nurturing, responsive, and educational spaces that support all children, especially those who have experienced traumatic events. This foundational understanding and adjustment in work can make a profound difference in the emotional and academic development of young children, making a long-term impact on their life. The following principles should guide practice:

1. **Trauma–Informed Care**: Understanding that trauma affects every aspect of a child's development, professionals must approach care with sensitivity, patience, and awareness of the child's emotional state. Trauma–informed care emphasizes safety, trust, empowerment, and choice.

2. **Building safe Relationships**: Establishing a trusting relationship with the child is crucial. A consistent, compassionate, and predictable adult presence can help the child feel safe and begin to heal. Regaining a feeling of safety is the most important element of a trauma healing journey.

3. **Promoting Resilience**: While trauma can have profound effects, children also possess resilience. Professionals should work to foster positive coping mechanisms, emotional expression, and a sense of agency to help children regain control over their lives. Providing children with opportunities to build resilience capacity at home, in school/carecenter, and within their community is essential to foster improvements in academic learning outcomes and social–emotional development (Neumann, 2023).

4. **Collaborating with Caregivers/Families**: In many cases, caregivers and families may also be affected by trauma or may need support in managing their child's behaviors or their own. Working closely with caregivers is critical in creating a stable environment for recovery.

5. **Professional Training and Support**: Professionals must engage in continuous learning about trauma and its effects, as well as maintain self–care practices to prevent burnout. Cooperation with colleagues and other professionals is also necessary.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2008) recommends following approaches that have been demonstrated to be effective in **helping children deal with traumatic** stress reactions:

- Helping children and caregivers reestablish a safe environment and a sense of safety

- Helping parents and children return to normal routines

- An opportunity to talk about and make sense of the traumatic experience in a safe, accepting environment

- Explaining the trauma and answering questions in an honest but simple and age–appropriate manner

- Teaching techniques for dealing with overwhelming emotional reactions

- Helping the child verbalize feelings rather than engage in inappropriate behavior

- Connecting caregivers to resources to address their needs—young children's level of distress often mirrors their caregiver's level of distress

However, it is essential to emphasize that when a child's behavior and reactions are severe (such as intense hopelessness or fear) or go on for a long time (more than one month) and interfere with a child's functioning, the educator should give referrals for additional help (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008).

In addition to professionals working within the principles, sometimes it is necessary that a mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist, psychotherapist or other mental health professional) evaluate the need, and if necessary, provide some type of mental health intervention.

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Activity Resources

3.1.1. Activity name	Understanding Trauma		
Purpose of the activity	Provide participants with theoretical knowledge regarding trauma, at the same time putting the knowledge in context of their experience and practice.		
Learning outcomes	■ define what trauma is and compare different types of traumas ■ understand the neurobiological impact of trauma on the developing brain, including how exposure to adversity can affect cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning. ■ respect the individual differences in children's responses to trauma, recognizing the need for personalized approaches		
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☒ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☒ Other: <u>video materials</u>
Time frame for activity	30 minutes		
Resources required	Flipchart paper Post-it Markers/crayons Beamer/smartboard		

Instruction	1. Provide each participant with several post-it papers. Ask them to write down any associations they have with the word *TRAUMA*. Encourage them to use as many post-it as needed to capture their thoughts and ideas.
	2. Invite participants to stick their post-it onto a flipchart or large sheet of paper labeled *TRAUMA* at the top. This will create a visual map of their thoughts.
	3. Read through and discuss with participants each post-it, and made following clusters of similar responses:
	  ■ Definitions of Trauma
	  ■ Types of Traumas
	  ■ Behavior Patterns
	  ■ Consequences of Trauma
	  Use this discussion to widen the information and guide participants in learning theoretical facts about trauma and help them develop a deeper understanding of its impact.
	4. Invite participants to watch a video that provides more insights on trauma and developing brain. Play the video using your available device (smartboard, projector, etc.). Video link: <u>https://youtu.be/xYBUY1kZpf8?si=p4Li7t0E8mkY7Q7D</u>
	5. After the video viewing, encourage participants to share their thoughts and reflections. Ask them to connect the content of the video to their professional experiences or personal practices if applicable.
	6. End the session by summarizing key points. This recap will reinforce participants' understanding of trauma and its impact.		

Comment	/		

3.1.2. Activity name	Typical challenging behaviors vs. Trauma related behaviors
Purpose of the activity	The activity will help participants to develop skills for recognizing symptoms and patterns of behavior resulting from trauma in children, and distinguish them from typical develop–mental challenging behaviors.
Learning outcomes	■ identify common symptoms of trauma exhibited by children (differentiate between acu–te and chronic trauma responses) ■ categorize patterns of behavior that may arise as a result of trauma in children ■ utilize effective observation skills to identify and document trauma–related behaviors in children
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Presentation ☐ Role playing ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz ☒ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Story ☐ Play ☐ Round table ☐ Other ☐ Problem solving
Time frame for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	Flipchart Large paper Markers/crayons
Instruction	1. Start with highlighting the importance of distinguishing between typical behavioral challenges and signs of trauma. 2. Ask participants to work in small groups and write down what they think are typical challenging behaviors in preschool children (e.g., tantrums, resistance to authority, etc.) and behaviors that could indicate trauma (e.g., withdrawal, extreme fear respon–ses, self–harming). 3. After a set time, invite each group to share their responses. Write down their answers in two columns on the board: one for *Typical Challenging Behaviors* and one for *Trauma Behaviors*. 4. Take time to further clarify and discuss the difference between typical challenging behavior and those indicative of trauma. Followed this with an in–depth explanation of trauma symptoms and behavior patterns in children. 5. Conclude emphasizing the importance of trauma awareness when working with children.
Comment	This activity can be further developed by role–playing some of the trauma behaviors to which a professional reacts in accordance to recommended methods of providing support and care to children with trauma.

3.1.3. Activity name	Understanding the Child
Purpose of the activity	Activity helps participants to develop sensibility to perceive trauma impact and consequences with children, recognize symptoms and apply trauma–informed practices to create safe and supportive environment for children affected by trauma.
Learning outcomes	▪ identify common symptoms of trauma exhibited by children (differentiate between acute and chronic trauma responses) ▪ list the potential triggers for trauma reactions in children and describe their impact on behavior ▪ categorize patterns of behavior that may arise as a result of trauma in children ▪ utilize effective observation skills to identify and document trauma–related behaviors in children ▪ apply trauma–informed practices to create a safe and supportive environment for children affected by trauma
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☒ Group work ☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☒ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other
Time frame for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	Flipchart Flipchart paper Markers/crayons Beamer Papers with case studies
Instruction	1. Start with a theoretical introduction to trauma–informed practice in early childhood settings. Discuss key principles of trauma informed practice. 2. Continue with dividing participants into small 4 small groups and give each group one case study vignette (Atachment 1). Instruct participants to read the case study, and discuss while completing the table and answering the questions. 3. Have each group present their case and findings in a large group. Invite the whole group to provide their ideas regarding responses/strategies educators could use to adequately respond and support effectively. 4. Close with recap and key points highlighted.
Comment	/

ATTACHMENT 1

These case studies allow for deep reflection on how different types of trauma might manifest in preschool-aged children and provide opportunities for participants to discuss strategies to respond effectively.

Case Study 1: Emily's Fearful Response to Authority

Emily is a 4-year-old girl who has recently joined a new preschool. She is often quiet and reluctant to interact with her peers or educators. When the educator asks her to participate in group activities or gives her instructions, she looks fearful and freezes. On some occasions, when the educator calls her name, Emily starts to cry and runs away, hiding under a table or in a corner. *Complete the table and discuss in groups:*

Possible trauma indicators (behavior):	Sofia's thoughts of herself and the world:
▪ Avoidance of eye contact and refusal to engage with adults or peers.	▪ I am not safe
Discussion Points:	
▪ What role does Sofia's recent experience (eviction) play in her behavior? ▪ How can educators create a safe space for Sofia to feel comfortable re-engaging with others? ▪ How might Sofia's educators use empathy and consistency to help her feel safe and supported in the classroom?	

Case Study 2: Marco's Aggressive Outbursts

Marcus is a 5-year-old boy who frequently has outbursts, especially when it's time for transitions, such as moving from one activity to another. During transitions, he might yell, throw objects, or hit others. He often has trouble controlling his emotions, and these outbursts are more intense than what his peers typically exhibit. When asked about his behavior, Marcus says he doesn't like the change and feels "scared."

Complete the table and discuss in groups:

Possible trauma indicators (behavior):	Sofia's thoughts of herself and the world:
▪ Fear of transitions, which might indicate feelings of insecurity or instability.	▪ I have no control
Discussion Points:	
▪ What might be the underlying causes of Marcus's aggression? ▪ How can trauma-informed strategies, such as providing consistency and predictability, help Marcus manage transitions better? ▪ What specific strategies can educators use to help Marcus feel more secure during changes?	

