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Children and young people

# Psychosocial skills: an operational framework for PSS experts and trainers

**NOVEMBER 2026**

• Volume I



LES COMPÉTENCES PSYCHOSOCIALES
Mieux avec soi et les autres

# Summary

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

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

This framework aims to promote understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying each of the PSS. It aims to increase professionals' knowledge and mastery of PSS by providing a practical explanation of the core psychological knowledge and practical skills associated with each PSS. This framework aims to transmit actionable knowledge that is useful for practice by seeking to categorise and formalise the main current scientific and experiential knowledge on how the PSS operate.

Designed by Santé publique France in collaboration with specialists (researchers and/or grassroots practitioners), this two-volume operational framework covers each of the 20 specific PSS of the updated classification published by the authority in 2022.

The **first chapter** sets out an intervention framework for high-quality PSS actions. Subsequent chapters each focus on a specific PSS. **Each PSS chapter explains the PSS covered** and presents, in a standardised format, the main psychological knowledge and practical skills that need to be strengthened to master the PSS. Each chapter is divided into two parts:

- The first part is theoretical and provides a conceptual definition of the PSS, a description of the related knowledge and practical skills, the main direct effects and prerequisite factors, and summarises the key takeaways;
- A second practical part gives examples of activities (both formal and informal) for adults, young people and children.

This framework comprises **two volumes**, based on the Santé publique France PSS classification (Santé publique France, 2022) with minor adjustments to form and content. Taking the summarised operational knowledge as a starting point, it was possible to identify a gradual PSS development process. The first three general skills, i.e. the first general skill of each PSS category (cognitive, emotional and social), constitute a preliminary phase in the understanding and acceptance of psychological functioning. This first phase is necessary in order to subsequently work on the regulation and fulfilment skills that form the secondary general skills of each category. This operational framework is structured around this progressive approach to learning.

**Volume I (this document)** focuses on the basic skills needed to increase one's understanding and acceptance of the cognitive, emotional and social experience (starting with oneself before moving on to the other). It deals with the first three general PSS, which encompass 11 specific skills (6 cognitive, 2 emotional and 3 social): strengthening self-awareness (general cognitive PSS 1), strengthening one's emotional awareness (general emotional PSS 1) and developing constructive relationships (general social PSS 1).

**Volume II (available on the Santé publique France website)** deals with the other PSS that enable one to improve one's capacities for self-regulation and self-fulfilment. It covers the three other general PSS, which encompass 9 specific skills (4 cognitive, 3 emotional and 2 social): strengthening self-control and self-fulfilment (general social PSS 2), regulating one's emotions and stress (general emotional PSS 2) and resolving relational difficulties (general social PSS 2).

This operational framework, which provides a detailed explanation of the mechanisms of each of PSS, is aimed at an informed professional audience that has knowledge of and a practice involving PSS (PSS trainers, PSS programme managers, PSS experts, etc.). It will soon be available in the form of **PSS sheets and booklets** tailored to a wider audience (as part of a PSS training support kit).

This document (available on the Santé publique France website) constitutes an operational framework that can be used to develop intervention guides and materials to support practice. The content can then be tailored to the specific audiences and environments of the various sectors committed to implementing the strategy. It contributes to knowledge sharing and a common vision of PSS. It represents a conceptual and operational basis for developing high-quality PSS interventions nationwide.

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

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

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

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# Résumé


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

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

Ce référentiel vise à favoriser la compréhension des mécanismes psychologiques à la base de chacune des CPS. En explicitant de façon opérationnelle les principaux savoirs et savoir-faire psychologiques associés à chaque CPS, il porte l'objectif d'accroître la connaissance et la maîtrise des CPS par les professionnels. En cherchant à structurer et formaliser les principales connaissances scientifiques et expérientielles actuelles sur les processus de fonctionnement des CPS, ce référentiel a pour objectif de transmettre des savoirs opérationnalisables (« *actionnable knowledge* » en anglais), utiles pour la pratique.

Conçu par Santé publique France avec la collaboration de spécialistes (chercheurs et/ou acteurs de terrain), ce référentiel opérationnel, organisé en deux tomes, traite de chacune des 20 CPS spécifiques de la classification actualisée publiée en 2022 par l'agence.

Après **un premier chapitre** proposant un cadre d'intervention pour les actions CPS de qualité, les suivants portent chacun sur une CPS spécifique. **Chaque chapitre CPS explicite la CPS traitée** et présente, de façon standardisée, les principaux savoirs et savoir-faire psychologiques qui sont à renforcer pour en permettre la maîtrise. Chacun des chapitres est scindé en deux :

- Une première partie théorique comprend la définition conceptuelle de la CPS, la description des savoirs et savoir-faire, les principaux effets directs et les facteurs préalables ainsi qu'un récapitulatif des éléments essentiels à retenir ;
- Une seconde partie pratique présente des exemples d'activités (formelles et informelles) pour les adultes, les jeunes et les enfants.

Ce référentiel est constitué de **deux tomes** construits à partir de la classification des CPS de Santé publique France (Santé publique France, 2022) légèrement ajustée sur la forme et le fond. Sur la base des connaissances opérationnelles synthétisées, un processus de développement progressif des CPS a pu être identifié. Les trois premières compétences générales, c'est-à-dire la première compétence générale de chacune des catégories de CPS (cognitive, émotionnelle, et sociale) représentent une phase préalable de compréhension et d'acceptation du fonctionnement psychologique. Cette première phase est nécessaire pour travailler les compétences de régulation et d'accomplissement correspondant aux secondes compétences générales de chaque catégorie. Ce référentiel opérationnel s'organise autour de cette progressivité dans les apprentissages.

**Le tome I (le présent document)** porte sur les compétences de base qui permettent d'accroître la compréhension et l'acceptation de l'expérience cognitive, émotionnelle et sociale (en commençant par soi pour aller vers l'autre). Il traite des trois premières CPS générales, lesquelles regroupent 11 compétences spécifiques (6 cognitives, 2 émotionnelles, 3 sociales) : renforcer sa conscience de soi (1re CPS générale cognitive), renforcer sa conscience des émotions (1re CPS générale émotionnelle), développer des relations constructives (1re CPS générale sociale).

**Le tome II (à paraître)** porte sur les autres CPS qui permettent d'améliorer les capacités de régulation et d'accomplissement de soi. Il regroupe les trois autres CPS générales qui comprennent 9 compétences spécifiques (4 cognitives, 3 émotionnelles, 2 sociales) : renforcer sa maîtrise de soi et son accomplissement (2de CPS générale sociale), réguler ses émotions et son stress (2de CPS générale émotionnelle) et résoudre des difficultés relationnelles (2de CPS générale sociale).

Ce référentiel opérationnel qui explicite de façon approfondie les mécanismes de chacune des CPS, s'adresse à un public professionnel averti ayant une connaissance et une pratique des CPS (formateurs CPS, responsable de programme CPS, experts CPS…). Il sera prochainement décliné en **fiches et livrets CPS** appropriables et compréhensibles par un public plus large (dans le cadre d'un kit d'appui aux formations CPS).

Ce document (consultable sur le site de Santé publique France) constitue un cadre de référence opérationnel qui permettra de développer des guides d'intervention et des supports pratiques avec des contenus adaptés aux publics et aux milieux des différents secteurs concernés par la mise en œuvre de la stratégie. Il contribue au partage de connaissances et d'une vision commune des CPS. Il représente une base conceptuelle et opérationnelle pour développer des interventions CPS de qualité sur tout le territoire.

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

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## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **AADA** | Attention/Analysis/Decision/Action |
| **CAT-CPS** | Psychosocial Skills Thematic Support Committee |
| **Dgesco** | Directorate General for School Education |
| **DGS** | Directorate General for Health |
| **EBM** | Evidence Based Medicine |
| **HDR** | Authorised to supervise research |
| **IGESR** | Inspectorate General for Education, Sport and Research |
| **Inserm** | National Institute of Health and Medical Research |
| **PSS** | Psychosocial skills |
| **RHA** | Regional Health Authority |
| **SAFE** | Sequenced/Active/Focused/Explicit |
| **Staps** | Sports science |

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# INTRODUCTION

**Psychosocial skills (PSS)** are a set of psychological skills (cognitive, emotional and social) that enable a person to maintain a state of psychological wellbeing [1-4]. Developing them promotes positive mental health, which the WHO defined in 2004 as "a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" [5, 6], and contributes to increasing overall positive health.

Psychosocial skills have an impact on the determinants of health such as educational success by improving wellbeing and empowerment, an individual's psychological development and functioning, and the quality of their interactions [1]. More than forty years of interventional research have demonstrated the effects of developing PSS:

- on mental health (fewer anxiety and depressive disorders, fewer behavioural problems, greater wellbeing and more positive mental health);
- on risky behaviours (lower substance consumption – tobacco, alcohol, drugs –, less violence, less bullying at school, less risky sexual behaviour);
- on educational success (better academic results, fewer academic failures, improved educational levels, greater integration).

Internationally, PSS programmes have given rise to major research works, particularly on issues of effectiveness, implementation and transferability. Today, this body of science represents a foundation of knowledge that can be used to support and enrich French professional practices and promote the deployment of evidence-based PSS interventions.

This research and the French recommendations, including several collective expert reports by Inserm, have had an impact, and developing PSS can now found in several national public health strategies or plans:

- the National Public Health Plan Prevention Priority (2018- );
- the Mental Health and Psychiatry Roadmap (2018- );
- the National Plan for Mobilisation Against Addictive Behaviours (2018- );
- the National Sexual Health Strategy (2017-2030);
- the National Anti-Tobacco Programme (2018- );
- the Ten-Year Combatting Cancer Strategy (2021-2030).

The elaboration of **a multi-sectoral strategy to deploy PSS** was announced at the Mental Health and Psychiatry Conference (September 2021) (*measure 11*). This national inter-ministerial strategy, in which Santé publique France is fully implicated, is led by the DGS and the Dgesco through a National Steering Committee comprised of all the ministries responsible for children and young people. It was formalised in Inter-ministerial Instruction 2022-2037, published on 19 August 2022 [7] with the aim of "Enabling all children to develop their psychosocial skills from the earliest age, throughout their growth and in all environments" so that "the 2037 generation is the first to grow up in a continuous environment of support for the development of PSS".

In support of this national strategy, the ministerial roadmaps and the ministries' PSS strategies, **the Santé publique France PSS programme** aims to forge a common culture on the subject and to guarantee the quality of the PSS interventions deployed. Thus, the public health objective pursued by Santé publique France is to develop the PSS of children and young people, and of adults in educational positions (professionals and parents) nationwide by promoting the implementation of effective and evidence-based PSS interventions.

Operationally, Santé publique France is producing expert and advocacy materials for professionals and the general population (parents, young people, children) and also aims to put mechanisms in place to enable their appropriation. With the support of a Thematic Support Committee (CAT-CPS), Santé publique France has already carried out initial work to synthesise scientific and experiential knowledge, which resulted in:

- **a first seminar on PSS in December 2021** to present this work and share several proven or promising field practices;
- **a scientific and theoretical framework published in February 2022** [8];
- **a summary brochure (*What You Need to Know*, published in 2023)** [9] based on a **comprehensive knowledge report published in October 2022** [1].

As part of the Inter-ministerial Strategy to deploy PSS and the Inter-ministerial Anti-Bullying Plan (Sept. 2023), **a PSS development educational support kit (the 'Empathy Kit', volume 1, volume 2** and **volume 3)** was put together by Santé publique France and the Dgesco and made available in the 1st half of 2024 [10, 11].

**This PSS operational framework** builds on the theoretical framework produced by Santé publique France in 2022. It aims to increase professionals' knowledge and mastery of PSS by explaining, in practical terms, the core current knowledge and practical skills in relation to each of the PSS. It provides a concise and accessible presentation of the main current scientific and experiential knowledge for which there is consensus, despite the diversity of theoretical models that exist across disciplines and schools of thought.

This framework aims to promote understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying each of the PSS. It is therefore focused on the 'invariant contents' that are mobilised and worked on during any PSS practice. It does not address implementation issues, which are contingent on the audience and setting in which it will be used.

This framework aims to transmit actionable knowledge that is useful for practice by seeking to categorise and formalise the current scientific and experiential knowledge on how the PSS operate. This document, which delves deep into each PSS, is aimed at an informed professional audience that already has a PSS practice and knowledge (PSS trainers, PSS programme managers, PSS experts, etc.). Later, it will be made available in other formats that are more accessible to all professionals wishing to increase their knowledge and skills in this area (including a Training Support Kit, consisting of PSS fact sheets for participants and PSS booklets for all stakeholders).

Following **an opening chapter that sets out an intervention framework for high-quality PSS actions based on the Santé publique France reference framework (2022)**, each of the subsequent chapters focuses on a specific PSS. **Each chapter presents, in a standardised format, the core psychological knowledge and practical skills[1] that need to be strengthened to master the PSS.**

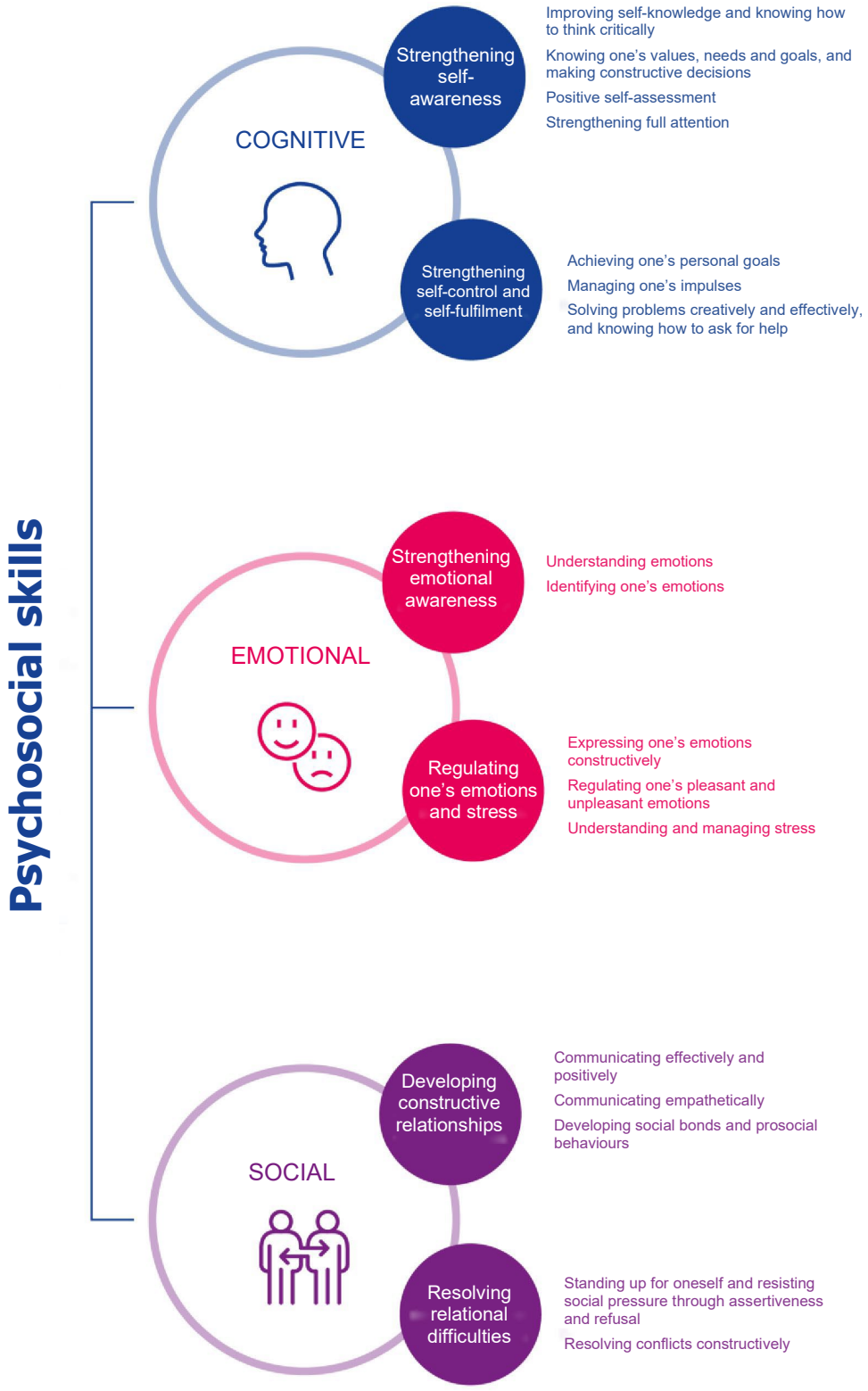
**Each PSS chapter** has two parts:

- a theoretical part that describes the knowledge and practical skills underlying the PSS (in the form of text, diagrams and tables), the main direct effects of the PSS and the prerequisite factors, and a summary of the key takeaways;
- a practical part that collates examples of activities (both formal and informal) for adults, young people and children.

[1] While it is customary in the fields of education and professional integration for the notion of 'practical skills' to refer to technical knowledge and the notion of 'social-skills' to refer to behaviours or attitudes (some of which are PSS), we have chosen to use the term 'practical skills' to emphasise the operational and voluntary aspect of the psychological action to be carried out and to distinguish them from psychological 'knowledge'.