Case Study 3: Sofia's Withdrawal and Avoidance

Sofia is a 3-year-old child who has become increasingly withdrawn over the past few weeks. She no longer seeks out her peers for play and often sits alone, staring blankly or engaging in solitary activities. When approached by a educator, she avoids eye contact and quietly moves away. She also refuses to join in group activities and remains silent during circle time. Sofia has recently moved to the area with her family after experiencing an eviction from their home. *Complete the table and discuss in groups:*

Possible trauma indicators (behavior):	Sofia's thoughts of herself and the world:
▪ Avoidance of eye contact and refusal to engage with adults or peers.	▪ I am not safe
Discussion Points:	
▪ What role does Sofia's recent experience (eviction) play in her behavior? ▪ How can educator create a safe space for Sofia to feel comfortable re-engaging with others? ▪ How might Sofia's educator use empathy and consistency to help her feel safe and supported in the classroom?	

Case Study 4: Noah's Hyperactive and Impulsive Behavior

Noah is a 4-year-old child who is often highly active and has difficulty sitting still during class activities. He frequently interrupts the educator and his peers, blurts out answers, and engages in impulsive behaviors, such as grabbing toys from others without asking. He struggles to follow instructions and gets upset easily when things don't go his way. Despite being encouraged to calm down, Noah finds it difficult to calm down. Noah's mother recently disclosed that she is in an abusive relationship, and Noah has witnessed episodes of violence in the home. *Complete the table and discuss in groups:*

Possible trauma indicators (behavior):	Sofia's thoughts of herself and the world:
▪ Hyperactivity and impulsivity, which may be a result of heightened arousal due to trauma.	▪ I must move to get away from hurt
Discussion Points:	
▪ How might trauma from witnessing domestic violence contribute to Noah's behavior? ▪ What trauma-informed approaches can be used to help Noah develop better self-regulation skills? ▪ How can educators work with Noah's family to create a consistent, supportive approach at both home and school?	

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TEACHING UNIT 3.2.

CONTEXT AND TRAUMA CAUSED BY FORCED DISPLACEMENT

THEORY INPUT

Forced displacement is caused by war, persecution, climate change and other crises affects millions of people worldwide. This phenomenon not only leads to physical uprooting, but also has a profound impact on the psychological well–being of those affected. The trauma resulting from forced migration is complex and includes stressors that occur in the phases before, during and after displacement.

These experiences can lead to serious mental health challenges such as post–traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety, especially in vulnerable groups such as children and women.

Context of Forced Displacement

Forced displacement occurs in different contexts, each of which brings specific challenges. In the pre–migration phase, people often experience violence, the loss of family members, systematic persecution or extreme poverty. These traumatic experiences shape their mental health even before the actual migration. During the migration itself, those affected are exposed to numerous dangers, including physical violence, exploitation, hunger and separation from family members. After arriving in a new country, migrants often face discrimination, legal uncertainties, cultural adjustment difficulties and limited access to health and social services. These cumulative stressors lead to an overload of individual coping mechanisms.

Trauma in Forced Displacement

Forced displacement trauma can be categorized into different types. Interpersonal trauma includes experiences such as violence and sexual assault during the conflict or while fleeing. Structural trauma is caused by systematic barriers such as discrimination or lack of access to basic services in the host country. In addition, prolonged exposure to multiple stressors over different phases leads to cumulative trauma, which can significantly affect mental health. Studies show that the prevalence of PTSD among displaced populations ranges from 13.9% to 83.4% (Baron & Flory, 2019. Rates of anxiety disorders and depression are also significantly higher, which indicates the chronic stress to which these people are exposed. Children in particular are vulnerable to long–term psychological effects due to their developmental stage.

Vulnerable Groups

Within the displaced and refugee population, there are certain groups that suffer particularly severely from the consequences of forced displacement. Children are particularly vulnerable in this respect. They often experience developmental delays and disorders in emotional regulation and cognitive development due to violence and unstable living conditions during critical growth phases. Women, on the other hand, are often confronted with gender–specific trauma, including sexual violence and exploitation during migration. In addition, they often have limited access to psychosocial support due to cultural norms or social stigmatisation.

Barriers to Intervention

Despite the high prevalence of traumatic disorders, many displaced persons face significant barriers in accessing support services. Access to health services is often restricted, which makes effective treatment difficult. Social stigmatisation associated with mental illness prevents many from seeking help. Furthermore, structural challenges such as language barriers and legal uncertainties present additional hurdles.

Conclusion

Overall, forced displacement creates a complex context for trauma that not only affects individual experiences, but also impacts families and communities as a whole. The cumulative burden of stressors at different stages of coercion leads to profound mental health issues that need to be urgently addressed. Addressing these challenges requires a multidimensional approach that includes culturally sensitive interventions as well as improving access to support services.

Working with Refugees in Social Institutions and Schools/Carecenters

Working with refugees in social centres and schools/carecenters requires a holistic and trauma–sensitive approach. In social centres, the focus is on creating a friendly atmosphere and providing daily structuring measures. Employees offer sporting, organisational and creative activities for all age groups and support the refugees in coping with their everyday lives.

The creation of a trauma–sensitive environment is of central importance (Peresin, 2019). Educators should be aware of their role as caregivers and create a learning environment in which refugee children feel safe and supported. Social integration into the classroom community is just as important as simply being present in class (Peresin, 2019).

The UNHCR handbook 'Refugees and trauma in the school context' provides valuable support for educators working with potentially traumatised children and young people. It provides information on the causes of flight, explains the consequences of trauma and offers practical strategies for everyday life. Particularly important are the promotion of self–confidence, self–control and self–efficacy as well as the active involvement of parents (Siebert, 2016.

Beside schools/carecenters and social centres, refugee accommodation centres and integration managers have a key role in supporting the refugee families and children. For example, in Germany, social workers provide support with labour market integration, arrange contacts with clubs and cultural institutions and help with administrative matters. Their work aims to enable refugees to live independently in Germany.

Resources for Further Reading

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Activity Resources

3.2.1. Activity name	The Shield Game
Purpose of the activity	The game aims to develop participants' deeper understanding of the needs of children in uncertain or difficult situations. This includes identifying and naming the specific needs that children have in such situations. The aim is also to encourage participants to reflect on the approaches and methods they use when working with displaced children and to question whether they are appropriate to the real needs of the children.
Learning outcomes	▪ explain the major consequences of forced displacement on a child's psychosocial functioning ▪ respect each child's background and experience ▪ being open to learning from diverse perspectives and lived experiences ▪ reflect on own behaviours and attitudes towards people affected by forced displacement
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Presentation ☐ Role playing ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Story ☐ Play ☐ Round table ☐ Other ☐ Problem solving
Timeframe for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	2 large sheets of paper, markers, whiteboard

Instructions	1. Ask participants to draw together a large circle on the paper, representing a "shield". The shield symbolizes the protection and support that children need in difficult moments.
	2. Instruct participants to think of different needs displaced children have or might have (when professionals do not have any experience in working with displaced children) when coming to a new environment (e.g. security, friendship, structure, attention, understanding, etc.).
	3. Have participants write their answers on the sign.
	4. Lead a discussion with the group on how childcare professionals can meet these needs in kindergarten or school. Below are some examples:
	   ▪ Security: clear rules and predictable environment can create a sense of security
	   ▪ Kindness: kind and thoughtful interactions between childcare professionals and children can improve children's well-being
	   ▪ Structure: a structured daily routine with fixed times for meals, play and rest can stabilize children
	   ▪ Attention: individual attention and listening from childcare professionals can make children feel seen and heard
	   ▪ Understanding: empathy and understanding of children's feelings and needs are crucial to support them in difficult moments
	5. Collect all arguments and write them down on another large piece of paper or a whiteboard.

Comments	Working with traumatized refugees in social institutions and schools requires a holistic and trauma-sensitive approach. They should have a friendly atmosphere and provide daily structuring measures. Employees offer sporting, organizational and creative activities for all age groups and support refugees in coping with their everyday lives.

INDEAR

Source:

- Yanolidis, S. and Haller, M. (eds.) (2024) *Spiele und Methodensammlung*. Düsseldorf: Deutsches Jugendrotkreuz Landesverband Nordrhein.

3.2.2. Activity name	The Thread of Trust		
Purpose of the activity	The purpose of the activity is to emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary approach when working with displaced children and families.		
Learning outcomes	- cooperate with internal and external experts providing a support system for displaced children and families - list available resources, services, and support networks for displaced individuals and communities - being open to learning from diverse perspectives and lived experiences		
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☒ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other
Timeframe for activity	30 minutes		
Resources required	Ball of wool		

Instructions	1. Ask participants to form a circle, sitting in the chairs.
	2. Instruct participants following:
	   • A participant holds a ball of wool and shares the thing he/she is good at, that can help him/her effectively interact with displaced children and families (e.g. interpersonal communication, creating and conducting workshops on the topics of self-respect/self-confidence, etc.)
	   • Then the participant throws the ball to another person, who also shares the thing he/she is good at. This continues until a net of yarn is created.
	3. Explain that the network they have formed is a network of people with expertise in different areas. When working with displaced children and families, it is important to cooperate with colleagues, supervisors and external experts who have expertise in different areas that we sometimes lack.
	4. Lead discussion with following questions: With whom do you cooperate with? Can you identify some services, institutions or organizations that can support you in dealing with challenges when working with displaced children and families?		

Comments	/		

Source:

- Yanolidis, S. and Haller, M. (eds.) (2024) Spiele und Methodensammlung. Düsseldorf: Deutsches Jugendrotkreuz Landesverband Nordrhein.

3.2.3. Activity name	Feelings Detectives
Purpose of the activity	The activity aims to promote participants' emotional expression and understanding of different feelings of children in their group, while taking into account different triggers and factors that might affect them. The purpose is also to foster empathy among participants by understanding and recognising emotions expressed by others.
Learning outcomes	■ respect each child's background and experience ■ explain the major consequences of forced displacement on a child's psychosocial functioning ■ explain trauma and its consequences in a child–friendly language
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Case study ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Presentation ☐ Role playing ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Demonstration ☐ Questioner/quiz ☒ Group work ☒ Discussion ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Debate ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Story ☐ Play ☐ Round table ☐ Other ☐ Problem solving
Timeframe for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	Cards with faces (happy, sad, angry, scared) and appropriate terms
Instructions	1. Show the participants the cards. 2. Ask each participant to take one card and act out the feeling depicted. 3. Invite the group to guess which feeling is being represented. 4. Discuss as a group: What could trigger these feelings among displaced children? What other factors could affect the way the child expresses its emotions and feelings? How can professionals support children in identifying and naming their feelings? 5. Ask participants (in large or smaller groups) to create a poster with key elements discussed: triggers, reactions/emotions, support necessary
Comments	It is important to emphasise the need for respecting child's cultural background, family values, experience, as well as individual characteristics and needs. All these factors can affect child's emotions and behaviour.

Source:

■ Yanolidis, S. and Haller, M. (eds.) (2024) Spiele und Methodensammlung. Düsseldorf: Deutsches Jugendrotkreuz Landesverband Nordrhein.

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TEACHING UNIT 3.3.

UNDERSTANDING FAMILY IN CRISIS

THEORY INPUT

The family is a complex, interconnected system, greater than the sum of its parts, creating a unique dynamic. It consists of subsystems and forms an integral part of society. The family's functionality depends on the relationships among its members, with each member's behavior shaped by interactions within the system. Circular causality reflects the mutual influence within these relationships, where a cause leads to an effect, which in turn influences the cause, fostering new behaviors.

A **family crisis** occurs when a family has to change. It is a turning point: things will either get better, or they will get worse (Nelson, n.d.). Crises disturb the psycho–social balance of the family system and can be classified as developmental or non–developmental. Developmental family crisis occurs if family doesn't adapt to developmental needs of its members in new phase of life cycle (martial crises are very frequent, crises in families with adolescent member etc.). Nondevelopmental family crises are caused by life events and situations that are unpredictable, mostly painful, traumatic, sudden etc., they also occur due to long–term bad relations between members of family system (Kanalić, 2014).

Family crises disrupt the usual functioning, affecting relationships, goals, values, and norms. These challenges often push families beyond their usual coping mechanisms, leaving them feeling vulnerable and stressed. Had they try to adopt the same method of adjustment again and again, and if they had faced defeat, it would have led to demoralization and more sensitivity to future exposures (Sumathi, n.d.).

- A family enters a state of crisis when two or more of the following factors interact:
- Experiencing a stressful situation (Youth Crisis Center, 2019) (certain life situations or events that increase pressure and stress within the family);
- Inability to cope: When a family struggles to accept or address the crisis, family dynamics may break down. Family members may blame each other, become argumentative, feel overwhelmed or hopeless, or stop communicating altogether (Youth Center Crisis, 2019). It may also lead to feelings of loneliness, exhaustion, and other signs of distress;
- Chronic difficulty meeting basic responsibilities: this could be anything from a parent not being present in their child's everyday life to being unable to provide basic needs to survive, like food, shelter, protection (Youth Center Crisis, 2019) or socialization;
- Lacking or not utilizing support from friends, neighbors, relatives, or formal resources like counseling or social care.

To identify and assess a crisis situation, **four critical questions** that address these factors should be considered (HEAD START / ECLKC, 2022):

- What specific event is causing the most stress for the family?
- What coping difficulties are evident within the family?
- Is the family struggling to meet its responsibilities?
- What support systems are available to the family?

A family crisis is usually characterized by **five phases,** which may occur in order, overlap, and/ or intertwine.

Phase 1: The family crisis is triggered.

A crisis begins when an event disrupts the family's circumstances, increasing stress and anxiety.

Phase 2: Seeing the crisis as threatening to the family's goals, security, or emotional ties.

Phase 3: Staging a disorganized response.

The family becomes increasingly disorganized as the strategies and resources used before to solve family problems fail (HEAD START / ECLKC, 2022). Feelings of vulnerability, helplessness, confusion, anxiety intensify. As a result, feelings of losing control and being unable to meet family responsibilities may become intensified and disabling to family members (HEAD START / ECLKC, 2022).

Phase 4: Searching for a solution.

In an effort to manage growing tension, the family seeks advice and support from others—such as friends, relatives, and neighbors. Often, family members turn to individuals who will align with their perspectives on the crisis and its resolution. However, differing opinions and advice can exacerbate confusion and destabilize the family further. If appropriate solutions are not found, this can trigger a series of events that escalate the crisis. Rapid intervention is necessary to stop the chain of events from causing a complete breakdown in family functioning (HEAD START / ECLKC, 2022).

Phase 5: Adopting new coping strategies.

When support for dealing with the crisis is available from a non-judgmental and skillful helper, this phase represents a turning point for the better for the family in crisis (HEAD START / ECLKC, 2022). It marks the beginning of the family's recovery. Family members are likely to welcome the sense of direction, security, and protection the helper brings to their situation (HEAD START / ECLKC, 2022).

Family Resilience

Often, families in crisis can only see their faults. Opening their cognitive boundary to view themselves as competent people can create a world of new solutions (Ed. Hecker, Ph L.L., Wetchler, J.L., 2003.

Family resilience refers to a family's ability to withstand and rebound from adversity, emerging stronger and more resourceful. It encompasses the potential for personal and relational transformation and growth, which can be overlooked during times of adversity. The family resilience perspective fundamentally alters the deficit–based lens from viewing struggling families as *damaged* and beyond repair to seeing them as *challenged* by life's adversities, with potential for fostering healing and growth in family members (Walsh, 2012.

According to Walsh (2012, a key premise of this systemic view is that serious crises and persistent adversity affect the entire family system. In turn, key processes for resilience in three domains of family functioning: family belief, systems, organizational patterns, and communication processes — mediate the adaptation of all members and their relationships. These processes enable families to mitigate stress, lower the risk of dysfunction, and foster effective adaptation during difficult periods.

Family Belief System

Family resilience is fostered by shared facilitative beliefs that increase effective functioning and options for problem solving, recovery, and growth. They help members make meaning of adverse situations; facilitate hopeful, positive outlook; and offer transcendent or spiritual values and connections.

Organizational Patterns

Resilience is strengthened by flexible structure, connectedness a nd s ocial a nd economic resources.

Communication processes facilitate resilience by bringing informational clarity to crisis situations, encouraging open emotional sharing, and fostering collaborative problem solving and preparedness. (Walsh, 2012.

By integrating these characteristics, resilient families develop adaptive problem–solving skills that enable them to navigate challenges with greater flexibility and effectiveness.

Practice Guidelines to Strengthen Family Resilience (Walsh, 2012) include:

- Honor the dignity and worth of all family members.
- Convey conviction in their potential to overcome adversity through shared efforts.
- Use respectful language, framing to humanize and contextualize distress:
  - View as understandable, common in adverse situations (e.g., traumatic event— normal reactions to abnormal or extreme conditions).
  - Decrease shame, blame, stigma, pathologizing.
- Provide safe haven for sharing pain, concerns, challenges.
  - Show compassion for suffering and struggle.
  - Build communication, empathy, mutual support among members.
- Identify and affirm strengths, resources alongside vulnerabilities, limitations.
- Draw out and build potential for mastery, healing, and growth.
- Tap into kin, community, and spiritual resources—lifelines—to deal with challenges.
- View a crisis as an opportunity for learning, change, and growth.
- Shift focus from problems to possibilities.
- Gain mastery, healing, and transformation out of adversity.
- Reorient future hopes and dreams.
- Integrate adverse experience—including resilience—into individual and relational life passage.