**The PSS operational framework consists of two volumes** that take the Santé publique France PSS classification (2022) as their basis. The 2022 classification has been revised in both form (notably through the systematic use of verbs) and content, to better align with the mechanisms described in the literature. As a result, it is now more coherent and better organised (see Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1. Schematic representation of the PSS (general and specific), 2024 update to the Santé publique France 2022 version**



In this framework, this PSS classification [1] is also presented in a more practical way (see Table 1 below) in order to facilitate appropriation and the progressive nature of learning. Unlike the Santé publique France 2022 classification and international classifications, an incremental process can be identified based on the compiled operational knowledge. Thus, the general PSS 1 – cognitive (C1), emotional (E1) and social (S1) – are now considered to be prerequisite skills for the acquisition of the more complex skills (C2, E2, S2). Whether at the cognitive, emotional or social level, an initial phase of understanding and accepting psychological functioning is necessary before attempts can be made to modify it (through a process of regulation) or transform it into action (through a process of fulfilment).

**Volumes I and II are divided into these two learning phases:**

1. **Phase 1:** Developing the ability to understand and accept the cognitive, emotional and social experience (starting with oneself before applying this to others);
2. **Phase 2:** Developing the ability for cognitive, emotional and social regulation and fulfilment.

**This volume I** focuses on the basic skills that strengthen understanding and awareness of oneself and of others. It covers the first three general PSS:

- Cognitive PSS 1 (being self-aware) which encompasses 6 specific cognitive PSS and 13 knowledge items and practical skills to be acquired;
- Emotional PSS 1 (strengthening emotional awareness) which encompasses 2 emotional PSS and 4 knowledge items and practical skills to be acquired;
- Social PSS 1 (developing constructive relationships) which encompasses 3 specific social PSS and 9 knowledge items and practical skills to be acquired.

**Volume II** will focus on the other PSS associated with self-regulation and self-fulfilment abilities:

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

**In total, the PSS operational framework (volume I and volume II) covers:**

- **2 general PSS per category (cognitive, emotional and social),**
- **10 specific cognitive PSS,**
- **5 specific emotional PSS,**
- **5 specific social PSS**
- **55 psychological knowledge items and practical skills**

**to be mastered *(see summary table in the annex)*.**

**Table 1. PSS operational classification, organised into two developmental phases (1. Understanding and acceptance 2. Regulation and fulfilment)**



COGNITIVE SKILLS



EMOTIONAL SKILLS



SOCIAL SKILLS

## PHASE 1: Understanding and acceptance

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(CD Strengthening self-awareness)** | **C1.1** Improving self-knowledge<br>**C1.2** Knowing how to think critically | **(ED Strengthening emotional awareness)** | **E1.1** Understanding emotions | **(SD Developing constructive relationships)** | **S1.1** Communicating effectively and positively |
| | **C1.3** Knowing one's values, needs and personal goals<br>**C1.4** Making constructive decisions | | E1.2 Identifying one's emotions | | **S1.2** Communicating empathetically |
| | **C1.5** Positive self-assessment | | | | **S1.3** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours |
| | **C1.6** Strengthening full attention | | | | |

## PHASE 2: Regulation and fulfilment

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(C2) Strengthening self-control and self-fulfilment** | **C2.1** Achieving one's personal goals | **(E2) Regulating one's emotions and stress** | **E2.1** Expressing one's emotions constructively | **(52) Resolving relational difficulties** | **52.1** Standing up for oneself and resisting social pressure through assertiveness and refusal |
| | **C2.2** Managing one's impulses | | **E2.2** Regulating one's emotions<br>(a) pleasant<br>(b) unpleasant | | |
| | **C2.3** Solving problems creatively and effectively<br>**C2.4** Knowing how to ask for help | | **E2.3** Understanding and managing stress | | **S2.2** Resolving conflicts constructively |

# An intervention framework for high-quality PSS actions

PSS interventions can be constructed using various approaches and pursue diverse goals. In order to clearly establish the objectives and support intervention quality, this chapter proposes an intervention framework and quality criteria.

## 1. An intervention framework based on two main axes

The inter-ministerial PSS strategy sets out two main axes for developing and implementing high-quality PSS interventions:

1. PSS interventions from a health and wellbeing promotion perspective (in accordance with the Ottawa Charter);
2. Evidence-based PSS interventions (related to the evidence-based medicine (EBM) paradigm).

- **PSS interventions from a health and wellbeing promotion perspective (in accordance with the Ottawa Charter)**

In 1986, the first International Conference on Health Promotion, jointly organised by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Canadian National Department of Health and Welfare and the Canadian Public Health Association, brought together 212 delegates from 38 countries in Ottawa, Canada, who issued a charter for action, aimed at health for all by the beginning of the 21st century. This charter, known as the Ottawa Charter (1986), was devised and adopted to promote a new form of public health, one that focused on overall and positive health. Thus, "health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities. Therefore, health promotion is not just the responsibility of the health sector, but goes beyond healthy life-styles to well-being" [12].

In this charter, PSS are seen as one of the five health promotion strategies for action that make it possible to maintain positive overall health. Thus, the acquisition of individual skills, in particular improving PSS, is complementary to and interdependent on the four other strategic axes which focus on modifying socio-environmental factors (elaborating health-positive policies, creating health-positive environments, strengthening community action and refocusing health services). According to this health promotion approach, strengthening PSS at all ages of life, in close interaction with the development of positive environments and supportive living conditions, can contribute to individual and social development, increase individuals' capacity for choice, their autonomy and their empowerment, and thus improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and populations [1].

- **Evidence-based PSS interventions (related to the EBM paradigm)**

While the terms ‘evidence-based interventions’ or ‘evidence-based programmes’ are often used restrictively to refer to an intervention or programme whose effectiveness has been validated by experimental evaluative research, for an intervention to be aligned with the EBM paradigm and use its methodology, three types of knowledge must be included:

1. The most relevant scientific knowledge (or evidence);
2. The experiential knowledge of professionals (i.e., knowledge and practical skills derived from professionals’ experience);
3. The experiential knowledge of the beneficiary public (or knowledge derived from people's experience).

Thus, contrary to the limited reading that is often made of EBM, the best available scientific knowledge represents only one of the three sources of knowledge necessary in practice [1].

Consequently, two main complementary methods can be used to develop and execute an evidence-based PSS intervention:

1. Transferring and using an evidence-based pre-existing PSS programme whose effectiveness has already been demonstrated;
2. Transferring and using scientific and experiential knowledge and constructing an evidence-based PSS intervention in close collaboration with professional practices, public needs and the setting [1].

Among the scientific data to be put to use, knowledge about effective PSS interventions and in particular knowledge about the factors common to effective PSS interventions constitutes key information when devising high-quality PSS interventions. Thus, as it is based on syntheses of scientific literature, the Santé publique France framework (2022) made it possible to highlight several factors in relation to effective PSS interventions. Several quality criteria could be formulated from an operational grouping of these efficiency-related factors. Three distinct general criteria related to PSS practices, the implementation of the PSS project and the educational environment, as well as several operational criteria and modalities, are presented below.

## Table 2. PSS intervention quality criteria

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

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

## 2. Quality criteria related to PSS professionals and practices (general criterion 1)

- **Strengthening the PSS of adults in educational positions and developing professional behaviours that support PSS (operational criterion 1.1)**

Developing the psychosocial skills of adults in educational positions poses several challenges:
- Supporting their wellbeing at work, as education- and teaching-related positions are particularly stressful [13];
- Promoting their ability to develop respectful interpersonal relationships, including a climate that is positive in terms of relations, education, safety, justice and belonging [14];
- Strengthening their relational ethics, as a condition of their responsibility and as a response to their consideration for the fundamental needs of young people [15, 16];
- Supporting the conditions for professional development (alignment of human, social and decision-making capital) in favour of new professional practices in the field of PSS [17, 18].

This strengthening of skills facilitates the establishment of benevolent relationships, i.e. relationships where there is both "a presence and special attention for others and their vulnerabilities" [19] and more generally the development of a benevolent setting necessary for children and young people to develop their PSS. This setting can be defined as a "set of physical, moral and psycho-affective attitudes, and positive and consistent behaviours of respect and good care, and demonstrations of trust, encouragement and help towards persons or groups" [20]. Strengthening PSS in adults contributes to the development of a benevolent stance which can be defined in terms of three dimensions [21]:

1) A cognitive dimension: an attitude of non-judgement, openness and acceptance of others (in everyday language we might call this tolerance and respect);
2) An affective dimension which includes emotional and compassionate empathy, as defined by Decety and Jackson [22], i.e., it relates to the intention to take care in order to achieve the greater wellbeing of the other;
3) A behavioural dimension which entails ensuring the setting is tailored to the fundamental psychological needs of the young person/pupil.

Thus, benevolence lies at the interface of the educator's stance and the characteristics of the educational activities, in terms of both their planning and their practice. Based on Bucheron's model [23], professional behaviours that support the development of a setting and benevolent relations that are favourable to PSS can take the form of:

1) Maintaining a certain atmosphere (**relational climate** and the educator's attitude);
2) **Management** (arrangement of time, space and equipment based on the needs of the audience and that is favourable to the development of PSS);
3) **Weaving** (taking the 'pre-existing skills' of the audience as a starting point and making a link with young peoples' other activities/experiences/knowledge in terms of PSS);
4) **Scaffolding** (the empathy necessary to support the audience's PSS learning journey, which entails the professional making adjustments to their concerns and transmitting feedback to support learning).

Finally, it has been shown that a school environment that promotes benevolence increases school motivation and engagement, and strengthens personal and interpersonal skills, encourages prosocial behaviour, and generates enthusiasm, wonder and greater involvement [24].

**Note: The words in green are key concepts.**

### • Prioritising teaching methods that support the development of PSS (operational criterion 1.4)

Three of the factors associated with the effectiveness of PSS interventions described in the framework [1] relate to educational methods and strategies. Given the characteristics of PSS and effective PSS interventions, mobilising active and positive teaching methods is particularly important for developing the PSS of children and young people.

**An active teaching method** can be defined as "a dynamic set of learner-centred teaching practices, enabling learners to develop their existing knowledge and skills by interacting (with the educator and their peers) in relation to a field, while adopting an analytical, reflective and critical perspective" [25]. If this is the case, we can speak of an active learning teaching method.

This means that learners develop their PSS through exchanges between educators and their peers, but also through the understanding they develop of a lived situation. Learning situations employing active teaching methods must have four dimensions [25]:

1) **Involvement**, which is characterised by the meaning of the activity (value of the task), the feeling of personal efficacy (confidence in the ability to succeed in an activity) and empowerment (choices, questions, opinions);
2) **Deep reflection** which takes place through the development of critical and reflective abilities (cognitive activation: meaning, links to prior knowledge and personal experiences, critical perspective);
3) **Interactions** take place through a growth in confidence in one's abilities in order to be able to present one's arguments, growth in cooperative skills, and promotion of interactions, critical thinking, positive interdependence, individual responsibility and group structure;
4) **Contextualisation** refers to two aspects: the specific nature of the learners (the student's level) and the nature of the proposed activity (authentic learning activities, the provision of supportive feedback).

Often, in the field of PSS, active professional practices are role plays; the learner is an active participant and engages in interaction (observing themselves and others), and is then guided through a process of awareness-raising and generalisation.

> *For example: inspired by the project-based learning exercise whereby primary school pupils engage in a role play scenario to create a project promoting the development of constructive relationships in the playground. Possible practices include: the pupils themselves surveying pupils' feelings and needs in the playground, joint analysis of problems and elaboration of solutions, learning the clear message technique used in class and by pupils in the playground to manage conflicts, co-construction of a model highlighting the spaces and functions of the playground in order to avoid gender stereotypes, co-construction of the rules for using these spaces, testing and analysing feelings before and now, reflection on transposition to other times and spaces of school life (extracurricular activities, canteen, etc.).*

**Positive teaching methods,** for their part, strive to "simultaneously take into account the quality of traditional learning and the wellbeing of the children" and can be defined "as the study of the conditions and processes which contribute to the fulfilment and optimal functioning of individuals, groups and institutions" [26] This translates into developing activities that are well calibrated – i.e. the PSS to be developed and the capacities of the learners match [26]. Furthermore, positive pedagogic practices emphasise the development of learners' resources (the strengths model of Peterson and Seligman [26] (*see the cognitive PSS 'positive self-assessment'*).

*For example: Developing the clear message or 'I message' in order to promote effective communication is an illustration of strengthening the learner's resources; in effect, this involves developing the vocabulary of communication, understanding that everyone communicates differently and that everyone perceives communication differently from others, becoming aware of one's own way of communicating, one's strengths and impact, and finally, the use of the 'I message' method to resolve conflicts in the classroom will then be transposed to managing relationships in the playground, which will further develop the learners' resources through more frequent use.*

Ultimately, positive practices aim to result in autonomy, a sense of competence and belonging (Deci and Ryan model [26]).

In summary, positive pedagogic practices supporting the development of PSS would entail [26]:

1) Ensuring that an activity is well-structured by taking into account the balance between learners' level of requirement and their abilities;
2) Fostering learners' sense of competence;
3) Knowing, validating and cultivating the strengths of individuals and the group;
4) Promoting autonomy, i.e. the possibility to make choices and set objectives and goals.

As they are skills, psychosocial skills need to be developed in practice; in this sense, they are commonly referred to as '**experiential' practices**. The pedagogic practices at work in terms of PSS must encourage the development of experiential learning. This kind of learning entails using horizontal approaches where the learner occupies an 'active' position as the "social dimension, interaction and exchanges between participants" are its main components [27]. This pedagogic form calls for strategies of "adjustment from the individual, mobilises their internal resources and reactivates their past experiences in order to adapt their behaviours to the current experience" [27]. Consequently, it is necessary to activate reflective processes in order to allow learners to move from experiential knowledge to experiential knowledge (to become aware of the specific experience and to transform it into knowledge that can be transmitted). Kolb's model [28, 29] is one of the theoretical models that can be mobilised; this cycle demonstrates the importance of three factors that are at play in experiential learning: "the experience, as it is subjectively lived by the person in different situations, understanding of this situation and the construction of knowledge from this context" [30]. Among the components of experiential learning are the outcomes of pedagogic and active practices as defined above, as well as the characteristics of the professional behaviours (in particular atmosphere, weaving and scaffolding).

Thus, the learning involved in developing PSS implies that the learner is active, interacts with professionals and peers, mobilises their resources, is supported in the links they can make with other experiences, and is placed in a reflective situation so as to identify the knowledge involved.

*For example: The role-playing technique, which focuses in particular on strengthening the capacity for self-control, mobilises this process, namely experiencing a situation, understanding the issues and knowledge, and carrying out a reflective analysis of the situation in order to transpose the knowledge involved.*

- **Implementing structured and sequenced PSS activities (operational criterion 1.2)**

These activities have already been documented in detail in the 2021 framework. Below, we summarise the key points. In terms of PSS, sequenced activities should be aligned with the SAFE acronym:

S – sequenced: a set of organised and coordinated PSS activities;
A – active participation of individuals;
F – focused on the key PSS based on individuals' needs and development level;
E – explicit when explaining the challenge in terms of PSS learning and development to people.

The professionals responsible for implementing these sequences have received training/support enabling them to have mastered the PSS as currently defined and their mechanisms, but also to have developed a relational ethic, a benevolent setting, appropriate professional behaviours and teaching methods favourable to their development. The sequenced PSS practices are based on the latest scientific knowledge, for example: the Santé publique France 2022 framework; 2024 empathy kit; and/or on proven PSS programmes. They must be long-term; a minimum of 8 to 10 sessions of approximately one hour for children and two hours for parents. In fact, it has been established that interventions must be longer than twenty hours per year, be spread out over time, begin early (early childhood) and become more complex over time. The resources used must be formalised, thereby promoting the weaving of learning in educational and family settings.

- **Implementing informal PSS practices - ritualised activities (operational criterion 1.3)**

According to Marquié-Dubié [31], it is important to draw a distinction between what is meant by a 'rite' and what is meant by 'rituals': we can differentiate the notion of 'rites' (related to the religious or spiritual domain) from that of 'rituals' (related to social practice or individual interpretation) [32, 33]. In educational settings, rituals serve as reference points (becoming a pupil), socialisation (codes, values), exploration (development of one's capacity for action) and safeguarding (capacities) for learners [31]. The aim is to enable young people to:

1) Internalise social norms and rules, including the relationship to time [34];
2) Develop social interactions and more broadly socialisation – cultural reference points to establish a circulation of exchanges, between individuals and groups [35];
3) Reinforce identity issues [34].

So as not to lose their meaning, rituals must be more than routines and simple habits; here we can discern the need to vary them and make modifications to them on the basis of learner needs [36]. Finally, it is also important that the rituals are **focused** (one primary target PSS), **explicit** – the primary target PSS must be made explicit to the learners, and be developed in reference to the intervention framework set out above.