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Activity Resources

3.3.1. Activity name	The Family Web: Exploring Systemic Dynamics
Purpose of the activity	This activity introduces participants to the foundational principles of the systemic approach, of–fering a direct experience of how individuals are embedded within systems, with a focus on family systems. It also highlights how changes in one part of the system can create tension or crisis, re–vealing how families often resist change to maintain balance. By making these dynamics visible, the exercise fosters awareness, empathy, and insight into both personal and family functioning
Learning outcomes	■ Recognize the systemic nature of family dynamics (understanding how each family member's behavior is connected and interdependent with others). ■ Experience a sense of connection and shared experience (visually grasp how individuals are part of a larger network that both supports and shapes them). ■ Understand emotional and relational responses to change (observe how shifts in one part of a system can cause different emotional reactions in others). ■ Build awareness of how systems strive to maintain balance and resists to changes ■ Understand that others' reactions often come from the system's attempt to maintain stability, rather than from ill intent
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☒ Group work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other
Timeframe for activity	15 – 25 min
Resources required	One ball of yarn or string
Instruction:	1. Invite participants to sit in a circle, close to each other. Explain that they will co–create a web of connection symbolizing the family system — or any system they are part of. Ask participants to think of a short statement related to their personal experience of family dynamics. This could be a role they often take, how conflict is managed, how communication happens (or doesn't), or any unspoken family rule. Encourage authen–ticity — whatever naturally comes to mind. Let them know they'll share this statement as they build the web. Emphasize: there are no right or wrong answers. Offer sentence starters (optional): ■ If it helps, feel free to start with one of these sentence. ■ In my family, I'm usually the one who… ■ When there's a conflict, I tend to… ■ A silent rule in my family is… ■ I often feel responsible for… ■ No one talks about… ■ I'm the one who keeps the peace.

2. Give the ball of yarn to one participant and explain the process:
   - The first participant holds the end of the yarn, shares his/her sentence aloud, and then throws the ball of yarn to another person across the circle (while keeping hold of their piece).
   - The next person catches the yarn, shares his/her sentence, and throws the ball to someone else — and so on.
   - This continues until everyone has spoken, and the yarn has formed a visible web of connection.

3. After the web is complete, invite one participant to stand up and take a few steps back, still holding their thread. As he/she move, the yarn will tighten for others, crea–ting a physical sensation of tension that the rest of the group can feel and notice. Ask the group:
   - What do you notice now?
   - How do you feel?
   - What would you want to do in this situation?

   Participants might respond with: *"I feel tension," "I want to bring her/him back," "I feel disconnected," "It feels uncertain."*

   Ask the person who stepped back:

   - How do you feel?
   - How did others' reactions affect you?
   - What do you feel like doing now?

   What you just experienced is a symbolic representation of what happens in families or any systems when one member changes. The entire system feels the shift — even if it's just one person. This may create discomfort or confusion because it disrupts the family's equilibrium, known as homeostasis.
   As you noticed when one participant stepped back few steps and pulled one thread, the rest of the other group members had specific reactions (e.g. discomfort, confusion, a desire to return the situation to how it was before or even to stand up to give the yarn some slack in order to adapt to new situation). This mirrors what often happens in families when a change — whether in behavior, circumstances, or a life event — un–settles the established balance. Every person in the family responds to change in their own way. Some may try to maintain the old status quo, while others might feel fear or discomfort due to the changes. Some may even try to adapt to this situation. These reactions are not necessarily negative; they are natural responses to disruptions in familiar patterns and dynamics.

   "Where do you see the possibility for change — and what reactions might that change trigger in others?"

   However, if these changes are not properly recognized and processed, they can lead to more serious issues in family functioning. This is where a crisis can emerge.

	A crisis may occur when the family is unable to adapt to a new situation, when change is not acknowledged, or when communication and support are lacking. As you saw in this exercise, when one member moves, the entire web responds — and this can trigger uncertainty, tension, or conflict among family members. This kind of imbalance in the system can lead to larger issues such as emotional distance, breakdowns in trust, or a growing sense of insecurity. This activity reveals how deeply interconnected we are. One person's movement affects the entire web. Recognizing and understanding these dynamics helps us respond more consciously— not just in families, but in teams, partnerships, and communities. Even positive change can bring discomfort because it disrupts the familiar patterns. Awareness, open communication, and flexibility are key to m anaging c hange and preventing unnecessary escalation. . *If we learn to recognize signs of imbalance or insecurity, we can intervene early and prevent the situation from developing into a crisis.* Conclude with a reflection question: ■ What did this exercise show you about your role or the system you belong to? ■ Where do you see the possibility for change — and what reactions might that change trigger in others?
Comments	This exercise can be easily adapted to various professional settings or work with entire family .

3.3.2. Activity name	Family Tree of Strengths
Purpose of the activity	Empower professionals to recognize the resources and strengths of the families they work with, and enhance their awareness of their role in supporting families.
Learning outcomes	prepare and organize collaborative efforts with families, providing information on resour–ces, and support for the well–being of children in crisis. assess relevant information about the family's history, dynamics, and current challenges to inform intervention strategies. engage children and families in open, non–judgmental, and culturally responsive conver–sations, building rapport and trust. acknowledge and value family dynamics, respecting the diverse structures and coping mechanisms that families employ during crises. value the input and perspectives of children and families in crisis, actively involving them in decision–making processes regarding their well–being acknowledge and respect the lasting impact of trauma on children and families fostering a compassionate and supportive attitude in interactions

Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☒ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other

Timeframe for activity	50 minutes
Resources required	Large paper or poster board (one per participant or group) Markers, colored pencils, stickers.
Instruction:	1. Explain that participants will symbolically create a "family strength tree" for a fami–lies in crisis they work(ed) with or have been in contact with in a professional setting. Describe the parts of the tree: ■ Roots: The fundamental resources families possess (values, support, traditions, skills). ■ Trunk: The role of the professional (tools, methods, support, and resources provi–ded by the institutions like schools, kindergarten, etc.) ■ Branches: Goals and possibilities families aim to achieve (what they hope to ac–complish with support) (e.g., improved relationships, stability). 2. Divide participants into small groups (2–5 people). Ask each participant to briefly describe the case of a family in crisis they work(ed) with or have been in contact with to members of their small group. Ask each group to select one case / family to focus on. Ask them to draw a symbolic tree representing the selected family, adding the fol–lowing elements in this order:

	■ Branches: In the branches, they write down the goals and possibilities the families want(ed) to achieve (e.g., strengthening relationships, stability, harmony, security, emotional resilience, etc.) — see the examples in the comment section. ■ Roots: In the roots, they write or draw the resources that family has (e.g., connection, love for children, community support, resilience, etc.) — see the examples in the comment section. ■ Trunk: In the trunk, they write key skills and methods they use(d) in their work (e.g., communication, education, empathy) — see the examples in the comment section. 3. Have each group present their tree briefly. Facilitate the discussion using these questions: ■ What resources do families often overlook, and how can you help them recognize them? ■ How does your role as a professional change depending on the family's needs? ■ What goals are most common, and which are the most challenging for the families you work with? 4. Summarize the collective conclusions/insights, emphasizing the importance of strengthening family resources and the role professionals play in empowering them.
Comments	■ Instead of small groups, participants can work (draw the tree) individually. ■ This activity can be adapted to specific professional roles or family contexts to maximize relevance and engagement. ■ Instead of using real-life examples, participants can explore imagined family scenarios prepared in advance by the trainers. ■ Additional information for the trainers: Roots (Family Resources) – what families already possess and what helps them cope with challenges or strengthen their relationships. Examples: Internal resources: Love between family members; Existing rituals (e.g., family meals, ce-lebrations); Family values (e.g., respect, tradition, responsibility); Connection and sense of belonging; Problem-solving skills (e.g., how they've coped with past challenges); Family fun time; Emotionally open communication / sharing; Flexibility (roles, obligations, boundaries, etc); Past experiences (e.g., how they've coped with past challenges); Pro-social belief sy-stem (cultural, religious frameworks); The sibling bonds; Strong family commitment to solve the problem; Emotional connection with the grandchildren/grandparents, Realistic hope External resources: Support from extended family (grandparents, relatives); Help from friends and community; Access to education and healthcare services; Financial or material support from the environment; Parenting support groups, Parenting support groups; Available support services (healthcare, mental health centers – psychotherapy, schools counsellors, social servi-ces, refugee assistance program, language cources, access to educational programs,…); Trunk represents the professional's methods and key skills used to provide support to families.

Examples:
Key skills: Empathy and active listening; Setting boundaries with respect; Communication tailored to the age and needs of family members; Observing and understanding family dynamics; Mediation of conflicts and facilitating dialogue; Problem–solving and decision–making skills; Trauma–informed care (safety, trust, empowerment, and choice); Empowerment–based approaches; Helping the children process emotions; Allowing expression of emotion (from grief and anger to joy and gratitude)

Methods: Educating parents about child development and positive parenting techniques; Group work (workshops for parents or the entire family); Individual counseling for family members; Family counselling / psychotherapy; Using creative methods (drawing, storytelling); Empowerment through praise and recognizing positive aspects of the family; Developing strategies for coping with stress and crises (stress management training); Connecting families with additional resources (support services, schools, therapy programs); Collaboration with caregivers; Child–focused interventions
Branches represent the goals and possibilities families want to achieve with support.

Examples:
Short–term goals: Improving communication within the family; Establishing routines for daily life; Resolving immediate conflicts or challenges (e.g., school issues); Connecting with support services that can assist them; Coping with stress, Maintaining connection with the mother/father or grandparents, etc.