> *For example: a morning ritual for younger children (4 to 5 years-old) focusing on identifying emotions can begin with a simple oral question, "How are you feeling this morning?" A progression could go from a colour associated with an emotion, to a verbalisation of the emotions felt (this morning I am... because I feel...), to a facial expression of emotions for example (facial emotions -> emotions visible through the eyes, mouth, cheeks, eyebrows, etc.). In addition, this ritual allows the pupil to integrate the fact that, at school, pupils are allowed and encouraged to express their emotions; this expression contributes to a positive school climate, and finally, this learning contributes to their emancipation as an individual and promotes other learning.*

**• Implementing informal PSS practices - ordinary educational activities (operational criterion 1.3)**

This entails setting out specific and explicit PSS development objectives as part of everyday educational activities. The challenge for the professional is to be F (focused) and E (explicit) in everyday learning. By way of illustration, we can take the group work method regularly used in learning; if these exercises are the subject of specific attention, then they can support the development of PSS. The professional behaviours most at play are those linked to management by providing specific arrangements on the didactic, equipment, spatial, etc. levels on the one hand, and to weaving in order to make links between specific sessions or activities devoted to PSS and the one which will take place on the other. The arrangements related to group work will allow learners to develop their capacity for empathetic listening, to communicate effectively, to develop social bonds, or even to develop prosocial attitudes and behaviours. Other skills can be regularly called upon in ordinary daily educational activities, provided that the professional raises awareness of them and makes use of appropriate practices.

## 3. Quality criteria related to the educational environment (general criterion 3)

Developing effective PSS professional interventions involves acting at the level of the intervention itself, of its implementation, but also at the level of the environment in which it takes place. Thus, one of the factors in the effectiveness of PSS interventions is creating an environment where several elements converge in favour of PSS development (Complementary Factor 6 - Santé publique France, 2022). In this field, the term 'environment' does not only refer to the physical places where everyday activities take place. It primarily refers to all the people with whom an individual interacts on a daily basis and who have an impact on their growth and quality of life. A child's environment, for example, consists of the family, school and social settings, as well as all the people who form part of these. PSS practices are all the more effective if there is no dissonance between these different settings [37]. This means that all the people in all the different settings (school, family, etc.) must provide an environment favourable to the development of PSS. They must therefore cooperate and agree on the educational coherence of their actions and stances [38].

Implementing collective practices in relation to PSS contributes to the development of a 'PSS culture' within the structures, with other strategies contributing to this, in line with the health-positive environments rationale [39]. In particular, this entails a PSS focus being enshrined in the structure's policies. In addition, its implementation must promote the participation of all in gathering needs and co-constructing the strategy in terms of PSS, it must validate and make visible each person's contribution to the development of PSS and coordinate them into a curriculum approach, develop spaces for consultation and exchange on PSS practices, and support 'formative' environments in terms of PSS, in particular through the development of multi-category training, and the provision of resources and support in terms of PSS [40, 41]. How space and time is organised contributes to the development of PSS. This could include, for example, rooms set up for holding talking circles, or even gardens of emotions or friendship benches. Finally, collaborating with nearby environments and mobilising partners also contribute to the development of this PSS culture.

***General cognitive skill 1***

# STRENGTHENING SELF-AWARENESS

# STRENGTHENING SELF-AWARENESS (C1)

"**Self-awareness** encompasses recognising and understanding one's cognitions (thoughts, beliefs, values, etc.), emotions (feelings, sentiments, etc.) and volitions (desires, needs, aspirations, dreams, etc.) and how they are linked to behaviours. This skill is developed by working on the representations we have of ourselves (called self-concept or self-image), our judgement about ourselves (called self-esteem) and on how these are constructed (influences, biases, etc.). It also involves the ability to pay full attention to one's present experience (cognitive, emotional, etc.) and to embrace this experience with benevolence" [1].

**Self-awareness can be strengthened** by understanding how the psychological Self operates, the role and limits of self-representations, and by developing self-observation and self-analysis skills. This PSS is also **nurtured by the ability to accept and embrace** one's internal experience, values and needs in order to make constructive decisions.

**This first general cognitive PSS (C1) encompasses 6 specific cognitive PSS** (set out over 4 chapters). **The development of each specific PSS relies on several psychological knowledge items and practical skills:**

- **Specific cognitive skills 1 and 2: in order to improve self-knowledge (C1.1) and knowing how to think critically (C1.2), the core useful psychological knowledge and practical skills are:**
    1. Recognising the different dimensions of the psychological Self (external Self, Self-image, inner Self, subject Self);
    2. Knowing the role and limitations of self-image;
    3. Questioning self-image in order to think critically;
    4. Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions.
    5. Observing and embracing the inner Self;
- **Specific cognitive skills 3 and 4: in order to know one's values, psychological needs and personal goals (C1.3) and make constructive decisions (C1.4), the core useful psychological knowledge and practical skills are:**
    1. Knowing one's self-concordant goals;
    2. Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals;
    3. Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals.
- **Specific cognitive PSS 5:** for **positive self-assessment (C1.5), the core useful psychological knowledge and practical skills are:**
    1. Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills;
    2. Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself.
- **Specific cognitive PSS 6: in order to strengthen full attention in relation to oneself (C1.6) the core useful psychological knowledge and practical skills are:**
    1. Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience;
    2. Observing and embracing the present sensory experience without judging or modifying it;
    3. Carrying out formal and informal full attention activities on a daily basis.

# ***Specific cognitive skills 1 and 2***

## Improving self-knowledge (C1.1) and knowing how to think critically (C1.2)

Better self-knowledge enables one to better understand, accept and regulate oneself and to act in a way that is true to oneself. Knowledge of the psychological dimension of the self facilitates this self-knowledge.

**This self-knowledge involves:**

- **Knowing the major dimensions of the psychological Self (external Self, Self-image, inner Self, subject Self);**
- **Knowing the role and limitations of self-image;**
- **Knowing how to question one's self-image in order to think critically;**
- **Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions;**
- **Being able to observe and embrace the inner Self.**

### 1.Knowing the different dimensions of the psychological Self *(see figures C1.1 and C1.2)*

**The psychological Self** has different dimensions; some may be conscious and others less conscious or even subconscious. These different dimensions of the psychological Self are distinct, yet interrelated [4, 42-45]. In schematic terms, it is possible to highlight four major distinct and interrelated dimensions of the psychological Self:

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

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

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

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

## 2.Knowing the role and limitations of self-image

**Self image or self concept** refers to the set of mental representations that an individual has of themselves [4]. These representations are numerous and can be grouped by areas of life and activity (body image or physical appearance; intellectual and academic skills, professional skills and situation, physical and sporting skills, etc.). These self-representations form the basis of our personal (mental) identity and constitute a major determinant of our behaviours. They are closely dependent on our cultural identity and social roles because they are constructed in interaction with our social environment.

- **Self-representations (or self-image) are major determinants of our behaviours and our lives**

Without always being aware of it, we have many ideas, thoughts, beliefs, images and judgements about ourselves. All these representations greatly influence our decisions, our behaviours, our choices and our life experiences. In connection with our **need for coherence and self-affirmation,**[2] many of our actions are aimed at confirming, maintaining and preserving our self vision [4]. Sometimes, it is as if there is no longer any difference between ourselves and our self-image: we become 'the nice one', 'the funny one', 'the rebel', 'the scientist', 'the teacher', 'the boss', 'the parent', etc. and we behave accordingly.

*For example: "If we think we are too fat, we will decide to buy certain clothes and not others, avoid certain places and activities, spend time in front of the mirror and on the scales, study foods, keep to a diet, think about this problem and look for solutions, discuss this problem with professionals and with loved ones, feel bad about ourselves, etc. All these behaviours, thoughts and feelings originate in a self representation: 'I am too fat'."*

In addition to guiding our behaviour and our life, our self-image contains our own self-judgement based on our **self-assessment** (*see cognitive skill C1.5*). This self-judgement generates a certain **self-esteem** through a comparison of one's self-image to a norm, a standard (which can sometimes take the form of an **ideal self-image**) or to others (social comparisons). This norm, which is a representation within oneself and which has been socially constructed, often pushes us to be very self-critical. Any discrepancy between one's 'self-image' and one's 'ideal self-image' is a source of tension and unease. These tensions can generate unpleasant emotions and lead to action.

> *For example, if we find ourselves 'shy' and 'not brave and dynamic enough' and we think that people who succeed in life are 'extroverted, enterprising and dynamic' then we will feel unease (due to the discrepancy between our 'self-image' and our 'ideal self'). This unease will be all the more significant when we are in the presence of people who are considered 'extroverted, enterprising and dynamic'. This unease will push us to react in different possible ways: to withdraw even more (to devalue ourselves, to have a complex, etc.) to react aggressively (to criticise, to hurt, to get angry, etc.) or to try to change ourselves (to work on ourselves, to learn, to improve).*

This tendency to believe in and act in line with one's 'self-image' and 'ideal self-image' is widespread. It lies at the heart of human functioning, both individual and social. We all tend to respond to our self-image and judge ourselves on the basis of our ideal self-image, forgetting that it is only a representation of ourselves and not reality. This tendency to treat these mental images of oneself as factual reality is referred to as **identification** or **cognitive fusion** (*see below*). We become and behave like 'the brilliant student', 'the young person from the suburbs', 'the cool and trendy woman', 'the rebellious young person', 'the knowledgeable intellectual', 'the executive', etc. without always realising that it is these images that tint and shape our life (like a colour filter or a computer program).

One self representation is **the future self-image**, i.e. the **possible self** concepts in the future; "what one wants to become (either rich, or thin, etc.) and what one fears becoming (unemployed self, disabled self, fat self, rejected self, etc.)" [4]. Just like the current self-image and idealised self-image, the future self-image, whether conscious or subconscious, guides our behaviour. The 'possible selves', whether sought after or feared, represent a major lever for action. These future self-images push us to act, and motivate us to shift

[2] See the list of psychological needs in the cognitive skill (sheet C1.3).

from the current self-image to the desired self-image, thus operating as a goal, a personal aspiration. Consequently, possible self-concepts, and positive (or ideal) futures are a major motivational factor [4] (*see cognitive skill C1.3: knowing one's goals*).

- **Self-representations (or Self-image) are constructed in interaction with our social environment**

Even though lived experiences (pleasant, unpleasant, etc.) influence our self-image, this image is largely dependent on our education (parents, family, school, etc.), our culture (country, people, religion, etc.) and our social environment (friends, profession, activities, etc.) [44, 47]. We assimilate representations of others and the feedback we receive (what our parents, friends, colleagues, etc. say about us) and they become our own. Then, these representations are used to construct our own self-representations through the process of **internalisation** [4, 48]. *E.g.: "If our loved ones see us as 'handsome and strong,' we build this self-image and behave accordingly: confidence, seduction, avoidance of situations and emotions that make us feel weak, etc."*

This major psychological mechanism relates to the fact that we tend, without being fully aware of it, to transform ways of thinking, evaluating and behaving that are originally outside of ourselves (in the social environment), into ways of thinking, evaluating and behaving that are internal to ourselves. Thus, the representations held by others are internalised; they become our own representations (of ourselves) which will then guide our own behaviour.

Two reasons are put forward to explain this process of internalisation [4]: **the need for affiliation**, i.e. the desire to develop harmonious relationships and to be integrated into one's social environment (family, friends, teachers, colleagues, employers, cultural and religious groups, etc.), this need, which is present at all ages of life, would appear to be particularly present in adolescence [49]; and **the need for adaptation and competence,** i.e. the need to act and interact effectively and in keeping with one's social environment (see list of psychological needs, cognitive skill C1.3).

Thus, self-representations are constructed through contact with our social environment and stem from our upbringing. Our 'self-image' is therefore largely dependent on our 'external self', as perceived by those around us. We tend to see ourselves as we think others see us.

## 3. Questioning self-image and thinking critically

Like a computer program, our representations (especially our self-representations), whether conscious or subconscious, determine a large part of our behaviour. Without realising it, we tend to confuse our ideas with facts (whether these are internal or external phenomena). This process of identifying with these representations, which occurs without our being aware of it, is called **cognitive fusion**. “We interact with our thoughts as representations of the internal world, but also of the external world, losing contact with the context in which we are situated and the stimuli it includes. When we fuse with our mind, we symbolically formulate rules to organise our behaviour. These rules are socially instilled. The problem is that they cause a loss of contact (with the facts)” [44].

Most of the time, this process of cognitive fusion is automatic, unintentional and subconscious. This means that we are not aware of the (self-) representations that are being activated and that lie at the origin of our behaviours. However, it is possible to regain control over this process using a mechanism called **cognitive defusion** [44, 50]. "Defusion is the ability to put in place a different, distanced and more nuanced psychological perspective in relation to one's inner experiences, such as thoughts, feelings, emotions and mental images" [44, 51]. Thus, defusion enables us to stop identifying with our self-representations and to stop considering our self-image as reality. “Thoughts are not facts, they are only thoughts, even those that say the opposite” [44, 51]. This awareness of the subjective nature of thoughts helps to "clarify the confusion we make between verbally constructed internal processes (our thoughts) and concrete situations in the external world (the facts). For example, ‘I will never be able to succeed’ can be reformulated as follows: ‘I think that I will never succeed.’ This reformulation makes it possible to distance oneself. It highlights that thought is the product of brain activity and is not necessarily equivalent to reality" [44, 50].

**Reconsidered as ‘mere’ beliefs and ‘mere’ thoughts, and not established facts, (self-) representations can thus be questioned, as can our behaviours that are associated with them. By relying on this mechanism of cognitive defusion and questioning our representations, we can strengthen our ability to think critically.**

We then have the possibility and the freedom to adhere, or not, to these representations (of ourselves) and to choose, or not, to act according to these beliefs (about ourselves). "We do not control the thoughts that arise on our mental screen, but we can choose whether to adhere to them or not, to follow their recommendation or not" [50].

Cognitive fusion can take place in relation to all of our internal productions (or inner Self), thus we tend, without being aware of it, to identify with and become one with **the thought**, **the emotion** or **the feeling** that inhabits us: “Most of the time, we fuse what we feel with who we are – as shown by the expressions ‘I am sad’ or ‘I am jealous’ – but this prevents us from giving these emotions free rein” [52].

Consequently, the voluntary mechanism of **defusion** can enable us to learn "to differentiate between ourselves and what we feel, in order to evolve from 'I am the emotion' to 'I feel an emotion', **thus transforming 'I am sad' into 'I feel sadness'**" [52]. It is therefore possible to defuse from one's thoughts, emotions and feelings and to observe one's inner Self through one's subject Self. Through observation, reflection and conscious decision-making, the individual becomes capable of choosing and generating conscious and voluntary behaviours that are truly in accordance with themselves.

## 4. Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions

**Cognitive capacities or mental abilities (**which are part of the subject Self) centre on four main functions [46]:

1. **Receptive functions**: perception and attention enable the acquisition, processing and integration of information;

2. **Memory functions**: memory and learning enable information storage and recall;

3. **Analytical functions**: thinking and reasoning allow us to (re)organise information mentally, make choices and solve problems;

4. **Expressive functions** lie at the core of all actions (verbal and behavioural).

We propose a simplified representation of these major cognitive functions associated with the subject Self. Thus, schematically we can distinguish between four major cognitive and behavioural capacities which, throughout this framework, will be represented by the acronym **AADA**:

1) Ability to pay **A**ttention and to observe the information presented;
2) Ability to **A**nalyse based on the information present and memorised information (through learning and experiences);
3) Ability to make **D**ecisions (using the present and memorised information);
4) Capacity for verbal and/or behavioural **A**ction.

*E.g.: "I observed and analysed the pupils' behaviour, then I decided to run a workshop on empathetic communication."*

The subject Self is the part of ourselves from which we can exert voluntary and conscious action. The subject Self enables us to act to execute intentional actions, whether these are of an intrapsychic nature (feeling, thinking, deciding, etc.) or a behavioural natural (speaking, writing, singing, running, etc.).

Thus, the abilities of the subject Self are particularly important; they lie at the heart of the development of PSS. Indeed, it is due to the subject Self that it is possible to strengthen each PSS. The subject Self plays an essential role in developing each of the PSS. Depending on the PSS to be developed, the subject Self is harnessed in a different way; certain abilities of the subject Self are then mobilised to a greater or lesser extent (*see table below).*

**Table 3. C1.1 and C1.2: The main subject Self abilities that need to be strengthened in order to develop the PSS (in Volume I)**

| PSS | Subject Self abilities to be strengthened | Other dimensions of the Self involved |
|---|---|---|
| C1.1: Improving self-knowledge *and*<br>C1.2: Knowing how to think critically<br>C1.3: Knowing one's values, needs and personal goals, and<br>C1.4: Making constructive decisions | Capacity for Attention and observation (**A**ADA)<br>Capacity for Analysis (A**A**DA)<br>Capacity for Analysis (A**A**DA) | Psychological self (as a whole)<br><br>Self-image (ideal and future possible self-images) inner self (psychological needs) |
| C1.5: Positive self-assessment | Capacity for Analysis (A**A**DA) | Self-image (positive representations) |
| C1.6: Strengthening full attention | Capacity for Attention and observation (**A**ADA) | Inner Self (5 psychic states) |
| E1.1: Understanding one's emotions | Capacity for Analysis (A**A**DA) | Inner self (emotions) |
| E1.2: Identifying one's emotions | Capacity for Attention and observation (**A**ADA) | Inner self (emotions) |
| S1.1: Communicating effectively and positively | Capacity for Attention and observation (**A**ADA)<br>Capacity for Analysis (A**A**DA)<br>Capacity to make Decisions (AA**D**A)<br>Capacity for verbal Action (AADA**A**) | External Self |
| S1.2: Communicating empathetically | Capacity for Attention and observation (**A**ADA)<br>Capacity for Analysis (A**A**DA)<br>Capacity to make Decisions (AA**D**A)<br>Capacity for verbal Action (AADA**A**) | Inner self (of the other)<br><br>External Self |
| S1.3: Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours | Capacity for Attention and observation (**A**ADA)<br>Capacity for Analysis (A**A**DA)<br>Capacity to make Decisions (AA**D**A)<br>Capacity for verbal Action (AADA**A**) | Inner Self<br><br>External Self |

*Colour code: blue: Cognitive PSS (C); pink: Emotional PSS (E); purple: Social PSS (S)*

## 5. Observing and embracing one's inner Self

The inner Self encompasses all the states that are produced within oneself and that can be experienced:

- The productions of the cognitive system called **cognitions** (ideas, thoughts, representations, images, beliefs, values, dreams, judgements, memories, etc.);
- The productions of the emotional and affective system called **emotions** (feelings, affects, moods, etc.);
- The states produced by the body called **bodily sensations**;
- The global and diffuse psychophysical states called **impressions**;
- The psychophysical productions that trigger the organism and tend towards action are called **volitions** or **conations** (impulses, urges, desires, needs,[3] etc.).

These five **internal states** can be made conscious by learning to observe them and pay attention to them through the subject Self. However, a subconscious (and widespread) mechanism regularly hinders this process of becoming aware: '**experiential avoidance**'. The latter is defined as the "tendency to want to avoid or escape from one's private experiences (thoughts, emotions, (bodily) sensations, memories, desires) [53] by seeking to modify their form, frequency, intensity, duration or situational importance, even when this is futile or interferes with the actions validated" [46].

*E.g.: My inner Self can contain emotions of anger and fear, sensations of unease and fatigue, thoughts such as 'I must succeed', 'I must not let myself go', 'if I crack I am worthless', and volitions such as no energy to get up, no energy to do the planned activity, without my subject Self consciously perceiving these emotions, sensations, thoughts and volitions; I then continue to go about my business as if nothing were wrong.*

Experiential avoidance is culturally learned and widely shared. It is also closely linked to the process of cognitive fusion [44]. Indeed, our tendency to identify with what we feel means that when we fuse with an unpleasant internal state (an unpleasant thought, a painful emotion, a feeling of unease or an uncomfortable impulse), it can become difficult to bear. We may then tend to repulse our internal state and cut ourselves off from our inner Self [44]. "Faced with these aversive internal stimuli, the individual engages in controlling behaviours: suppressing, taming or resolving the threat. When it is private events that take on these aversive functions (thoughts, images, emotions, physical sensations) the individual engages in attempts at control" [44]. These strategies for controlling internal states are costly for the individual, even if they may seem effective in the moment. "Control leads to rigidity in the individual's fields of action, as they tirelessly engage in acts of control and struggle against these 'symptoms'." Time, energy and cognitive functions are no longer available for other tasks" [44]. Experiential avoidance generates a climate of tension and struggle within oneself. It is a source of unease that is not always identified and is often difficult to decipher. If it becomes too great, it generates psychological suffering and can lead to mental disorders. Avoidance and control strategies (for internal states) can be implemented by the cognitive and/or behavioural system and take different forms. On a cognitive level, this can involve suppressing thought, distraction or rumination. At the behavioural level, this can lead to risky behaviours, aggressive behaviours, emotional dysregulation, the use of psychoactive substances and suicidal behaviours [44]. This experiential avoidance mechanism also seems to lead to a vicious circle; indeed, "the very extensive literature on experiential avoidance has largely shown that attempting to control private events leads to an increase in those same events" [44].

[3] See table of psychological needs in the annex.

In contrast to experiential avoidance, embracing experiences or **experiential acceptance** is a psychological attitude that is considered more constructive and beneficial for oneself. It is defined as "the voluntary and intentional attitude of coming into contact with one's private experience, regardless of whether this is considered positive or negative. The individual chooses to openly and benevolently embrace their thoughts, physical sensations, emotions, feelings and memories, whatever their content. Acceptance is not resignation or passivity" [44]. The productions of the inner Self are thus accepted and taken into consideration by the person through the subject Self's capacities. The individual then becomes capable of thinking and acting with full awareness, in connection with their whole person and in accordance with their internal states.

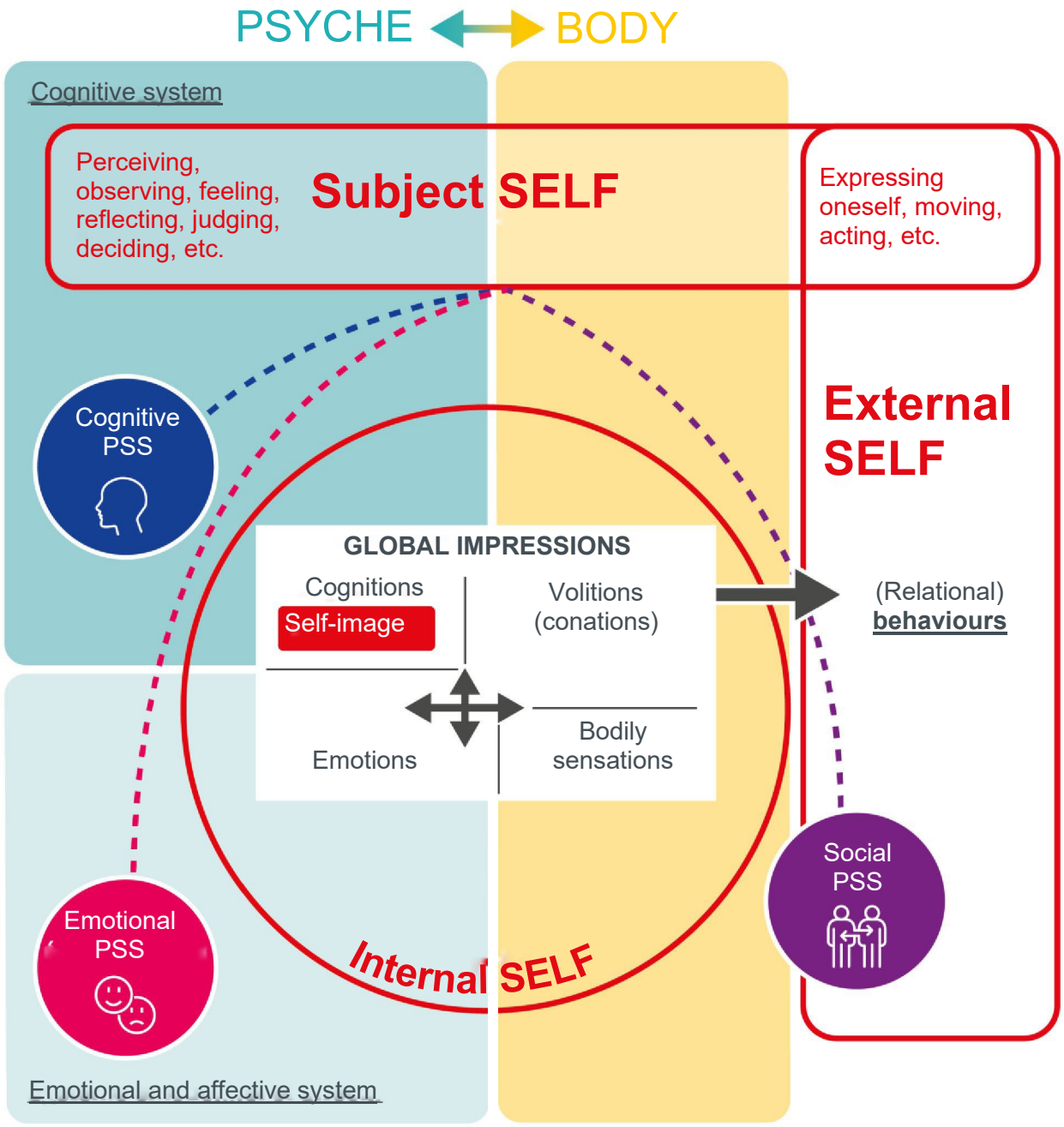
*Improving self-knowledge generates three main beneficial effects:*

- **Knowing the limitations of self-image strengthens empowerment:** by becoming aware of the link between our self-representations and our behaviours, it is possible to gain perspective on how we function. We can identify the mental images that underlie our behaviours and life experiences. After (re)cognising them, we can question and challenge them, which develops our capacity to think critically. We will then be in a better position to change them, adjust them and enrich them, which will increase our capacity to think and our empowerment.
- **Defusing from our representations and thinking critically strengthens empowerment**: by differentiating ourselves from our thoughts and representations we can perceive how they act on us and condition our behaviours. By becoming aware of this automatic reflex, we can then choose to observe and question our representations, which further promotes empowerment.
- **Embracing the internal experience (or experiential acceptance) makes it possible to improve one's creativity and psychological well-being:** experiential acceptance enables a person to consciously access their internal productions (images, needs, emotions, etc.). By recognising our internal states (without fusing with them), it will then be possible to better regulate them, respond to our psychological needs in an appropriate manner (*see needs table in C1.3*), make informed choices and act intentionally, in a manner that is more true to ourselves. Reducing experiential avoidance and increasing experiential acceptance helps to increase psychological wellbeing and avoid a large number of problems (risky behaviours, violent behaviours, addictions, etc.).

*Strengthening self-knowledge requires two conditions:*

- **Cognitive skills of attention, observation and reflection (related to the subject Self):** these depend, in particular, on neuropsychological development and practice (through learning).
- **Accepting that one's psychological Self is largely constructed (and conditioned) by others:** the process of internalisation remains central in the construction of self-image and in our daily actions. This is why our identity is also dependent on our beliefs and social interactions. This psychological mechanism, however, goes against a widely shared (and internalised) social representation in our society today whereby we are free and autonomous in our thoughts, choices and actions [54]. Becoming aware of and accepting this innate process (which shows the full importance of the lessons learned) is an essential first step in truly strengthening our decision-making power and our empowerment and not being satisfied with a mere (illusory) representation of freedom.

**Figure 2. C1.1. Schematic representation of the PSS and the four dimensions of the Self (subject Self, inner Self, external Self, Self-image, in red)**



## Key takeaways (C1.1 and C1.2)

**Conceptual definition:** **"Self-awareness entails understanding one's cognitions** (thoughts, beliefs, values, etc.), **emotions** (feelings, sentiments, etc.) **and volitions** (desires, needs, aspirations, dreams, etc.) and how they are **linked to behaviours.** This is made possible by a better understanding of how the Self works and by "working on our self-representations (called self-concept or self-image), our judgement of ourselves (called self-esteem) and on how these are constructed (influences, biases, etc.) (...). This improved self-knowledge implies strengthening one's ability to think critically by understanding the influence of the social environment on oneself (on how one thinks, feels and acts) as well as perception and interpretation biases [3, 44]. It enables us to better understand the process of (self-) representation genesis and the role of different social influences (family, friends, educational, cultural, religious, etc.) in order to be able to adjust one's self-image to one's own perceptions and develop a benevolent relationship with oneself."(45)

**Operational definition: Five knowledge items and practical skills enable one to improve self-awareness and critical thinking**

1. **Knowing the different dimensions of the psychological Self**: the external Self (which includes all aspects of the self that are external and perceptible to others), self-image (which encompasses all the representations we have of ourselves and all the judgements we make about ourselves that form the basis of self-esteem), the inner Self (which refers to internal experiences and includes the 5 psychic states of cognition, emotions, sensations, impressions, and volitions or conations) and the subject Self (which encompasses cognitive (perceiving, thinking, deciding, etc.) and behavioural (expressing oneself, moving, etc.) capacities and which allows one to perform actions voluntarily and to self-regulate).

2. **Knowing the role and limitations of self-image**: self-image is comprised of representations; it is not the reality of who we are. These self-representations have a marked influence on our behaviour; they are constructed in interaction with others and are therefore largely dependent on our social and cultural environment. Consequently, they can be modified.

3. **Questioning self-image and thinking critically**: by reducing our tendency to treat our ideas as facts (a mechanism called 'cognitive fusion'), it becomes easier to question and challenge our self-representations and our representations of the world.

4. **Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions**: the cognitive and behavioural capacities of the subject Self, represented in this framework by the acronym **AADA** (Attention/Analysis/Decision/Action), form the basis of all conscious and voluntary actions; they play an essential role in the development of PSS.

5. **Observing and embracing one's inner Self**: by reducing our tendency to reject or modify our inner experience (a mechanism called 'experiential avoidance') we can better perceive our psychic states (cognitions, emotions, volitions/conations, bodily sensations, impressions) (a mechanism called 'experiential acceptance') and act accordingly.

## Key takeaways (C1.1 and C1.2 *continued*)

**Main effects: Improving self-knowledge and critical thinking makes it possible to**:

- **Strengthen one's empowerment:** by becoming aware that our self-representations are constructed in interaction with our social environment and that they largely determine our behaviours, we can question them more. By differentiating ourselves from our ideas and self-representations through the mechanism of cognitive defusion, we can then question them and choose to change, adjust and enrich them, which allows us to increase our capacity to think and act (empowerment).

- **Better embrace one's internal experience (or experiential acceptance) and foster one's creativity and psychological wellbeing:** by recognising one's internal states (without fusing with them), it is easier to regulate them, to respond to one's psychological needs in an appropriate manner, to make informed choices and to act intentionally, in a way that is truer to oneself. Reducing experiential avoidance and increasing experiential acceptance helps to increase psychological wellbeing and avoid a large number of problems (risky behaviours, violent behaviours, addictive behaviours, etc.).

**Main conditions: Improving one's self-awareness and critical thinking requires**:

- **Cognitive skills of attention, observation and reflection (related to the subject Self):** these depend, in particular, on neuropsychological development and practice (through learning).

- **Accepting that one's psychological Self is largely constructed (and conditioned) by others:** the process of internalisation remains central in the construction of self-image and in our daily actions. Thus, our identity is largely dependent on our social interactions. However, this innate process (which demonstrates the full importance of the lessons learned) goes against a widely shared (and internalised) social representation in our society today whereby we are free and autonomous in our thoughts, choices and actions [12]. Becoming aware of and accepting this constitutes an essential step in strengthening our decision-making power and empowerment and not settling for a mere (illusory) representation of freedom.

# Example activities to develop the PSS

## C1.1 Improving self-knowledge and C1.2 Knowing how to think critically

## Cognitive defusion of limiting beliefs

*(Extract from Kotsou I, Farnier J, Shankland R, Mikolajczak M, Leys C., 2022 [50])*

**Audience:** □ Children; □ Young people; ☒ Adults

**Activity type:** ☒ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Improving self-knowledge C1.1 and C1.2 knowing how to think critically

**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Having better knowledge of the different dimensions of the psychological Self

☒ Knowing the role and limitations of self-representation (self-image)

☒ Questioning self-representations (and strengthening critical thinking)

□ Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions

□ Learning to observe and embrace one's internal experience (inner Self)

**Format:** ☒ Individual; ☒ Group

"A **limiting thought** is a thought that prevents the generation of behaviours adapted to the context. Conversely, a **helpful** thought is a thought that facilitates adjustment to the context in line with the individual's objectives or what makes sense for them. The facilitator can give examples of thoughts that can prove limiting for some people or in certain contexts:

- *Rules*: 'I must always be nice', the problem in following this rule comes when the most appropriate response is to be able to express our needs which are different from those of the other person, to be able to say no or to set limits.
- *Beliefs about oneself*: 'Nobody is interested in me', this belief can lead to avoiding meeting new people or developing new relationships.
- *Catastrophic thinking* of the 'What if?' type: 'What if he leaves me?', 'What if I have an accident?', these can be associated with mental images and generate anxiety, avoidance or reassuring behaviours that are costly for those around them.

The facilitator asks the participants to identify their four limiting thoughts or scenarios that recur most frequently and prevent them from carrying out activities or actions that would be important to them." "Our thoughts influence our emotional and behavioural reactions. Therefore, it can be problematic to listen to them when they are limiting or inappropriate. However, our brain likes us to listen to it constantly, whatever it is telling us; this is what is called cognitive fusion. During this exercise, we are going to experience another way of getting in touch with our thoughts: **defusion**. This entails observing our thoughts as thoughts, without taking them for truths, and without trying to fight against them either." "My top four limiting thoughts or scenarios (a thought is a verbal description, while a scenario can take the form of mental images):

1).....
2).....
3).....
4).....

Using a codename can be helpful in detaching from a thought in the moment in an amusing way: 'My number 1 limiting belief has just come up' or 'The inner dictator has just snatched the microphone back'."

# Proust questionnaire

*(Extract from the ScholaVie tools, ScholaVie - Psychosocial skills at school)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Improving self-knowledge C1.1 and C1.2 knowing how to think critically

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Having better knowledge of the different dimensions of the psychological Self

□ Knowing the role and limitations of self-representation (self-image)

⊠ Questioning one's self-representations (and strengthening one's critical thinking)

□ Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions

□ Learning to observe and embrace one's internal experience (inner Self)

**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** printable template below

## Using the tool

- Print one questionnaire per pupil, or project it onto the board.
- Make groups of no more than four pupils and give out the questionnaires.
- Choose the option that suits you best depending on the time you wish to dedicate to the exercise:
  - 35 mins: the pupils answer the questionnaire items in order, each taking turns in their group.
  - 15 mins: ask the pupils to choose five items and answer them in turn. The pupils can agree as a group on the five questions they wish to answer, or each person in the group can answer the five questions of their choosing.