Long–term goals: Stabilizing family relationships and strengthening connections; Empowering parents to better cope with challenges; Developing emotional resilience in children; Creating family harmony and a sense of security; Emotional well–being; Achieving a healthy balance between obligations and free time; Financial stability (long–term employment); Empowering parents to better cope with challenges; Social integration, Empowering the family to independently solve problems; Building self–confidence and self–esteem in children and parents; Creating a network of support in the community; Developing new values and traditions within the family, etc.

Possibilities (Potential): Empowering the family to independently solve problems; Building self–confidence and self–esteem in children and parents; Creating a network of support in the community; Developing new values and traditions within the family

3.3.3. Activity name	Family Fun
Purpose of the activity	The activity will help participants to plan quality time within family and make a commitment to schedule quality time both for self and for family.
Learning outcomes	■ Engage children and families in open, non-judgmental, and culturally responsive conversations, building rapport and trust. ■ Apply active listening skills when engaging with families in crisis to understand their concerns and needs ■ Value the input and perspectives of children and families in crisis, actively involving them in decision-making processes regarding their well-being.

Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☐ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☒ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other

Timeframe for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	Flipchart, Markers/crayons, Pencils, Paper (A4 for each participant)
Instruction:	1. Pass out paper to each participant and have them fold paper into fourths. 2. In the upper left quadrant, have participants write down the activities he/she currently enjoys doing for fun (or activities he/she would like to try for fun) by themselves that doesn't cost money. If they can't think of anything, they could think of what they liked to do as a kid for fun and write that down. 3. In the upper right quadrant, have participants write down the activities he/she currently enjoys doing for fun (or activities he/she would like to try for fun) by themselves that costs money.
	4. In the lower left quadrant, have participants write down fun things he/she currently enjoys doing for fun (or activities he/she would like to try for fun) with their family that doesn't cost money. 5. In the lower right quadrant have participants write down fun things they he/she currently enjoys doing for fun (or activities he/she would like to try for fun) with their family that cost money. 6. Have participants form groups of four and share what they wrote in their lower left quadrant (what they like to do with their family that doesn't cost money). Have them comment on what they notice about similarities and differences on this list. 7. If any group member heard something on another participant's list that they would like to add to their list, have them do so. 8. Ask each group to decide on one thing they would like to put on their family fun calendar to do the next week. 9. Process by asking if anyone would like to share what they learned from this activity. 10. Ask how many would be willing to make a commitment to do this activity with their families at home.
Comments	The process of sharing can be repeated with the lists for other quadrants. The flipchart can be used by a trainer or by each group representative for listing the similar and/or different fun things.

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TEACHING UNIT 3.4.

ESTABLISHING TRUST AND EMPATHIC RELATIONSHIP WITH TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

THEORY INPUT

Trauma is a deeply disturbing and upsetting experience that can affect a person, regardless of their age, gender, origin, culture, ethnicity or nationality. Trauma can have very serious and long–term effects on a person's mental, emotional and physical health. A person who has experienced trauma has a very vulnerable sense of self. Although it may seem that some people function in most situations without major problems even after the trauma they have experienced, in most of them signs such as anxiety, depression, hypersensitivity, sudden changes in behavior, anger, aggressive outbursts, etc. can be recognized. Therefore, it is extremely important not to draw conclusions about someone's character and behavior based on these signs, but to understand the cause of them and establish a relationship with the person based on trust and empathy.

Communication and behaviors that block trust and empathy

In order to know how to build a relationship of trust and empathy, childcare professionals should reconsider their own ways of thinking, communicating and behaving, which hinder the establishment of such a relationship:

- **Moralistic Evaluations** refer to the evaluation of other people's behavior in accordance with our personal moral values, where we classify what we see as "right or wrong", "good or bad", "normal or abnormal" etc. E.g. *"What you did was rude. You mustn't act like that!"*

- **Comparing** one person with another with the expectation that they behave the same (regardless of their different life experiences). E.g. *"See how nice Denis plays with others. You should try it too!"*

- **Giving Advices** although guided by the human intention to help, we forget that the advice we give comes from our experiences or specific knowledge that is often not (sufficiently) understandable or applicable to a person who has experienced trauma.

- **Avoidance** e.g. *"There's no need to feel that way, it's all over now."* or **Consolation** E.g. *"It will get better..."*

Although they are closely related terms that are often used as synonyms, pity, sympathy and compassion are not the same as empathy.

- **Pity is an impression of discomfort or sadness for someone who is in a difficult situation. It has a paternalistic undertone. E.g. "I'm sorry (for you)" or "I'm sorry that this happened to you"**

- **Sympathy is a feeling of concern for someone, often a close person, accompanied by the desire to see that person happier and more satisfied. E.g. "I'm worried about you."**

- **Compassion is the feeling of one's own pain and sadness by observing and taking on the pain and sadness of others. General attitude is "I suffer with you" E.g. "I'm sad because you're sad". With the person we show compassion to, we are essentially adding more pain (or fear or any other unpleasant emotion we experience). We can also cause the other person to feel guilty because he/she provoked unpleasant emotions in us. E.g. "I'm sorry that you're crying because of me now"**

Avoiding, rejecting or minimizing feelings and needs, using inappropriate words and reactions by childcare professionals, a child or an adult who has experienced trauma can lead to the reactivation of previous pain or even re–traumatization. Therefore, building and maintaining empathy is an approach that should be an integral part of their relationship.

Empathy is mindful presence and connection with directing attention and understanding what the person feels and needs (regardless of the person's behavior and words). The basic attitude is: **"I am here, I am fully present, I see/hear you, I recognize your feelings and needs."**

In empathic connection, we separate our own emotions and needs from the emotions and needs of the other person. Of course, we can feel, for example, sadness listening to someone's story, but at the same time we are aware that it is our sadness. We may have a "need to fix" the situation, but at the same time we are aware that it is our need. In empathic connection, the focus is completely on the other person and what is happening in them.

Emotional Intelligence / Literacy as the Basis of Empathy

Empathy and emotional intelligence are two terms that are closely related, but there are differences between one and the other. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand and manage one's own emotions and needs, includes the ability of self-awareness and self-regulation. Therefore, the development of emotional literacy and emotional intelligence is the first important condition that a childcare professional must fulfill in order to be able to develop empathy in her/himself and the ability to connect empathically with others.

- **Emotions**: Recognizing, accepting and understanding one's own feelings are like the alphabet in developing emotional intelligence and empathy. Knowing the connection between body sensations, pleasant and unpleasant emotions, their cause and influence, are key abilities for understanding our own reactions, behavior and words that we address both to ourselves and to others. At the same time, developing a vocabulary of feelings is an indispensable part of all this. Very often, the words that people express, thinking that they express their own emotions, actually hide judgments and criticism. For example, "I feel manipulated." – is a hidden judgment and criticism of the other person, which actually means: "You manipulated me." Feelings that could be present in it are: disappointment, anger, sadness, etc.

- **Needs**: All our reactions and behaviors arise from an attempt to satisfy our needs. Needs are directly related to feelings: unpleasant feelings indicate that there is some unsatisfied need in person. Pleasant feelings indicate satisfied needs. Although it is an innate reaction of every living being, unfortunately, meeting needs is often seen as a selfish and egotistical act. The reason for this is mainly related to the fact that people do not even know the inner world of needs, they do not know how to name them, and they often confuse them with strategies – a way to satisfy needs. For example, there is universal human need for closeness. This can be satisfied through conversation and/or hug and/or time spent together. Those are all different strategies. Misunderstanding and even conflict between two people mostly arise because the strategies of one and the other do not match or are not compatible.

Developing the ability to better recognize, understand and name one's own emotions and needs also increases the ability to understand other people's emotions, needs, reactions and behavior, which facilitates the establishment of trust and an empathetic relationship that will also have a positive effect on the very process of healing each person's traumatic experience.

Instead of: *"What you did was rude. You mustn't act like that!"* an empathetic reaction would be: *"I noticed that you pushed Philip when he got in front of you in line.* (observation) *It is possible that you were impatient and angry* (feelings) *because respect and order are important to you* (needs). *At the same time, I'm worried about Philip' safety. Please, next time he does something like that, come to me for help.* (request)"

Empathy actually plays a key interpersonal, professional and social role, enabling the exchange of different human experiences, needs and desires and providing an emotional bridge that promotes prosocial behavior.