## Feedback

At the end of the exercise, we recommend that you give your pupils some time to consolidate the psychosocial skills they have worked on and to grasp the role they can play at school and in their learning:

- **Phase 1: First, propose self-observation** - *How did you find this exercise? What have you learned about yourself? About your classmates? How are you feeling now?*
- **Phase 2: Conclude by initiating metacognitive reflection** - *How can the skills you have developed through this exercise help you to learn better? How can you put them to good use at school and in the classroom? Why do you think they are important?*

To promote pedagogical freedom, this tool, like all those offered by ScholaVie, can be adapted according to needs and/or co-constructed with the pupils in order to involve them as much as possible and increase their level of engagement.

## PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE

A tool for developing self-knowledge and knowledge of others.

- Primary school version -

1. What I like most about school
2. Something I enjoyed learning
3. A nice memory from the year
4. One of my successes
5. A mistake that taught me things
6. A strength that I recognise in myself
7. A strength that others recognise in me
8. A strength I would like to develop
9. An activity that calms me down
10. A hero who inspires me

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## PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE

A tool for developing self-knowledge and knowledge of others.

- Secondary version -

1. Someone who makes me want to get up in the morning
2. Something I am grateful for
3. What I like learning
4. A pleasant emotion that I often feel
5. A recent positive experience
6. A mistake that made me grow
7. My greatest achievement
8. My goal for the year
9. My favourite quote
10. An activity that makes me feel good
11. A physical activity that I enjoy doing
12. A film, series, or joke that makes me laugh
13. Music that gives me energy
14. The friends I can count on
15. What I most appreciate about my friends
16. An engaging teacher
17. A person I want to thank
18. A person who inspires me
19. My way of helping others
20. What I appreciate most in my life

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# The human domino

*(Extract from the Cartable des compétences psychosociales [Psychosocial Skills Toolkit], Promotion Santé Pays de la Loire)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Improving self-knowledge C1.1 and knowing how to think critically C1.2

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Having better knowledge of the different dimensions of the psychological Self

□ Knowing the role and limitations of self-representation (self-image)

⊠ Questioning one's self-representations (and strengthening one's critical thinking)

□ Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions

□ Learning to observe and embrace one's internal experience (inner Self)

**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

## Experiment/Role play

**Instruction** 1: Make the link with the game of dominoes that the children may already know; this exercise is also about forming a line, taking turns in going to stand next to someone with whom we may have something in common. Each person represents a domino. The game is over when the chain is complete.
Each person says while looking at the other: 'I'm standing next to you... (first name), because like you, I have... or I am... or I like...'

### Alternative

Quality dominoes: appropriation of work done on qualities, skills, etc.

### Equipment

Space to form a circle and to move around.

**Instruction 2:** Once the game of dominoes has been completed, this new instruction is given: "Now, we are going to go back in the other direction and each person will say, turning to their neighbour:
'...(First name), you came to stand next to me because, like me, you...'"

## Awareness/Analysis

Did you enjoy this exercise?
What do you think of it?
What did you notice?
Depending on the age of the participants and the objectives, the facilitator may draw attention to:

- feelings of cohesion, belonging or existence within a group, physical proximity;
- the skills used: listening, paying attention to others, memorisation;
- the needs met: pleasure, moving, changing place, occupying space, etc.

# Three children and four triangles

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R. & Williamson M, 2021* [47]*)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Improving self-knowledge C1.1 and knowing how to think critically C1.2

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Having better knowledge of the different dimensions of the psychological Self

□ Knowing the role and limitations of self-representation (self-image)

⊠ Questioning one's self-representations (and strengthening one's critical thinking)

□ Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions

□ Learning to observe and embrace one's internal experience (inner Self)

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** printable sheet with four triangles below

**"Suggest that the children exchange views as a whole group:** Ask if they have ever felt different from others. What did they feel in those situations? What was pleasant about it? Unpleasant? Emphasise (drawing on the children's experiences) that when we feel different, we are sometimes afraid of being rejected by others.

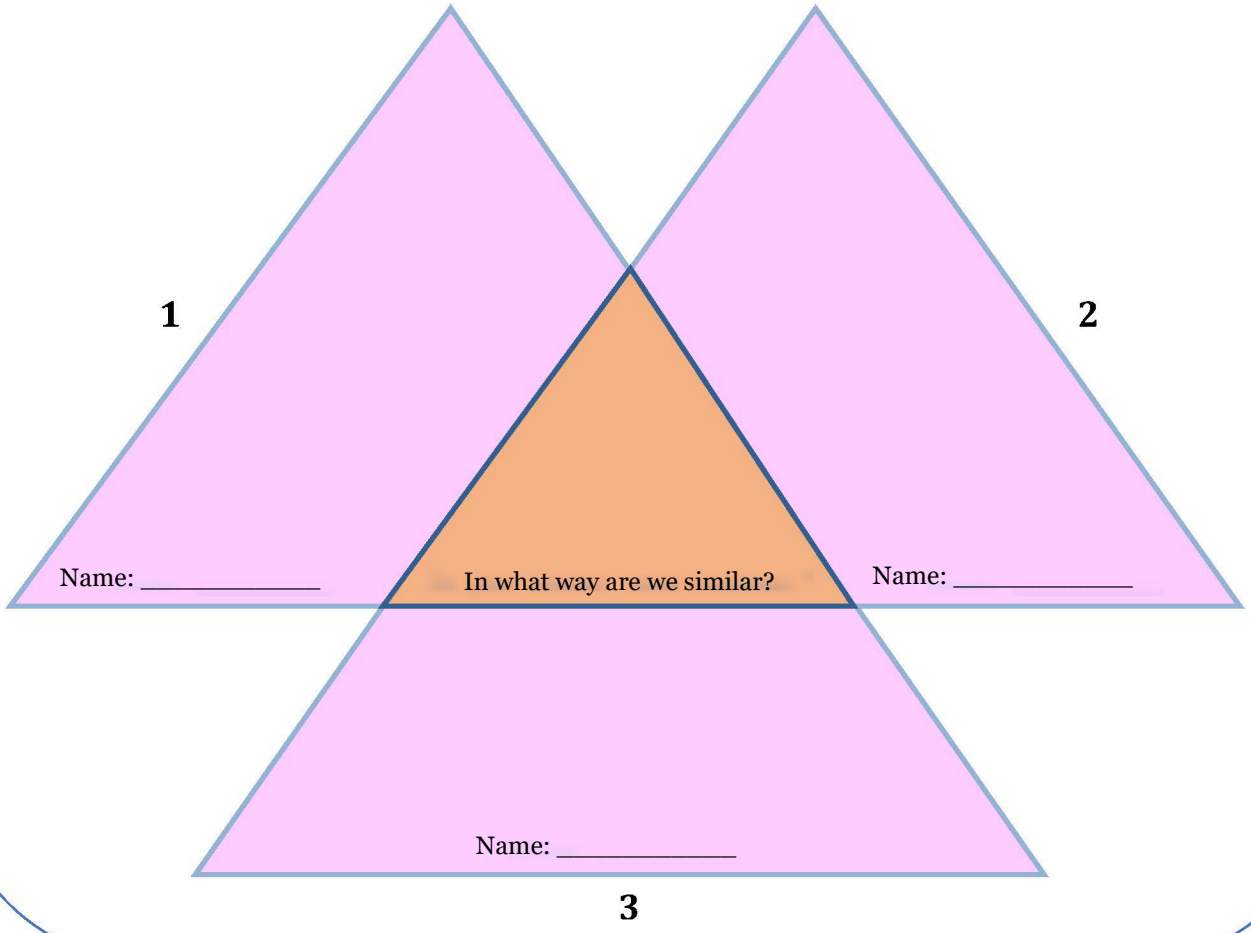
- Next, make **groups of three** and give each child a copy of the 'four triangles' sheet (see below).
- Read the instructions together. Point out that each triangle on the sheet is numbered (1, 2 or 3) and that each will represent one child of the group of three. The children choose a number and write their name inside the corresponding triangle.
- First, each child will work out and write down a characteristic that makes them unique in their group of three. *For example, 'child 1' may enjoy playing the violin, and will write it down if neither 'child 2' nor 'child 3' do.*
- Next, invite each group of three to work out, and then write down, three characteristics that are common to all three of them.
- At the end of the exercise, invite the children to share the differences and similarities that have been highlighted with the whole class.

***Extension:***

- *You can suggest finding a characteristic that just one child has and that distinguishes then from all the others.*
- *Conversely, you could suggest finding a characteristic that all the children have".*

**Equipment: four triangles sheet**

*In the central triangle, write the characteristic(s) that you have in common with the other members of your group. In the other triangles, indicate the characteristic(s) that make each of you unique.*



# The hidden world of emotions
## An emotional skills development programme for children

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou, 2024)*

**Audience**: ⊠ Children;⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Improving self-knowledge C1.1 and knowing how to think critically C1.2

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Having better knowledge of the different dimensions of the psychological Self

⊠ Knowing the role and limitations of self-representation (self-image)

□ Questioning one's self-representations (and strengthening one's critical thinking)

⊠ Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions

□ Learning to observe and embrace one's internal experience (inner Self)

**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** Blablatyrex template below

"Today, researchers are interested in thought production; our brain produces them continuously, again and again! Thoughts arise in different ways: when we reflect, when we have to solve a problem, when we make a plan or when we think about someone; all these thoughts are voluntary and intentional, meaning that you know you are thinking about a particular subject.

However, there is another category of thoughts, automatic thoughts, which come in quick succession and are out of your control, opinions, judgements, doubts about a lot of things*: 'He doesn't think I'm nice', 'I'm useless, I'm not going to get this dictation right', 'That's always how it goes',* these thoughts go on and on, as if we had a chattering bird on our shoulder that pokes its beak into everything, comments on everything, and criticises and judges constantly.

These automatic thoughts will trigger a whole avalanche of different emotions which will in turn influence our reactions to a situation. Often, we listen to this chattering bird and believe it speaks the truth, taking these thoughts for reality, then we feel sad, we are afraid, all because of this inner voice that judges and criticises. Even though you cannot stop thinking, you can stop believing everything that this chatterbox parrot tells you! Researchers have even given this bird a name: the Blablatyrex.

Now, it is your turn: *What does your Blablatyrex tell you? What does it look like? What are these repetitive and negative thoughts that go round and round, like 'I'm not going to be able to do it, it's too hard'; or 'I'm not good enough, I'm useless, it's going to go badly, the others are better, etc.'*

### Exercise 1: My Blablatyrex and I

Give out the activity sheet. Then, ask the children to first draw their Blablatyrex, this overly talkative and critical bird that represents all these automatic and negative thoughts; do not hesitate to ridicule this bird to reduce its influence. Once the children have drawn the Blablatyrex, ask them to write inside the first head the words or phrases that the bird repeats.

Once the thoughts have been listed, the facilitator will ask the children to observe these thoughts from a distance, and to ask themselves the following questions as if they were a detective:

- What is the proof for this idea?
- Are there any other possible explanations?
- How would I feel if I thought differently?

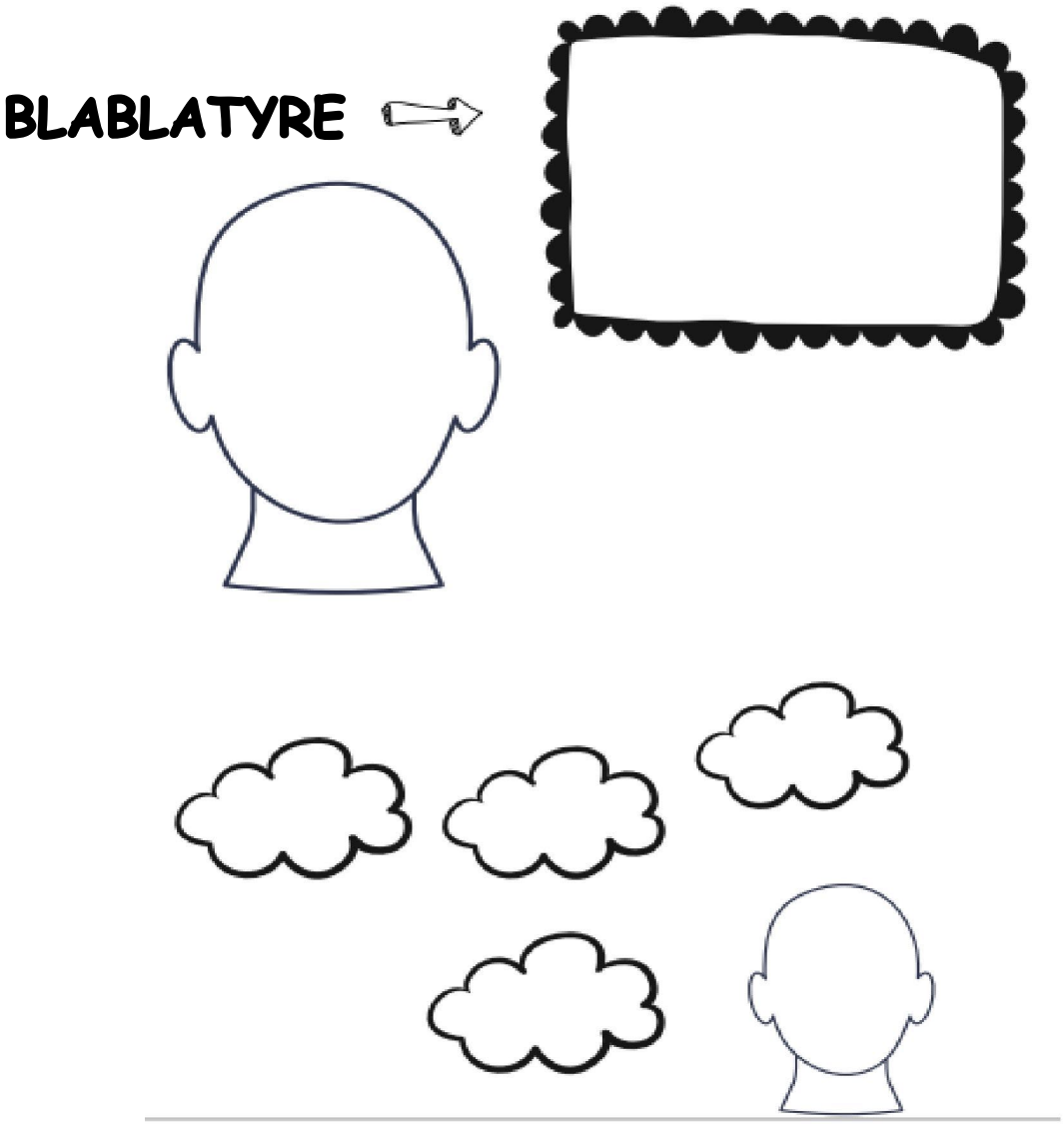
Explain to the children that thoughts are just thoughts, and are not reality; these negative thoughts sometimes take them away from the present moment and prevent them from enjoying and experiencing positive moments because they are lost in their thoughts.

Ask the children to write the sentences and words outside the head this time, in the clouds. Then, ask the children how they feel now, once the thoughts have left their heads and are like passing clouds [...].

Offer the children different metaphors that allow them to distance themselves from their thoughts, such as observing the train of thoughts passing by and deciding to stay on the platform rather than getting on and embarking on a punishing journey. They can also imagine themselves sitting by a river on which small leaves are floating; when a thought appears, they let it go with the flow of the river like a small leaf carried away by the current, or they can imagine a cinema screen inside their head and watch the film of their thoughts.

The facilitator concludes the exercise with time for the group to share with one another. They can ask the children how they experienced this exercise. What did they feel. What have they learned and discovered through this exercise."

**Equipment: Blablatyrex template to fill in**



# Examples of adjustments to spaces and everyday activities

*(Proposed by Promotion Santé Auvergne Rhône-Alpes – Soizic Brunet)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** □ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Improving self-knowledge C1.1 and knowing how to think critically C1.2
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Having better knowledge of the different dimensions of the psychological Self
□ Knowing the role and limitations of self-representation (self-image)
⊠ Questioning one's self-representations (and strengthening one's critical thinking)
□ Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions
⊠ Learning to observe and embrace one's internal experience (inner Self)
**Format:** □ Individual; □ Group

### "Adjustments to transition spaces, for example upon arrival at school or after-school clubs (in the morning, after the lunch break, in the evening)

A time, like a transitional phase, when children and young people can choose an activity before being put into groups and starting collective activities, based on their needs, desires, emotions and states. Offer different spaces, for example: a relaxation area (to lie down, rest, read quietly), a group games area (board games, construction games), manual activity areas (drawing, handicrafts), a space to finish lunch or have a snack.

These adjustments help to strengthen the attention paid to one's needs and pace during times of transition. Adult assistance is needed to set the operating rules and the duration of this time. Sometimes, it will also be necessary to help some children identify their needs. Establishing the rules of these spaces together with the group will promote their proper functioning.

### School canteen adaptations: some examples to support autonomy

Installing a salad bar-type area where children can choose their first course based on their preferences and appetite. This allows choices to be made: the reassurance of something known and liked or exploration of new dishes. These are everyday opportunities to strengthen the feeling of competence and autonomy by serving oneself. Adult supervision and care are needed in terms of the equipment used to ensure it is suitable for the age and motor skills of the children.

In general, allowing children to participate, serve themselves and help with setting up for the meal, satisfies their need for action, participation and competence.

### Regular daily activities

Read stories to gradually enrich vocabulary about bodily sensations, needs and emotions. Then, gradually, values, temperaments, influences, etc. Reuse this vocabulary in everyday life, in situations experienced by the children or adults.

### Occasional activities: our origins are diverse

Invite the children (from the class or after-school club) to represent, in the form of a drawing or artistic creation, the origins and specific features of their family (regional, national, language, cuisine, customs, etc.). Create a group patchwork to show its diversity. This activity provides an opportunity to reflect on one's origins and identity. It also allows the members of the group to get to know one another."

# Imaginary CV

*(Extract from the Prodas Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Improving self-knowledge C1.1 and knowing how to think critically C1.2

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Having better knowledge of the different dimensions of the Self

□ Knowing the role and limitations of self-representation (self-image)

⊠ Questioning one's self-representations (and strengthening one's critical thinking)

□ Strengthening the subject Self in order to carry out conscious and voluntary actions

□ Learning to observe and embrace one's internal experience (inner Self)

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** Sheet of paper

"Give out the equipment and ask the participants to make their **imaginary CV** with the following instructions: "On the first page, a drawing of a t-shirt with a slogan written on it that fits or defines you; then, the film you would have liked to make; an object you particularly like; the quality you find most important in someone; the quality you find most important in yourself; your leisure activities; a place where you feel good; your favourite word; your favourite colour; an animal that you resemble; a country you would like to visit, etc."

The facilitator can add other instructions or sections and even ask the group to choose the additional items they would like to see on a CV, as long as these new sections do not make anyone feel uncomfortable.

Once the CVs have been completed, ask the participants to put their CVs on a table and to move around to read those of others. Next, ask those who wish to do so to introduce themselves in 4 or 5 minutes based on their CV and to choose what seems most important to them to illustrate their personality."

# Cognitive skills 3 and 4

## Knowing one's values, needs and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)

Behavioural needs are part of our essential psychological needs (*see the table of psychological needs below*). They drive everyone to move, express themselves and take action. They motivate each individual to learn so they can act competently and effectively in their physical and social environment. They incite people to be able to create and take concrete action in and on the world. Although these psychological needs for movement, action and fulfilment are universal, the way in which each person will implement these behavioural needs is unique.

**Setting and achieving personal goals and making constructive decisions requires knowledge of concordant goals, psychological needs and one's personal values. Pursuing self-concordant goals that are based on psychological needs and personal values also enables constructive choices to be made.**

### 1.Knowing one's self-concordant goals

**Personal goals** are mental representations that align with the set of states and situations that a person wishes to achieve [4]. *E.g.: "To have a general average of 15/20; to get a teaching qualification; to meet the man or woman of my dreams; to move to an exotic country, etc."*

Personal goals are directly associated with the **future self-image**, which itself is linked to **the ideal self-image** and possible self-representations. "**Possible selves** are essentially mental representations: attributes, characteristics, skills, social roles, etc. that the self does not yet possess, but desires" [4]. Possible selves, and therefore the goals associated with them, are major motivational factors. In fact, the difference between the current situation or state (the current self) and the desired situation or state (the possible/ideal self) drives us to act and achieve our goals [4]. Thus, generally speaking, people who have goals perform better than those who do not. "Researchers refer to this divergence between the present level of achievement and the ideal level of achievement as the 'goal-performance discrepancy '[4]. Thus, people who do not have possible self-representations in an area of their life also have less motivation and capacity to act in that area [4].

Personal goals are thus elaborate cognitive representations and are linked to our future self-image. They drive us to act intentionally and purposefully towards a defined goal. They are therefore distinct from simple **action tendencies** which can be defined as "automatic tendencies of the organism to be ready on a behavioural level when an emotional situation arises in our environment" [46] and which, if activated, result in 'simple' behaviours in response to the immediate environment.

Personal goals are often numerous and can lead to different daily objectives in different areas. They can be grouped into '**personal aspirations**'; these "represent what an individual typically aims to achieve in their daily behaviour and over the course of their life [57, 58]. Personal aspirations are not goals in themselves, but rather present themselves as superordinate dimensions of the self, which organise and integrate the many and different goals that a person strives to achieve" [4]; a single personal aspiration typically encompasses several different personal goals and can lead to many different day-to-day objectives.

> *For example: my personal aspiration is 'to help vulnerable people' and to that end I pursue several goals: 'to become a doctor', 'to get my degree', 'to get good marks', 'to get involved in a charity', 'to campaign for a political party', etc., which leads me to have many daily objectives: 'to revise my lessons properly', 'to prepare for my exams', 'to be a volunteer', 'to participate in party meetings'.*

We can differentiate between two main types of personal goal: **self-concordant goals** and **non-self-concordant goals**. Concordant (or self-congruent or intrinsic) goals stem from **personal** and authentic **aspirations**. "Goals that are concordant with the self reflect the interests, needs, values and preferences of the self. These are goals that are perceived as being authentic and in harmony with the self" [4].

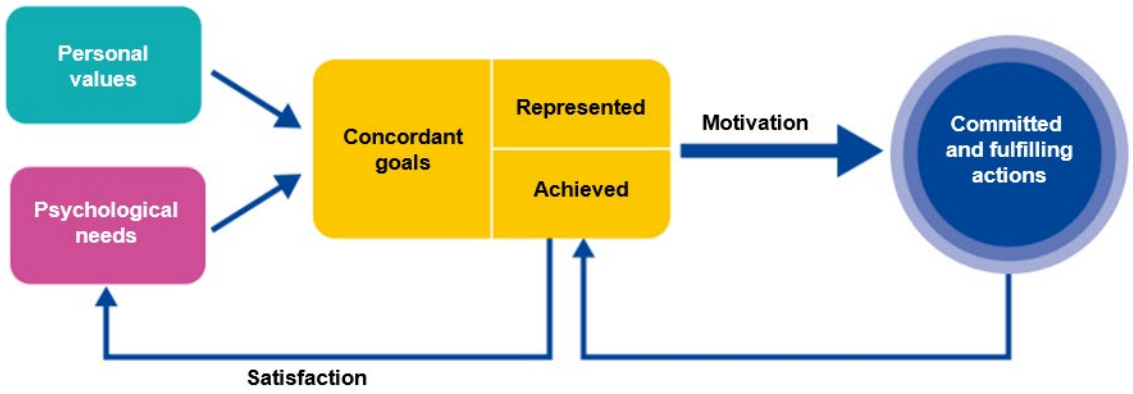
They can be distinguished from **non-concordant goals** (or incongruent or extrinsic) goals, which result from the social environment (parents, family, friends, social and professional circles, culture, society, religion, etc.). They may stem from social obligations and/or a (more or less conscious) desire to be praised or rewarded, and have been integrated into personal representations through the psychological process of **internalisation** (see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2). "Goals that are non-self-concordant are those that neglect the interests, needs, values and preferences of the self, and reflect only social obligations (and representations) and external pressures."

Thus, for reasons external to the individual (social pressure, social norm, social desirability), many people pursue goals that are not their own, but that determine their behaviour and guide their entire lives without realising it. These non-self-concordant goals, which are not in harmony with oneself, are a source of internal conflict and unease.

**Conversely, pursuing concordant goals is a source of wellbeing and harmony. Scientific studies have shown that wellbeing depends more on the nature of the goals pursued than on their actual attainment** [4].

"Goal consistency is important because goals that are congruent with the self enable the individual to draw on their personal resources to inject enthusiasm into, manage and sustain the pursuit of a goal [59]. Indeed, when associated with a goal, personal interests, psychological needs, intrinsic motivation, internalised values, personal preferences and internal motivational resources in general fuel and maintain greater energy, direction and perseverance" [4]. Thus, concordant goals naturally generate more self-determined motivation (i.e., the individual has freely chosen to act because they perceive a personal interest in the action), empowerment, effort and performance [4]. **Motivation** plays a key role in executing behaviours and accomplishing actions. Vallerand and Thill [60] define it as "the internal and/or external forces that produce the trigger, direction, intensity and persistence of the behaviour." Unlike non-self-determined motivation and amotivation, self-determined motivation generates internal strengths to achieve and maintain behaviour [61]. The most self-determined form of motivation is intrinsic motivation. Indeed, "an intrinsically motivated individual decides to deliberately engage in an activity for the pleasure, interest and satisfaction it provides" [62]. Therefore, concordant goals, aligned with an individual's psychological needs and values, generate intrinsic motivation, a greater capacity for action and a more satisfying execution process, within the framework of a committed action that makes sense [4, 44, 62].

**Figure 1. The different components and processes to be implemented to achieve a self-concordant goal**




## 2.Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals

While satisfying physiological needs (breathing, hunger, thirst, sleep, sexuality, etc.) is essential for the proper functioning and survival of the body, satisfying psychological needs is necessary for an individual's growth and psychological wellbeing. Thus, a psychological need can be defined as referring to "a psychological nutrient essential to the adaptation, integrity and growth of individuals" [48, 50]. Psychological needs are inherent to a person and their psychological functioning. In order to maintain its balance, and its physical and psychological wellbeing, the human organism (in its physical and psychic dimension) naturally seeks to meet its intrinsic needs from a very young age [48, 50, 55]. "With its inherent needs and interests, preferences, potentials and emerging capacities, the self is ready to grow, develop and set itself apart"; "The self develops actively" [4]. It is not simply a passive recipient that merely internalises the expectations and beliefs of its social environment (*see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2*) [4, 48]. "The Self is not limited to a cognitive structure (self-concept). The self possesses intrinsic motivation which gives it a quality of agency," [63][4] allowing each person to fully become an actor in their own life. Thus, from a very young age, a person is naturally driven by dynamic and motivational processes that push them to act and develop [4].

Psychological needs, which are essential to a person's balance, should be differentiated from desires and wants, even if in everyday language these different terms can be used interchangeably [48].

> *For example, even though these are more desires than fundamental psychological needs, a child may say that they 'need a tablet to play their video games'; a teenager that they 'need the latest branded trainers for the start of the school year'; a parent that they 'need a little glass of wine to relax'.*

"In everyday language, the term 'need' is used in reference to specific desired attributes or outcomes" [8]. However, in these three cases, the terms 'wishes' and 'desires' would be more appropriate. While satisfying these needs can also generate a certain sense of wellbeing in the moment, their non-satisfaction does not call into question the psychological balance of the person, in the way that the non-satisfaction of psychological needs can. Unlike desires and wishes, the satisfaction of psychological needs is "essential to the wellbeing of individuals" [48]. Some objects or activities may be highly desired without being essential to maintaining a person's balance and wellbeing.

The list of psychological needs is still a subject of debate. For more than seventy years, many psychologists have proposed inventories of psychological needs that partially overlap, such as Maslow (1943, 1954, 1962), Max-Neef *et al.* (1992); Deci and Ryan (2002); and Reiss (2008) [48, 50, 55, 64-69].

By drawing on the main lists of psychological needs and by linking these with the schematic representation of the PSS and the Self (see *figures C1.1 and C1.2*), it is possible to identify and classify the 12 main psychological needs [4, 24, 46, 50, 52, 55, 70-73].

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

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

Our wellbeing and psychological balance are largely dependent on the satisfaction of these different psychological needs. However, it is not easy to recognise all of these needs, let alone respond to them optimally.

Some needs may be overvalued, to the detriment of others [50].

> *For example: I can persevere in an activity that I master and in which I am recognised (and satisfy my need for competence and my need for recognition), even if I feel some weariness and I am no longer learning anything (unmet need for discovery).*

Other psychological needs may be (totally) ignored or even obscured by others.

> *For example: I can act and accomplish many things and seek out stimulating activities and environments (and satisfy my needs for achievement and stimulation), without ever stopping and taking time for myself (and thus forgetting my need for rest).*

Psychological needs can be opposed to one another and create a state of **cognitive dissonance**[4] within the self.

> *For example: I may need coherence and meaning, and need to believe in a peaceful and fair world, yet I am living in a violent and unjust social group, and in order to meet my need for affiliation in this group, I will have to conform to its way of functioning.*

[4] **Cognitive dissonance**: "a state of uncomfortable tension felt when a person's thoughts, beliefs, emotions, behaviours or attitudes come into conflict with one another." (Nandrino in Luminet, 2021, pg. 348).

Several psychological needs can be interdependent or opposed to other needs, thereby generating conflicts inside the self. Thus, from the first days of life, the newborn, through its state of dependence on the other, sees its need for subsistence (ensuring its survival and protection) linked and conflated with its need for social affiliation (having harmonious relationships and feeling integrated into its social environment). Thus, these two intertwined needs constitute a determining factor in the process of internalisation and self-image construction (*see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2*). In seeking to satisfy their need for subsistence and their need for affiliation, the baby and then the child internalise the beliefs, values, rules and concerns of their social environment and society, indirectly responding to their need for coherence [4]. Thus, "the need for affiliation keeps the individual close to societal concerns and regulations (...). Controlling and conflicting environmental conditions lead the self to ignore innate needs and preferences and, conversely, to develop a self structure that is based on the goal of external validation. Example: choosing a career based on financial wealth, prestige or social power rather than a career that is more in line with one's intrinsic interests, preferences and psychological needs" [4].

Through these situations of 'rivalry' and opposition between needs, linked to the person's social and psychological environment, some psychological needs (which are nevertheless essential) may not be satisfied or may even be frustrated.

The distinction between the **non-satisfaction of a need** and the **frustration of a need** is important. Frustration "implies an active threat to psychological needs (rather than a mere lack of satisfaction of needs)" [48]. Thus, while the frustration of a need implies, in fact, the non-satisfaction of a need, the reverse is not true; "the absence of the satisfaction of needs does not necessarily imply the presence of a frustration of need" [48]. Empirical studies have confirmed that detrimental effects were greater in a situation of need frustration [48].

> *For example: a child may not be valued by his or her relatives (unmet need for recognition) without being actively and significantly criticised (or even humiliated) by their relatives (frustrated need for recognition).*

When faced with situations where their needs are frustrated, people may resort to different behaviours and compensatory strategies to cope [48]:

- Resorting to rigid patterns of behaviour;
    - *For example: out of fear of being criticised - and to cope with their frustrated need for recognition - a person may start working intensely every day without ever taking a break*.
- Developing oppositional behaviours and doing the opposite of what is asked;
    - *For example: stopping working altogether, answering insolently or stopping answering altogether;*
- Finding and pursuing 'substitutes for needs', such as the search for popularity, social recognition, the desire to have a perfect body, overinvestment in material goods or professional activity, etc. [48].

## 3.Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals

Just like psychological needs, **personal values** constitute one of the foundations of concordant goals. These two concepts are similar, but must nevertheless be distinguished from one another. "Both encompass the idea of something precious and important to a person. Needs are more strongly rooted in a bodily experience, while values refer more to a mentalised and symbolic ideal. Values are not limited solely to moral values, but rather encompass everything that can be valued by the individual symbolically" [50]. Thus, "values have been defined as verbally constructed, global, desired and freely chosen directions in life" [74]. (…). "Values are the compasses (…). These reference points will act as markers and provide a stable counterbalance to ever-changing thoughts and emotions. They will be a beacon illuminating the possible path to follow when placing valued actions" [44].

Unlike psychological needs, values are not directly associated with an emotional feeling or sensory experience that is perceptible in the moment. Thus, even though personal values can have emotional and experiential resonance, they are not a natural component of the organism, but rather they originate in mental elaboration, and individual and collective choice [46, 50].

Indeed, certain values can be upheld collectively (for example: justice, truth, honesty, integrity, solidarity, fairness, altruism, etc.). However, it is important that they be chosen individually so that they can motivate the individual in a self-determined manner, become operational and be practiced by individuals through **concordant goals** and **committed actions**. "Values are choices; they are not determined by others and are specific to each individual. Values are the essence to be embodied in order to move towards the life to which one aspires. Values are verbal stimuli for human beings" [44]. Personal values, chosen by an individual, motivate them in a self-determined manner and allow them to guide their choices and actions. They give meaning and coherence to their life [44]. Thus, they are aligned with and support the needs for coherence, transcendence and achievement (see psychological needs above).

Several types of **collective values** can be distinguished [75, 76], such as:

- **Moral or ethical values**, which refer to notions of justice, fairness and the sense of what is considered 'good' (versus what is considered 'bad'); they are linked to an (higher or spiritual) order and to adopting appropriate behaviours that are favourable to the common good;

- **Civic values**, which are linked to respect for the social and natural environment, and to productive and responsible participation in community life;

- **Achievement values,** which are linked to success, the ability to accomplish actions, to act effectively and to reach one's goals; they allow one to work hard and to be able to defer immediate pleasures.

Thus, "values are not solely limited to moral values, but encompass everything that can be valued by the individual symbolically" [50]. **Individual values** are those values that are adopted by the individual. They may be conscious or subconscious, and chosen voluntarily or involuntarily. As with psychological needs, individual values can come into conflict with one another inside the self.