Resources for Further Reading

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Activity Resources

3.4.1. Activity name	Active and Mindful Listening		
Purpose of the activity	This exercise helps participants develop active listening skills, using a mindfulness approach, to improve communication quality, enhance understanding, reduce misunderstandings, and strengthen empathy in conversations		
Learning outcomes	■ use active and authentic listening as a technique for better understanding of the words and behavior of (traumatized) children and families ■ modify own words and reactions – use words not as automatic reactions, but as a mindful respond specifically when communicating with traumatized children ■ create and maintain a relationship that supports mutual understanding, appreciation, respect and safety when working with children with trauma		
Interactive method/ technique	☐ Individual work ☒ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☒ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other
Timeframe for activity	35–40 minutes		
Resources required	None		
Instructions:	1. Provide the following introductory information about the exercise: This exercise is particularly beneficial when working with traumatized children, as it helps create a safe and supportive environment where they can feel heard and understood. By incorporating active listening skills and a mindfulness approach, adults can foster a sense of trust and empathy, which is crucial for children who have experienced trauma. It can create a calm space for open communication, and strengthen the emotional connection between the adult and the child, facilitating healing and emotional regulation. This approach can significantly enhance the quality of interactions, allowing for better support and understanding of the child's feelings and needs. 2. After this, provide an explanation of what active listening and mindful listening are: Active listening involves the complete concentration of the listener on the person speaking, where we not only listen to the words, messages, and content of what the person is saying, but also pay attention to the voice (tone of speech), non–verbal communication (gestures, facial expressions), as well as the emotions and needs that may be present in the person. The content that the person is speaking is attempted to be understood and remembered. Mindful listening involves being consciously present in the moment, without our interpretation or judgment. The listener is fully focused on the speaker, without giving advice, trying to identify solutions, or offering responses during the speech, but simply accepts what has been said with full understanding		

3. Then give the participants instructions for the exercise:

Divide participants into pairs. Ideally, the exercise partner should be someone they do not know well or at all. To minimize distractions, it is recommended to perform the exercise in a quiet, peaceful space or as far away as possible from other pairs also performing the exercise.

The participants in each pair should decide who will be the speaker (Person A) and who will be the listener (Person B) at the start of the exercise. Inform them that they will have the opportunity to switch roles later.

Person A should recall a situation from their personal or professional life in which they felt a certain unpleasant emotion(s), such as frustration, anger, disappointment, sadness, etc. On a scale of emotional intensity from 1 to 10 (where 1 is very mild and 10 is highly intense, overwhelming, almost paralyzing), they should choose a situation where the emotions do not exceed number 6. This means choosing a situation that is important but not too overwhelming, as it could make it difficult to perform the exercise and reduce the learning effect.

Person A then begins to tell their story. They will have 7 to 10 minutes to recount their situation.

Person B should try to use active and mindful listening techniques, which include the following:

- Maintaining eye contact, showing focus and presence through facial expressions, nodding, and body posture to indicate full attention to Person A.
- Listening to Person A without interruption. Occasional affirmations of understanding (such as "Yes, I understand," etc.) may be used.
- While listening, Person B should try to hear all the information being spoken without thinking further about it, without interpreting or making conclusions.
- Additionally, Person B should try to recognize any emotions and needs present in Person A. These can be identified through both verbal statements and non–verbal signals from Person A.
- Person B should try to remember as much as possible from what was said as well as the emotions and needs observed. This is achieved by focusing their presence entirely on Person A.

Once the time is up and Person A finishes their story, Person B provides feedback based solely on the facts (what was said), as well as emotions and needs (what was re–cognized), without additional comments or interpretations. For example, the feedback could be: "I heard you saying that your colleagues didn't help you when you asked them for help. It seems you needed support that you didn't receive, and this made you feel frustrated and disappointed."

It is possible that this feedback will encourage Person A to continue or expand on their story, but it is important to note that the time for the exercise is limited, and the purpose is to learn and improve listening skills.

3.7. Now, the participants switch roles, and Person B becomes the speaker, following the same instructions for recalling a situation as Person A did earlier. Person A follows the same instructions as Person B did for active and mindful listening.

4. After this part of the exercise is completed, all participants return to the group, invite those who wish to can share their experiences and observations gained from the exercise, both from the role of the speaker and the listener.
Possible questions for reflection include:

4.1. What did you notice about yourself when you were **in the role of the speaker**? How did you feel when you had someone whose attention was fully focused on you, on what you were saying? What did that cause in you? If you noticed that the listener's attention was not sufficiently focused on you, how did you feel, and what did that cause in you?

4.2. What did you notice about yourself when you were in the role of the listener? How did you feel as an active and mindful listener? Was there anything challenging or difficult about it, and if so, what was it? Was what was challenging or difficult something familiar to you when listening to others in the past? Was it easy or hard for you to give feedback (empathic) to the speaker after they finished their story? Did your thoughts or memories of similar situations interfere? Did your interpretations of what you heard affect your response? Was it easy or hard for you to recognize the emotions and needs present in the speaker? What can you work on to improve your active and mindful listening skills? At least 10 minutes should be allowed for this part of the exercise so that as many participants as possible can share their experiences, which will further enhance learning at the group level.

Comments	/

3.4.2. Activity name	A Wealth of Feelings and Needs
Purpose of the activity	The activity helps the participants to recognize the presence of their own feelings and their connection with needs in everyday personal situations, which later facilitates the recognition of feelings and needs in other people and enables the establishment of an empathetic relationship.
Learning outcomes	■ list people's pleasant and unpleasant feelings – enrich the feelings vocabulary ■ list and understand the diversity of people's universal needs – enrich the needs vocabulary

Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☐ Work in small groups ☒ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other

Timeframe for activity	40 – 45 minutes
Resources required	Printed exercises for each participant, Printed lists of feelings and needs for each participant, Pencils
Instructions	1. Give each participant papers with the Wealth of Feelings and Needs exercise, papers with a list of feelings and needs and a pencil. 2. Give them following instructions to read the sentence/s and to imagine themselves in such possible everyday situations : Then let them try to guess / recognize which 2 feelings and 2 needs may be present in them in such situations. Let them use the list of feelings and needs. 3. To make the exercise easier to understand, do the first example together with the whole group. ■ Read the first situation and ask the group to try to find 2 feelings and 2 needs using the list of feelings and needs. ■ Give the opportunity for more participants to find feelings and needs, and it is very likely that there will be different feelings and needs that they will express. Use this to explain that it is quite natural that people can have different feelings and needs in exactly the same situations, and that is exactly why there is no right or wrong answer in this exercise. ■ Say that the exercise will help them to become aware that they as well as every human being at every moment has some satisfied or unsatisfied needs and, accordingly, some pleasant or unpleasant feelings. ■ You can also say that this exercise serves to enrich our vocabulary of feelings and needs and to start using them more in everyday communication, especially in those situations when we want to connect empathically with someone or when we want to prevent conflict, etc. 4. Give instructions to the participants that they will do this exercise individually in the next 20 minutes. Tell them also that another 20 minutes, those who want will have the opportunity to share what they wrote and what they learned through the exercise.

The exercise paper A wealth of feelings and needs (Ivona Erdeljac, 2020) contains the following:

(First example a is to be presented to the group for learning purposes)
a) Situation: I got up at 5:30 in the morning. It's a grey, cold day outside and it's raining. I have a lot of things to finish today and I'd rather stay at home.
a) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel dejected and tired because I need some peace and rest.

b) Situation: I'm waiting for a taxi. Cars pass by me. One goes right over a big pond and the dirty water splashes me.
b) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel... because I need...

c) Situation: I'm waiting for a taxi. Cars pass by me. One goes right over a big pond and the dirty water splashes me.
c) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel.. because I need...

d) Situation: I meet a friend I haven't seen in a long time. She laughs, comes up to me and hugs me.
d) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel....................................... because I need...

e) Situation: I meet a friend I haven't seen in a long time. She laughs, comes up to me and hugs me.
e) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel...................................... because I need ....

f) Situation: I'm standing in line at the supermarket. The man behind me is standing very close behind me and I smell an unpleasant smell.
f) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel..because I need..

g) Situation: I sit down at the table and in front of me is a bowl of ripe strawberries, cherries, peaches, and figs. There are also a few pieces of chocolate cake.
g) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel...because I need...

h) Situation: In the store, I listen to the saleswoman explaining to the customer why the price of an item on the invoice is different from the price on the shelf. The customer is very loud and visibly upset.
h) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel..because I need...

i) Situation: I enter the house. The living room is lit by the evening sun and I see my husband / child / mom... preparing dinner. I hear soft music on the radio.
i) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel...because I need...

j) Situation: My colleague promised me that he will finish his part of the work / project we are working on in the next 3 days. And after 7 days, he still hasn't finished it, and the deadline is approaching.
j) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel...because I need..

k) Situation: A boy in my group / my class doesn't listen when I talk. At the same time he talks and disturbs others so that they can hear me. Even after I told him to be quiet, he continues to do the same. It seems to me that he is even louder now.
k) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel....................................... because I need..

l) Situation: I am in a workshop where I should learn something about feelings and needs. I complete the exercise according to the coach's instructions.
l) Connecting with feelings and needs: I feel..because I need...

Comments	The exercise can be deepened so that the participants remember some 2 of personal situations: one in which they were happy and the other in which they were frustrated. Then they should try to find from the list (or if they feel ready without a list) which pleasant feelings and satisfied needs were present in the first situation and which unpleasant feelings and unsatisfied needs were present in the second situation.