> *For example: Personally, I may have individual values of solidarity, altruism and social justice, but live in an environment where the values of domination, strength and individual success at the expense of others are emphasised; inside me, my individual values may then come into conflict with these collective values which have become mine over time and through social interactions.*

*Making constructive choices that are concordant with one's values and psychological needs generates two main beneficial effects:*

- **An increase in one's motivation and capacity to achieve.** Non-concordant goals are pursued against a backdrop of pressure and 'duty'; this is a source of anxiety. Conversely, concordant goals are constructed and chosen based on a person's values and psychological needs. Therefore, they generate a self-determined or even intrinsic motivation which produces spontaneous satisfaction in action; they form part of 'a context of positive affect' and 'willingness' [4].
- **A greater ability to meet one's psychological needs and embody one's values:** knowledge of one's self-concordant goals is the first step in being able to achieve those goals, satisfy one's psychological needs and embody one's values. Just as it is necessary to satisfy physiological needs to maintain balance, wellbeing and development of the body, satisfying a person's psychological needs is essential in ensuring wellbeing and psychological balance (emotional, cognitive, relational and behavioural). "Conversely, the deprivation or frustration of these needs diminishes fulfilment and increases the risk of unease and psychopathology" [8]. Therefore, the satisfaction or frustration of psychological needs has an impact on the state of wellbeing/unease, self-esteem, behavioural problems and health-positive lifestyle habits [48, 77].

*Making constructive choices that are concordant with one's values and psychological needs relies on two conditions:*

- **High-quality social interactions during childhood**: during the first years of life, in order for their basic physical and psychological needs to be met, the young child is totally dependent on the adults who take care of them (parental and professional attachment figures). If their needs are not met, imbalances arise both in the child's experience (unpleasant emotions, feelings of insecurity and unease) and in the child's emotional reactions and behaviours. Conversely, if adults regularly provide a satisfactory response to their needs, their inner state, and their emotional and behavioural reactions to failings remain balanced; gradually, they will be able to learn to respond to their own needs in an optimal manner and to set self-concordant goals.
- **Living environments and adults that meet psychological needs and that embody moral and civic values that promote children's development:** the way in which adults in educational positions meet children's psychological needs and their own needs, as well as the moral and civic values they demonstrate, have an impact on how children will be able to satisfy their own psychological needs and personal values. Therefore, it is essential to consider how educational environments (schools, after-school clubs, socio-educational centres, etc.) and work environments (where the adults work) take the psychological needs of each individual, and moral and civic values into account. It is important that adults (in educational positions) can implement their concordant goals, based on their values and psychological needs, so that children and young people can do the same. Research findings highlight that it is possible to train adults (in educational positions) to better respond to their own psychological needs [8]. Contrary to some cultural preconceptions, it is important to start with oneself and to meet one's own psychological needs in order to be able to satisfy the psychological needs of children and to best help them in achieving their own concordant goals. "From a very young age, when we learn language, we are told that it is not ethical to think about oneself (which includes having compassion for oneself). On the contrary, over time, we will be in a better position to help and participate, to be kind and generous to others, if we also pay attention to our own needs" [52].

# Key takeaways (C1.3 and C1.4)

**Conceptual definition:** **Being self-aware** involves having better knowledge of **one's goals and values** [1]. "**The capacity to make choices** that are responsible is enhanced by the capacity to identify those goals that are important for oneself and to be able to evaluate them in light of social norms, safety, ethics and their feasibility" [1].

**Operational definition:** **Three core psychological knowledge items and practical skills strengthen knowledge of one's personal values, psychological needs and personal goals, and support constructive decision-making:**

1. **Knowing one's self-concordant goals**

Unlike non-concordant goals that are constructed in interaction with the social environment, concordant goals are based on a person's authentic aspirations. As they are in harmony with oneself, they naturally generate greater motivation and are a source of wellbeing and fulfilment.

2. **Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals** Fundamental psychological needs are inherent to the person and their psychological functioning (cognitive needs for discovery, coherence and transcendence; affective and relational needs for love, belonging and recognition; behavioural needs for freedom, competence and achievement; body-mind needs for sustenance, stimulation and rest). The human body naturally seeks to meet its intrinsic needs from a very young age in order to maintain its psychological balance. Concordant goals based on these fundamental needs promote the maintenance of this balance and psychological wellbeing.

3. **Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals** Just like psychological needs, personal values constitute one of the foundations of concordant goals. But, unlike psychological needs, values are not directly associated with an emotional feeling or sensory experience that is perceptible in the moment. Thus, even though personal values can have emotional and experiential resonance, they are not a natural component of the organism, but rather originate in mental elaboration, and individual and collective choice (like moral, civic or achievement-based values).

## Key takeaways (C1.3 and C1.4 *continued)*

**Main effects: Making constructive choices based on one's values, psychological needs and personal goals allows one to**:

- **Increase one's motivation and capacity to achieve:** while the pursuit of non-concordant goals is a source of anxiety and takes place against a backdrop of pressure and 'duty', striving for concordant goals that are based on a person's values and psychological needs generates a self-determined or even intrinsic motivation which produces spontaneous satisfaction in the act.

- **Better respond to one's psychological needs, embody one's values and find psychological balance:** knowledge of one's self-concordant goals is the first step in being able to achieve one's goals, satisfy one's psychological needs and embody one's values. Just as it is necessary to satisfy physiological needs to maintain balance and wellbeing of the body, satisfying psychological needs is essential in ensuring a person's wellbeing and psychological balance (emotional, cognitive, relational and behavioural).

**Main conditions: Making constructive choices based on one's values, psychological needs and personal goals requires**:

- **High-quality social interactions during childhood**: during the first years of life, in order for their basic physical and psychological needs to be met, the young child is totally dependent on the adults who take care of them. If adults regularly provide a satisfactory response to their needs, their inner state, and their emotional and behavioural reactions to failings remain balanced; gradually, they will be able to learn to respond to their own needs in an optimal manner and to set self-concordant goals.

- **Living environments and adults that meet psychological needs and that embody moral and civic values that promote children's development:** the way in which adults in educational positions meet children's psychological needs and their own needs, as well as the moral and civic values they demonstrate, have an impact on how children will be able to satisfy their own psychological needs and personal values. It is important that adults (in educational positions) can implement their concordant goals, based on their values and psychological needs, so that children and young people can do the same.

# Example activities to develop the PSS
## C1.3 Knowing one's values, needs and personal goals and C1.4 Making constructive decisions

## The psychological needs satisfaction wheel

*(Adapted from Seznec JC, 2019 (148) [44])*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing one's self-concordant goals
⊠ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals
□ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** see template below

"**The wheel of satisfaction** (*see diagram below*) is a tool that enables you to determine your satisfaction level in different areas of your life (it can be used to self-assess the satisfaction of your psychological needs) (...). To complete this satisfaction wheel, indicate your level of satisfaction (for each of your psychological needs) using a cross that corresponds to your current level of satisfaction assessed over the past four months. (...)

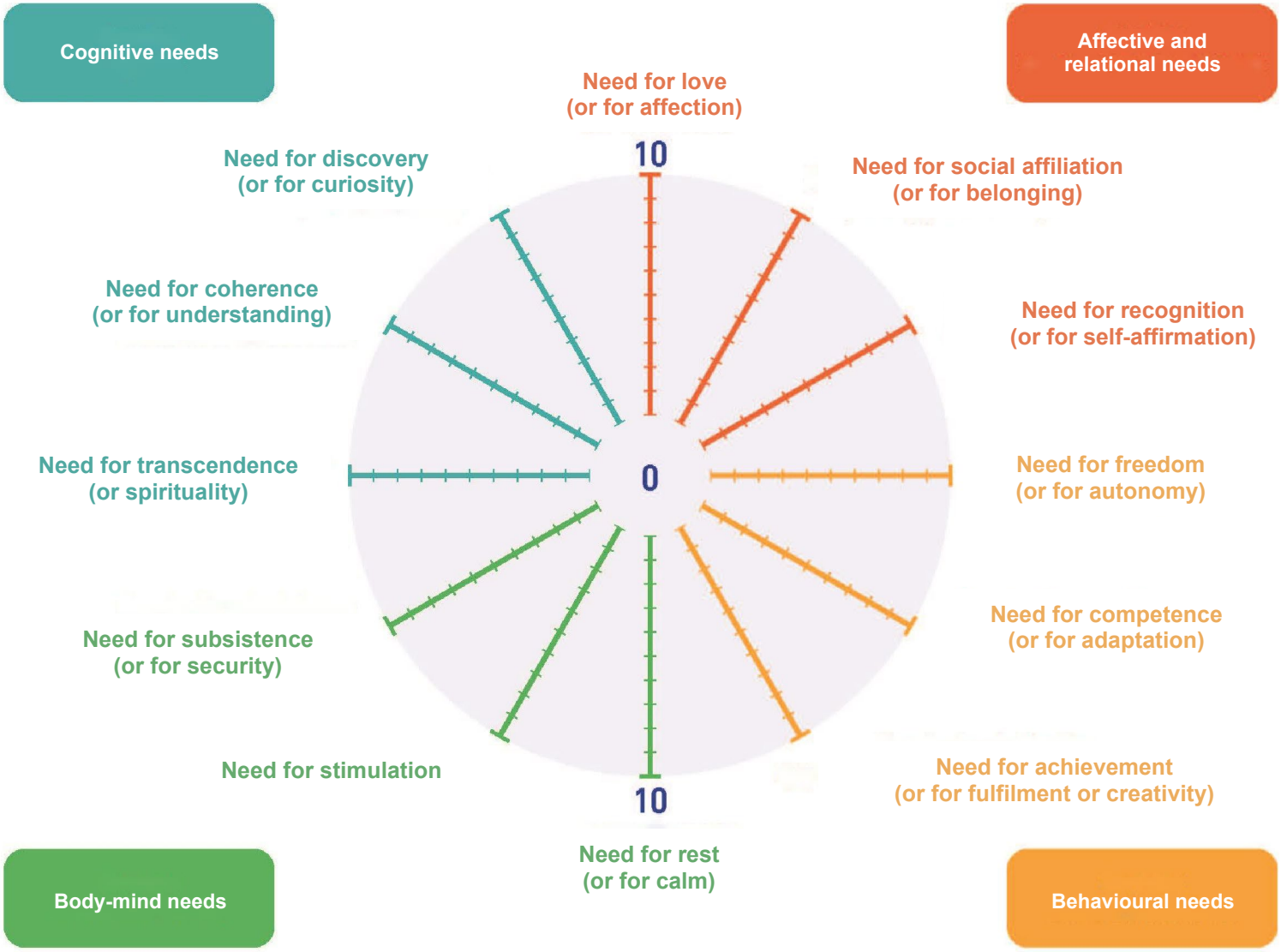
**Put a cross to indicate where your level of satisfaction lies on a scale from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied).**

Once you have completed this rating, you can connect all the crosses to draw **your area of satisfaction (of psychological needs)**. The larger this is, the more satisfying your life is. You can shade or colour in the inside of the area to make it easier to see.

**Now answer the following questions:**

- What can you see?
- Which need(s) deserve(s) a little more time from you?
- What would matter most to you (in relation to this need)?
- What could you do that might improve your satisfaction (of this need)?
- What obstacles do you foresee?
- How could you overcome these obstacles?"

## Figure of the psychological needs satisfaction wheel



## Ways to satisfy my needs

*(Extract and adapted from Kotsou I, Farnier J, Shankland R, Mikolajczak M, Leys C, 2022 [50])*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)

**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Knowing one's self-concordant goals

⊠ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals

□ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals

**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** table template below

"List my (unmet) needs (it is possible to pick up from the exercise on the 'needs satisfaction wheel'):

(Unmet cognitive needs:) .....
.....
(Unmet affective and relational needs:) .....
.....
(Unmet behavioural needs:) .....
.....
(Unmet body-mind needs:) .....
.....

For each need, list as many solutions as possible to satisfy it:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Then, for each solution, answer the following four questions: Is this realistic? Is this under my control? Is this appropriate for the context? What alternative solutions are available to satisfy my need? (See table below)".

| Need | Solution | Realistic? | Control? | Appropriate? | Alternatives? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E.g., being a good parent (need for love and/or competence) | Forcing my teenager to study | No, he is practically an adult and decides for himself. | Little control, he doesn't obey me. | Perhaps not; it creates more relationship problems than it solves | Express that his future is important and that I am worried about him, listen to his opinion on the subject. |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

## Childhood dreams and personal aspirations

*(Extract from the CARE Programme in Shankland et al., 2024)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)

**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Knowing one's self-concordant goals

⊠ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals

□ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals

**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

"Take a few minutes. You can close your eyes if you want. Take some time to remember some of your childhood dreams, i.e. what you wanted to be (doctor, teacher, veterinarian, chef, etc.), the causes that were close to your heart (sick children, orphans, abandoned animals, nature, etc.) and that you wanted to get involved in (adopting a dog, feeding homeless people, etc.) (...).

As you connect with these deep-rooted dreams or aspirations, identify the values to which they are attached. Identify which plans/actions you could put in place or continue to implement to serve these values? What is the smallest thing you could do in practice this week to progress in this direction?"

## My accomplished life in ten years from now

*(Extract from the CARE programme in Shankland et al., 2018)*

**Audience:** □ Children; □ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)

**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Knowing one's self-concordant goals

□ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals

⊠ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

"Before posing the question for this exercise, the facilitator guides the group towards optimal self-awareness: comfortable posture, eyes closed or open depending on their needs, attention paid to their body's points of contact and their present state, etc.

Once this state has been established, the facilitator poses the following question, projecting the person into a desired future where they can connect with what truly matters to them: 'I invite you to take a journey into the future, this journey takes you ten years into the future... There, you live the life you desire for yourself... What made this possible is that, day-by-day, you got closer and closer to what gives meaning to your life...
Step-by-step, you fully served the primordial values that drive you. What can you observe in your life 10 years from now that illustrates this? What does your daily life look like?"

# My values through gratitude

*(Extract from the CARE Programme in Shankland et al., 2024)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing one's self-concordant goals
□ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals
⊠ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

"Individually, take some time to think about three things that happened last week for which you feel grateful. This can be an interaction with someone, or it can be linked to your living context, your environment. For each of these things, ask yourself why do you feel this gratitude?

This exercise is designed to connect you to your values and shed a little more light on what gives meaning to your life.

- My gratitude
- Why?

- My gratitude
- Why?

- My gratitude

# A compass to identify our psychological needs

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou, 2024)*

**Audience:** □ Children; □ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed: Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing one's self-concordant goals
⊠ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals
□ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; □ Group
**Equipment:** see template below

### What is important to me?

If you had to award a medal to your three priority needs, in order of importance to you, what would get the gold medal? The silver medal? The bronze medal?



1 ..... 2..... 3.....

**What needs lie behind the following feelings? Match the needs expressed with the following messages:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | Look at my drawing!! It's good,isn't it?!! | | 1 Need for support, recognition and rest |
| B | Could you give me a hand with tidying up instead of just sitting in front of the television? | | 2 Need for contact, for someone to listen |
| C | I haven't talked to anyone in several days. | | 3 Need for recognition, love, attention |
| D | It's so unfair, my brother always gets loads of things and I never get anything! | | 4 Need for recognition |



## The magic wand (children - in groups and individually)

*(Extract from Claeys Bouuaert M, 2022)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Knowing one's self-concordant goals
□ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals
□ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; □ Group

- "Imagine you had a magic wand that could transform you in an instant. How would you like to be different? What would change in you?
- Close your eyes and imagine this change happening... How do you feel in your new self? What would you do differently now?"

## Needs and objectives

*(Extract from Claeys Bouuaert M., 2022)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed: Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing one's self-concordant goals
⊠ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals
□ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals
□ Understanding the importance of choosing self-concordant goals
⊠ Choosing self-concordant goals based on one's psychological needs
□ Choosing self-concordant goals based on one's personal values
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

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

# Taking care of one's needs

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou, 2024)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing one's self-concordant goals
⊠ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals
□ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** The needs filter below

"... Ask the children to choose a need, then, in pairs, to imagine the different ways to nourish and satisfy that need. Pool the children's suggestions and then ask them to put these strategies through the needs filter to see if their strategy is suitable and if it can be approved. Give out the worksheet and explain each question using the examples below:

- Is this a realistic need? In other words, not too extreme. For example, I need to feel autonomous:
This is a realistic need, because I can, for example, go alone to my friend's house who lives a little further down the street.

- Can I, or those around me, take action to meet this need? For example, in relation to my need for autonomy, my parents can let me to go to my friend's house alone.

- Is this appropriate in my current environment? For example, at the moment, there is no particular risk when going out on the street, unless it is really late at night.

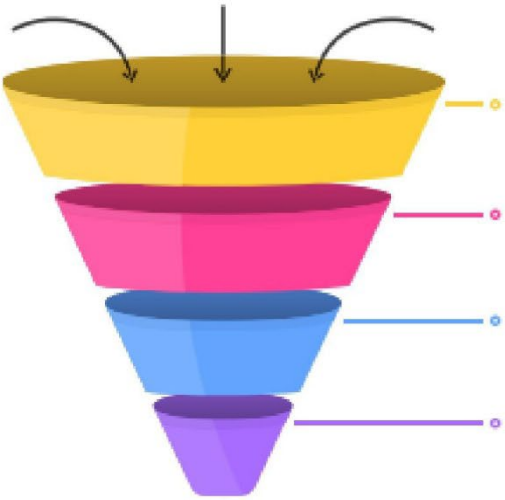
- Is there another way to meet my need if the chosen solution is not appropriate in my current environment? For example, if my friend is not there, I can think of another action that gives me a sense of autonomy, such as packing my own suitcase to go on holiday. This allows me to choose my clothes, my books and my toys.