3.4.3. Activity name	Facts vs. Judgment
Purpose of the activity	The purpose of this exercise is to learn how to distinguish between words and/or state-ments that are based on **objective facts** and those that include **(hidden) judgments, eva-luations, interpretations, criticisms** etc. Differentiating between these two approaches helps build clearer and more effective communication, which is key to reducing misunder-standings, strengthening interpersonal relationship and establishing an **empathetic con-nection**. When communication is based on real, non-judgmental facts, it enhances under-standing, allows for deeper connection, and creates a safe and empathetic relationship.
Learning outcomes	- identify the words that contain hidden judgments, criticisms, interpretations etc. and di-stinguish them from facts - consciously choose words that encourage and ensure an empathetic relationship and a relationship of trust, especially when working with traumatized children - modify own words and reactions – use words not as automatic reactions, but as a mindful respond specifically when communicating with traumatized children
Interactive method/tech-nique	☒ Individual work ☒ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☒ Group work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☐ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other
Timeframe for activity	45 – 50 minutes
Resources required	Printed exercises for each participant, Pencils
Instructions	1. Give each participant papers with the *Facts vs. Judgment: The Foundation for Empa-thetic* exercise, and a pencil. 2. Explain to the participants that the exercise has three part: - In the first part, they need to choose (circle) the statement from the three options / sta-tements that does not contain words with hidden judgments, evaluations, interpretations, criticisms, etc. - In the second part, they should read statements that could appear in a school environment while working with children and imagine themselves in those situations. These sentences contain hidden judgments, evaluations, interpretations, criticisms, etc.. Their task is to try to rewrite them in a way that focuses only on the facts related to the given (imagined) situation. - In the third part of the exercise, they do the same as in the second part, but this time they try to add an empathetic response to the situations. For ease, the first example has already been done.

The exercise paper *Facts vs. Judgment: The Foundation for Empathetic* (Ivona Erdeljac Senkas, 2021) con–tains the following:

Part 1: Warm–up!
Read the three sentences related to the same situation. Circle the sentence that you believe does not contain words that hide judgments, evaluations, interpretations, criticisms, etc.

a) This week, I haven't seen you coming to school.
b) This week, you're not regular in class.
c) Lately, you've been absent more often from school.

a) Your things are scattered all over the room.
b) Is there anything left from your things in your bag?
c) On the table and on the floor in the room, I see your pencils, papers, and toys.

a) Your behavior is unacceptable.
b) Last week, you pushed your friend.
c) I don't like your behavior – you're always arguing with others in the group.

Part 2: Try It Yourself!
The following examples are situations or statements that contain judgments, evaluations, interpretations, criticisms, etc. Imagine yourself in these situations and try to write a statement that contains only the facts.

a) You haven't done your homework again.
b) ....

a) You shouldn't take other people's things without asking. It's simply not right.
b) ....

a) Of course, you didn't hear the instructions I gave you. You never listen to what I say.
b) ....

Part 3: Add Empathy!
Here are again the statements that involve judgments, evaluations, interpretations, criticisms, etc. Imagine yourself in these situations and try to rewrite the statements to focus solely on the facts. And this time, <u>try to add an empathetic response</u>.

For example, it could sound like this:
a) This task isn't hard at all. You have nothing to worry about, just concentrate better.
b) I see you're worried about this task. You're unsure where to start. Would you like us to do the first part together so you can see how to proceed?

a) You always hide somewhere when everyone else in the group is participating in the activity. Come join us now!
b) ....

a) It's not okay to laugh at others for speaking and behaving differently from you.
b) ....

a) It would be better for you if you put more effort into your learning.
b) ....

Comments	■ This exercise can be done individually, with each participant working on their own. ■ The exercise can also be done in pairs or smaller groups (3–4 people), where participants, through discussion, try to find the most optimal answers to the given tasks. ■ The exercise has added value when different responses from different participants are discussed with the whole group, as this allows participants to deepen their knowledge and awareness of the words they use, which can either block or support clear communi–cation and empathetic connection.

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TEACHING UNIT 3.5.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF–AWARENESS AND SELF–CARE OF PROFESSIONALS

THEORY INPUT

Working in the field of childcare and social pedagogy is demanding and often involves emotionally challenging situations. Trauma in children and families can cause secondary traumatic stress (STS) or indirect trauma consequences in professionals, which can affect their professional performance and personal well–being in the long term. Against this backdrop, self–awareness and self–care are essential skills in order to be able to act effectively, healthily and professionally.

In order to understand how sustainable and beneficial good self–awareness and self–care can be, a fundamental basis for various concepts must be established.

Self–Awareness describes the ability to consciously recognize one's own physical and emotional states and to understand their influence on one's own behaviour. It is the basis for reflective action and adapting to challenging professional situations.

Self–Care refers to targeted measures aimed at promoting personal well–being, reducing stress and building resilience. It encompasses physical, emotional and social dimensions and requires proactive management of one's own resources.

The differentiation between these two concepts is of great importance, because only if I am aware of myself can I ultimately take care of myself.

Working with children and families requires a high level of emotional presence and adaptability from professionals. This work can involve stressful situations and emotional challenges that affect both mental and physical health. Professionals who recognize their own needs and consciously deal with the effects of stress are able to remain resilient and effective in the long term. Self–reflection and promoting resilience play a key role here. Resilience describes the ability to develop positively despite adverse circumstances and to emerge stronger from crises. Self–reflection is the process by which professionals consciously analyze their thoughts, emotions and actions. This process helps them to recognize and critically question their own stress factors, reactions and behavioral patterns. In professional practice, self–reflection offers several advantages, such as the early recognition of stress, the promotion of emotional intelligence or the avoidance of misconduct.

As already mentioned, promoting resilience plays a central role in working with children and families. There are various coping strategies for effectively dealing with the challenges of everyday working life in childcare. First and foremost, emotional coping should be mentioned. Mental stability can be maintained through mindfulness exercises such as meditation or breathing exercises. Good emotion management is also important to ensure that negative emotions are dealt with consciously. However, cognitive coping through a conscious change of perspective can also help to increase resilience. Last but not least, good health promotion and social support from colleagues, mentors, supervisors or other advisors are particularly important (Goleman, 1995; American Psychological Association, n.d.).

Self-care is a dynamic process that needs to be continuously adapted in order to be effective. It is therefore only effective if there is regular self-reflection, professional support is sought in the event of persistent stress, a positive attitude towards work is maintained and a balance to work is created. Professionals who are aware of their own physical and mental health and actively take self-care measures can not only increase their resilience, but also improve the quality of their work. A conscious approach to their own resources is therefore not only a personal gain, but also a prerequisite for the ethical and effective care of the children entrusted to them (Figley, 1995; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Secondary traumatic stress (STS) and indirect traumatization describe the psychological and emotional stress that professionals can experience when they regularly work with traumatized children and their families. This stress is not caused by their own traumatic experiences, but by repeated confrontation with the traumas of others. These symptoms can impair both professional performance and personal quality of life. Without targeted prevention and intervention, the risk of burnout increases (Stamm, B. H. 2010 / Figley, C. R. 1995).

Possible symptoms of this secondary traumatization can be

- emotional exhaustion: professionals feel permanently drained and unable to muster emotional energy

- intrusive thoughts: images or stories of traumatized clients intrude uncontrollably into the professional's daily life

- reduced empathy: also known as compassion fatigue, it describes the diminishing ability to feel empathy for clients, which can significantly impair work (Figley, 1995)

It is particularly important for professionals to recognize their personal triggers in self-awareness, set boundaries for themselves and recognize early signs of burnout. Setting realistic expectations and seeking support in areas that give you stability in certain situations can contribute to self-care.

Looking after your own well-being is not just a personal matter, but a professional and ethical obligation. Professionals have a responsibility to the children in their care, their families and themselves. Self-care is explicitly mentioned in the ethical guidelines of many socio-educational professions. It is seen as essential to ensure the safety and well-being of those in care (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Educational professionals should have the skills to strengthen self-awareness and self-care through helpful techniques. Of particular note here is mindfulness, an ability to be aware and non-judgmental in the moment. This technique helps professionals to become more aware of their own emotions and reactions and thus improve their self-regulation. This can be encouraged through meditation, guided reflection exercises or emotion diaries. The conscious use of these techniques improves stress management and helps to master professional challenges in a targeted manner (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). However, good time management and a good work-life balance are also important key skills for reconciling professional and private commitments and preventing burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Self-care strategies should be mentioned here. Everyone should identify measures for themselves that aim to promote physical or emotional well-being. Whether through exercise and sport, hobbies and creative activities or social support. The regular use of such strategies strengthens resilience and personal well-being (Van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009).

Above all, however, the communication of needs and boundaries is of particular importance in educational work. Only through empathic listening, ego messages or assertive communication can professional challenges be met at eye level. If, despite the application of self–care, personal problems do reduce professional performance, proactive measures should be taken at the first warning signs before the problems escalate. Measures include, for example, the ability to accept support, whether from colleagues, through psychological support or in the form of further training (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Siegel, 2012; Kabat–Zinn, 2003).

A positive and open attitude towards one's own emotions, attitudes and perceptions is a key step in developing self–awareness and emotional intelligence. This acceptance enables professionals to understand their reactions to stressful or traumatic situations without allowing themselves to be overwhelmed by negative feelings. Open communication about personal emotions and needs is also particularly important in order to create a supportive working environment. This is the only way to proactively face the challenges of everyday working life. Actively looking for solutions and taking responsibility shows strength. This triggers problem–solving–oriented thinking and allows people to question and objectively evaluate their own behaviour. In this way, self–care is developed and personal and professional development is initiated. Self–care is not an option, but a necessity for professionals in challenging professions. Acknowledging personal weaknesses and seeking help are signs of strength and professionalism. These attitudes are essential for professionals to remain effective and healthy in their role in the long term. They not only promote personal development, but also contribute to a supportive and respectful work environment (Van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009; Goleman, 1995).

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3.5.1. Activity Name	Relaxation		
Purpose of the activity	The purpose of the activity is to practice breathing techniques to help participants reduce stress and tension in challenging situations, pay attention to their needs and treat themselves with love in order to promote mental health.		
Learning outcomes	▪ practice mindfulness and self–reflection techniques to enhance self–awareness, regulate emotions, and manage stress effectively ▪ utilize self–care strategies and resources, such as regular exercise, hobbies, social support networks, supervision, and professional development opportunities ▪ prioritize self–care as an essential component of ethical practice and responsible caregiving		
Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☒ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☒ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☒ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other
Timeframe for activity	5–10 minutes		
Resources required	▪ quiet and comfortable space free from distraction ▪ mats, cushions, or chairs for participants to sit or lie down comfortably ▪ soft background music or ambient sounds to create a calming atmosphere – optional		
Instructions	1. Ensure the environment is quiet and free of distractions. Provide a brief explanation of the exercise's purpose (e.g., reducing stress and tension). 2. Explain the steps clearly to the participants. Emphasize the importance of a calm set–ting and the focus on breathing. 3. Guide the participants through the breathing exercise step–by–step: ▪ Sit down comfortably ▪ If you like: Close your eyes. ▪ Breathe in and count to four in your mind (count slowly 1–2–3–4) ▪ Hold your breath and count to four (count slowly 1–2–3–4) ▪ Then breathe out slowly through your mouth in one breath (count slowly 1–2–3–4) ▪ Hold your breath and count to four (count slowly 1–2–3–4) ▪ Breathe in and count to four in your mind (count slowly 1–2–3–4) ▪ Hold your breath and count to four (count slowly 1–2–3–4) ▪ Then breathe out slowly through your mouth in one breath (count slowly 1–2–3–4) ▪ Hold your breath and count to four (count slowly 1–2–3–4).... ▪ Sit still and breathe normally a few times.		

	–>If you do this exercise at least three times in a row, you will notice how tension and nervousness leave your body. 4. Observe participants as they practice, ensuring they are performing the steps correctly. Gently correct anyone who appears confused or out of sync. 5. After completing the exercise, ask participants to reflect on how they feel. 6. Discuss the potential benefits and situations where the technique can be used. 7. Remind participants that this tool can be used anytime they feel stressed.
Comments	■ Relaxation exercises are a wonderful way to calm down in a very short space of time, especially when a person is under stress. This enables to cope better with daily challenges. ■ Encourage them to practice regularly to become more comfortable with the technique.

3.5.2. Activity name	Selfcare–Meditation
Purpose of the activity	The purpose of the activity is to promote personal self–awareness and strengthen resilience, by introducing mindfulness, a self–reflection technique enabling professionals to focus on the present and become more aware of their feelings and thoughts.
Learning outcomes	■ practice mindfulness and self–reflection techniques to enhance self–awareness, regulate emotions, and manage stress effectively ■ utilize self–care strategies and resources, such as regular exercise, hobbies, social support networks, supervision, and professional development opportunities ■ accept own emotions, attitudes and perception ■ openly discuss personal emotions and needs with others

Interactive method/tech–nique	☐ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☒ Group work	☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☐ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving	☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☒ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____

Timeframe for activity	30 minutes
Resources required	chairs in a circle one candle, one matchstick and the matchstick–box small candles (one for every participant) decoration materials like different stones, springs, glass nuggets, small wooden sticks... soft background music or ambient sounds to create a calming atmosphere – *optional*
Instructions	Preparations: Place chairs in a circle. In the middle of the chairs circle, put one candle, one matchstick and the matchstick–box. Previously prepare decoration material and small candles and set aside. 1. Explain the purpose of the listening to story, to help participants become more mindful and present in the moment: "You will hear a story is about the courage to chance. It encourages people to leave their comfort zone and realize their full potential, even if this involves challenges" 2. Ask participants to sit comfortably and make few deep and slow breaths in and out. 3. Read the text slowly and emphasize *The Matchstick and the Candle* *The day came when the matchstick said to the candle: "I have been given the task to light you". "Oh no," cried out the candle in alarm, "I don't want that. Once I start burning, my days are numbered. No one will admire my beauty anymore".* *The match responded: "Do you want to stay cold and rigid all your life, without having lived first?"* *"But burning hurts and depletes my strength," whispered the candle, uncertain, and full of fear.*

"That's true," replied the match, *"but that's the secret to our calling. We are called to be light. What I can do is little. But if I don't light you, I'm missing out on the meaning of my life. I was made to light a fire. You are a candle. You were made to shine for others and radiate warmth. All the pain and suffering and energy you give, will be transformed into light. You will not become extinct when you consume yourself. Others will pass on your fire. Only if you spare yourself, will you die."* Then the candle trimmed its wick and spoke full of expectation: *"Please light me."*

4. Ask one participant to light the candle.
5. Place the decorative material and the small candles next to the candle in the middle and show participants following steps:
6. Starting from the large candle, lay a "beam of light" with decorative material to a participant
7. Light the small candle from the large candle in the middle and give the small candle to the participant to whom you have given the ray of light.
8. Hand over the candle together with a wish, e.g. "I wish that there is always someone in your life who loves you".
9. Now the participant who has been given the candle may give a candle to the next participant (in the same way).
10. After all participants have received a candle, conclude the meditation with a summary: "Our candle has recognized the meaning of its life. It has sent out light and joy to us. The result is a beautiful picture with rays of light. Good wishes were given that touched us. I hope that we all discover what we are burning for and what our purpose in life is.
11. After the meditation, encourage participants to reflect on the experience and share how they felt or what they noticed.
12. Discuss how mindfulness can help manage stress and improve emotional awareness.

Comments	There are numerous scientific studies that have investigated the link between self-perception and resilience. One study that is particularly relevant was conducted by Brissette, Scheier and Carver (2002). In their study, they found that people with a strong self-perception tend to be better able to respond to stressful events and recover more quickly from setbacks.

3.5.3. Activity name	**Self–Reflection: SWOT–Analysis**
Purpose of the activity	This activity supports participants reflect on their personal strengths, weaknesses, as well as opportunities and risks. The activity will enable participants to become more aware of their potential or identify areas needing improvement, and thus create more structured professional and personal plans.
Learning outcomes	■ recognize when personal issues may be affecting professional performance ■ objectively assess own behaviour and emotions ■ recognise and accept the limits of own competences, expertise and responsibilities
Interactive method/ technique	☒ Individual work ☐ Work in pairs ☒ Work in small groups ☒ Group work ☐ Brainstorm ☐ Presentation ☐ Demonstration ☒ Discussion ☐ Debate ☐ Story ☐ Round table ☐ Problem solving ☐ Case study ☐ Role playing ☐ Questioner/quiz ☐ Guided fantasy ☒ Somatic exercise ☐ Play ☐ Other _____
Timeframe for activity	20 minutes
Resources required	quiet and comfortable space free from distraction mats, cushions, or chairs for participants to sit or lie down comfortably soft background music or ambient sounds to create a calming atmosphere – *optional*
Instructions	1. Explain the concept of a SWOT analysis to participants, outlining the four areas: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. 2. Clarify that this analysis can be used for both self–assessment and strategic planning. 3. Guide the participants through 1–4 steps of SWOT Analysis: ■ Identify your strengths Start by evaluating your strengths. Consider both technical and methodological knowledge as well as personal traits and abilities. What do you do well? What unique skills or talents set you apart? Ask yourself: "What am I naturally good at?", "What specialist knowledge and skills do I have?", "Which characteristic allows me to do my best work?", "What would other people say are my strengths? "What advantages do I have that not everyone has?" ■ Assess your weaknesses Identify your weaknesses. Which areas could use improvement? Are there skills or qualities you lack or need to work on? Ask yourself: "What challenges me?", What are the gaps in my education, training or skills?", "Which of my habits prevent me from doing my best work?", "What do I avoid because I lack confidence?", "What are others likely to see as my weaknesses?" ■ Explore opportunities Think about both professional and personal development opportunities. Opportunities are often derived from your strengths. What possibilities exist for growth or new goals? Ask yourself: "What options do I have to strengthen my strengths and to eliminate my weaknesses?"

	■ Evaluate threats
	Consider the potential negative developments or risks you might face. This could stem from personal weaknesses, your current situation, or changes in your environment. Ask yourself: "What external or internal factors could threaten my progress respectively hinder my further development?"
	4. Allow time for participants to reflect on their analyses and, if desired, share their thoughts with others.
	5. Encourage a group discussion about the findings and how participants can use the analysis for their personal or professional development.
Comments	The results of the analysis can be "objectified" if the SWOT analysis is done both from the individuals' perspective (self–image) and from the perspective of someone else who is clo–se to them (external image). An external viewpoint can help identify blind spots and offer a more comprehensive picture of their situation.

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