This activity can be done using the individual worksheet. The children can then exchange ideas in pairs, and finally, the facilitator provides time for group discussion during which the children can suggest the strategies they have chosen to meet their needs. This will also allow the facilitator to highlight the difference between needs and strategies."

Template to be completed

# The needs filter to check my strategy.

**My need and the solution to satisfy it**



Is it realistic?

Can I, myself, take action?
Is it under my control?

Is it appropriate for my environment?

Is there another way if this one is not appropriate?



## Clarifying my objectives

*(Extract from Claeys Bouuaert M., 2022)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Knowing one's self-concordant goals
⊠ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals
□ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

"Explore the following questions in writing:

- What are the things I am most 'satisfied' with in my life? (What I love and appreciate most, what I am proud of, etc.)
- What are the things I am least satisfied with in my life?
- What needs does this dissatisfaction reveal?... Explore these on a personal, family, relational, social, academic, etc., level.
- What objectives can I set myself (small or big, internal or external) in order to meet these needs?... In the short and longer term... this week, this year, beyond...
- What concrete steps can I take immediately?

Share in pairs or groups of three.
Whole group feedback: what lessons can be learned?"

# Values

*(Extract from Claeys Bouuaert M., 2022)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Knowing one's values, needs, and personal goals (C1.3) and making constructive decisions (C1.4)
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing one's self-concordant goals
□ Knowing one's psychological needs so as to choose self-concordant goals
⊠ Knowing one's personal values so as to choose self-concordant goals
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** The 'Values' sheet below

"After having clarified what is meant by the term 'values', and after potentially having researched different perspectives (religious, political) (see below), give out a 'list of values' to the pupils, with the following instructions:

- Go through the list of values and rate each one on a scale of 0 to 10 based on how important that value is to you. Take the time to fully understand their meaning and implications. Consider both your own existence and that of the world around you. Feel free to add to the list if you think of other values that seem important to you.

- Once you have given a numerical score to each of these values, rank, in order of importance, the ten values that you find the most fundamental.

Sharing in sub-groups (3 or 4): What are the most important values for you? What can you do to express or demonstrate these values in your life?

Research to be carried out in teams (one separate research task per team):

- What are the values of the French Republic?
- What are democratic values?
- What are humanist values?
- What are secular values?

Sharing and discussion: What do these different perspectives have in common? How do they differ? ...
Debate: Are values beliefs (that must be defended!), battles that must be fought to impose them on others or qualities that must be demonstrated?
- Rate each value on a scale of 0 to 10.
- Select the ten most important ones."

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Abundance | Etiquette | Intimacy | Respect |
| Acceptance | Excellence | Intuition | Responsibility |
| Action, activity | Expansion | Joy | Risk-taking |
| Adaptability | Expression | Justice | Sacrifice |
| Alignment | Faith | Knowledge | Satisfaction |
| Authority | Faithfulness | Leisure | Security |
| Autonomy | Fame | Letting go | Self-esteem |
| Balance | Family | Life | Self-sufficiency |
| Beauty | Forgiveness | Look | Sensitivity |
| Care | Fraternity | Love | Service |
| Career | Freedom | Loyalty | Silence |
| Change | Friendship | Luxury | Simplicity |
| Commitment | Frivolity | Meaning | Skill |
| Communication | Fulfilment | Money | Social status |
| Compassion | Generosity | Obedience | Solidarity |
| Competition | Grace | Order | Success |
| Compliance | Gratitude | Organisation | Synthesis |
| Conscientiousness | Growth | Other… | Time |
| Continuity | Happiness | Ownership | Tolerance |
| Cooperation | Harmony | Peace | Tradition |
| Creativity | Having a good time | Perfection | Transcendence |
| Curiosity | Health | Pleasure | Trust |
| Delight | Hierarchy | Power | Truth |
| Desire | Honesty | Progress | Uniformity |
| Discipline | Honour | Quality | Unity |
| Diversity | Hope | Quantity | Wisdom |
| Education | Humour | Rationalism | Work |
| Efficiency | Image | Recognition | Youth |
| Enthusiasm | Independence | Reliability | Respect |
| Equality | Integrity | Religion | Responsibility |

# ***Specific cognitive skill 5***

## Positive self-assessment (C1.5)

**Self-image** is the set of mental representations we have of ourselves; it is therefore associated with our personal identity and determines a large part of our behaviour (*see previous skills: C1.1 and C1.2).* Some of these self-representations are judgements that we make about ourselves (*e.g.: 'I'm too sensitive').* This self-assessment takes place by comparing one's self-image to a norm or standard (called an **ideal self-image**) or to others (during social comparisons).

It is largely dependent on the assessments and judgements about ourselves that we receive from others throughout our lives. The attitudes and representations of those close to us (parents, family, teachers, educators, etc.), of the people we interact with and of the environments in which we live become our own through the process of **internalisation** [78, 79].

**Our self-assessment can have a negative bias** due to critical judgements we frequently received during our upbringing, which is detrimental to our wellbeing and proper functioning. Learning to self-assess in a positive and unbiased manner is essential to maintaining satisfactory self-esteem. In turn, this is indispensable for a person's psychological and physical wellbeing.

**Positive and unbiased self-assessment requires:**

- **enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills;**
- **developing a benevolent and constructive attitude towards oneself.**

### 1.Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills

We have very many different representations of ourselves. They can refer to an overall self-assessment (*e.g.: 'I'm a funny person')* or be related to an area of life or activity (physical appearance, intellectual and academic skills, professional skills and situation, physical and sporting skills, etc. *E.g.: 'I'm terrible at sport'*). These self-representations are often the result of judgements we have received in our lives, particularly in educational settings. Thus, without really being aware of it, our self-image is often biased.

Identifying positive and unbiased representations of ourselves helps to enrich our self-image. However, it is important to keep in mind that these representations are only images, and it is important not to identify with them (*see previous skills C1.1 and C1.2*) so as to be able to question and broaden our vision of ourselves. By drawing on what we perceive about ourselves internally and what we manifest externally, we can build a richer and more objective self-image.

Each individual possesses qualities and talents that they show and/or possess but do not externalise. These practical skills and resources develop through experience and learning. They can manifest themselves differently depending on the moment and the situation. It is important to be able to recognise and value them, as being unique to each individual, and to remember them on a daily basis, especially in difficult situations.

- **What are human qualities and character strengths?**

**Human qualities** are the set of positive attitudes that a person shows towards themselves, others and their environment. Our qualities are largely the result of our personal history and our interactions with our environment. They can also be strengthened through education and learning. Human qualities vary from person to person, but can also be shared.

At the scientific level, human qualities have been particularly studied from the perspective of **personal strengths** also called **'character strengths'** or **'human strengths and qualities'** [56]. Personal strengths represent the positive aspects of our personality related to how we think, feel and behave. The scientific study of personal strengths began in the early 2000s. It led to the classification of positive human traits; 24 character strengths were thus highlighted [56].

**Table 1: List of the 24 personal strengths [56]**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. | Creativity, ingenuity and originality |
| 2. | Curiosity and taking an interest in the world |
| 3. | Discernment, critical thinking and open-mindedness |
| 4. | Love of studying and learning |
| 5. | Perspective, wisdom |
| 6. | Bravery and valour |
| 7. | Diligence, application and persistence |
| 8. | Honesty, integrity and sincerity |
| 9. | Zest, enthusiasm, vigour and energy |
| 10. | Capacity to love and be loved |
| 11. | Kindness and generosity |
| 12. | Social intelligence |
| 13. | Citizenship, teamwork and loyalty |
| 14. | Impartiality, fairness and justice |
| 15. | Leadership (ability to lead) |
| 16. | Forgiveness |
| 17. | Modesty and humility |
| 18. | Caution, prudence and discretion |
| 19. | Self-control and self-regulation |
| 20. | Recognition of beauty |
| 21. | Gratitude |
| 22. | Hope, optimism and anticipation of the future |
| 23. | Humour and cheerfulness |
| 24. | Transcendence, purpose in life and faith |

In order to improve our positive self-representations, we can name our qualities using this classification of personal strengths. For this positive self-assessment process to be constructive, it is important for it to be rooted in reality by linking our perceptions to facts, lived experiences or specific behaviours (*e.g.: 'I did not give up on this difficult challenge so, I showed courage').*

- **What are personal skills?**

**Personal skills** refer to the set of abilities and practical skills that we demonstrate in different areas of our lives. In order to improve our positive self-representations, it is important that we become aware of the extent and diversity of our abilities.

We can name and represent our personal skills by grouping them into **areas of activity and life**: creative and artistic skills, practical and everyday life skills, intellectual skills, academic skills, professional skills, physical and sporting skills, relational and social skills, emotional skills, etc.

Recognising our skills requires observation (by the **subject Self**) of our behaviours and our abilities that we put to use on a daily basis in order to develop self-representations that are as unbiased as possible. These self-representations are linked to what we are capable of achieving and actually bringing to fruition. This focus on our skills causes us to look at what we already know how to do and also invites us to identify what we could improve.

## 2. Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself

The self-assessment process frequently involves comparing one's self-image with a norm (or standard) or with others. These self-judgements can be a source of tension and unease. We compare and judge ourselves frequently, but rarely show gentleness and sensitivity towards ourselves. We often assume a stance of criticism and rejection towards what we are feeling. This form of opposition within oneself, which is not necessarily conscious, leads in particular to the mechanism of **experiential avoidance**(4) (*see previous skill C1.1 and C1.2*).

Developing one's ability to carry out positive and unbiased self-assessment entails becoming aware of our relationship with ourselves and questioning it. For this, it is useful for us to observe how we view ourselves on a daily basis; how we take care of ourselves and our physical and psychological needs on a daily basis (*see the list of psychological needs in cognitive skill C1.3*). To encourage this **self-observation** **of our internal workings,** we can focus our attention on how we talk to ourselves on a daily basis: what is our internal dialogue? What are the words we use with ourselves?

This self-observation will allow us to become aware of our relationship with ourselves, and to choose to maintain or modify certain attitudes. We will then be able to transform an attitude of disapproval and criticism into an attitude of welcome and acceptance. **In this way, we can gradually replace our current practice of biased self-judgement with a skill of benevolent self-observation.** *E.g.: 'I can't learn as fast as other children my age, but what others can do doesn't tell me anything about what I can do. I do my best and make progress every day; I can develop my skills and qualities, my aspirations and my motivation, and therefore I will be able to accomplish what is important to me.'*

**Observing how we see ourselves on a daily basis is made possible by daily questioning:**
- How do I see myself?
- How do I talk to myself? What is my internal dialogue?
- How do I take care of myself?
- How do I listen to and respond to my physical and psychological needs?

*Positive and unbiased self-assessment generates three main beneficial effects:*

- **Improving and maintaining self-esteem:** by paying more frequent attention to our qualities and skills, and minimising our biased self-assessments, we can develop positive self-representations, enrich our self-image and develop more positive self-esteem. By recognising, without bias, what works well, we have more confidence in ourselves, in our resources and in our ability to act, which increases our **sense of self-efficacy** and our empowerment.
- **Strengthening wellbeing and autonomy:** by recognising, without bias, what we do well, we are responding to one of our basic psychological needs: the need for recognition and confirmation, which enables us to improve our wellbeing. We are used to expecting this positive reinforcement from another person. Without overlooking the role of others in this process of recognition, it is also possible to grant oneself this recognition. We can then distance ourselves from the gaze of others and reduce our dependence on others. We maintain our own balance and preserve our self-image as unbiased as possible; in this way, we gain freedom and autonomy. A **more** objective and accepting relationship with oneself also helps to reduce internal tensions and conflicts. A more positive and less biased self-image, as well as a benevolent and peaceful relationship with oneself, promotes inner relaxation and a state of subjective wellbeing.
- **Improving our relationships with others:** our relationship with others is largely dependent on our relationship with ourselves. Thus, by recognising **our** own qualities and skills without bias, we become more able to perceive these in others; by developing a welcoming, unbiased and positive relationship with ourselves, our relationship with others becomes more open and peaceful.

*Positive and unbiased self-assessment relies on one important condition: agreeing to change one's self-image*:

- Our need for coherence and self-affirmation (*see the list of psychological needs in skill C1.3*) drives us to preserve our vision of ourselves (and the world), and to adopt a rigid and fixed attitude towards ourselves (and others). This difficulty in demonstrating **flexibility** and openness does not encourage us to question and change self-representations. Furthermore, the **cognitive fusion** mechanism strengthens our identification with self-representations and makes it harder to modify them. This is why it is useful to learn about and work on the mechanism of **cognitive defusion,** in order to become aware that these representations are merely (primarily socially constructed) beliefs that can be transformed intentionally.

## Key takeaways (C1.5)

**Conceptual definition:** **Self-assessment** refers to the competence of the **subject Self** to be able to make a judgement about itself (about its behaviours, its performance, its skills, its qualities and those that could be developed, etc.). "**The capacity for positive self-assessment** is based on the ability to make a positive judgement about oneself and to have a positive and benevolent attitude towards oneself [51]. It involves, on the one hand, becoming aware of one's qualities, skills, resources and strengths, and on the other hand, being able to develop a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself. Strengthening this capacity for positive self-assessment helps to increase self-confidence (or a sense of self-efficacy), and to develop a positive and unbiased self-image and self-esteem [1, 45].

**Operational definition:** **Two core knowledge items and practical skills facilitate positive self-assessment:**

1. **Enriching one's self-image** by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills;
2. **Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself** by gradually transforming our current attitude of biased self-judgement through benevolent self-observation (enabling us to observe how we see ourselves and how we take account of our physical and psychological needs on a daily basis).

## Key takeaways (C1.5 *continued*)

**Main effects: Positive and unbiased self-assessment enables one to:**

- **Improve and maintain self-esteem:** by paying more frequent attention to our qualities and skills, and minimising our biased self-assessments, we can develop positive self-representations, enrich our self-image and develop more positive self-esteem. This helps to strengthen our **sense of self-efficacy** and our empowerment.
- **Strengthen wellbeing and autonomy:** by recognising, without bias, what we do well, we are responding to one of our basic psychological needs: the need for recognition and confirmation, which enables us to improve our wellbeing. This self-recognition carried out by the self allows us to distance ourselves from the gaze of others and reduce our dependence on others; we thus gain in freedom and autonomy. A more objective and accepting relationship with oneself also helps to reduce tensions and internal conflicts, which promotes inner relaxation and a state of subjective wellbeing.
- **Improve our relationships with others:** our relationship with others is largely dependent on our relationship with ourselves. By recognising our own qualities and skills without bias, we become more able to perceive these in others; by developing a welcoming, unbiased and positive relationship with ourselves, our relationship with others becomes more open and peaceful.

**Main condition: Positive and unbiased self-assessment requires accepting to change one's self-image**:
Our need for coherence and self-affirmation (*see C1.6*) drives us to preserve our vision of ourselves (and the world), and to adopt a rigid and fixed attitude towards ourselves (and others). This difficulty in demonstrating **flexibility** and openness does not encourage us to question our self-representations. It is necessary to learn about and work on the mechanism of cognitive defusion, in order to become aware that these representations are merely (primarily socially constructed) beliefs that can be transformed intentionally.

# Examples of activities to develop the PSS
## C1.5 Positive self-assessment

## A situation I am proud of

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson M, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** □ Children; □ Teenagers; ☒ Adults
**Activity type:** ☒ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Positive self-assessment C1.5
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
☒ Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills
☐ Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
**Format:** ☒ Individual; ☒ Group

"Find a comfortable sitting position and take the time to relax. You can close your eyes. Bring to mind a situation that made you proud of yourself as a professional (or as a parent). This does not have to be an extraordinary action, it can be something that reflects positively on you as a professional (or as a parent).

- Let the whole situation come to you: what happened? What did you do? What did you think? How did you feel?

.....
.....
.....

Identify the qualities and skills you demonstrated in this situation. Write them below.

- .....
- .....
– .....".

## My scroll of qualities

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson M, 2021 [47])*

"Make your magic scroll using the list of qualities below. (You can add qualities in the empty boxes at the bottom of the table)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Active | Considerate | Foresighted | Loving | Reassuring |
| Ambitious | Creative | Friendly | Loyal | Reliable |
| Attentive | Curious | Funny | Nice | Resilient |
| Autonomous | Determined | Generous | Observant | Resourceful |
| Brave | Discreet | Good at sharing | Open | Responsible |
| Calm | Effective | Hard-working | Organised | Shows solidarity |
| Candid | Efficient | Helpful | Patient | Shrewd |
| Cautious | Energetic | Honest | Pleasant | Sincere |
| Cheerful | Fair | Intelligent | Prudent | Smiley |
| Combative | Flexible | Kind | Reasonable | Sporty |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |

What are your qualities? Write them down on your scroll.

This magic scroll belongs to.....




Next, the two children work together to identify the qualities and skills that each has demonstrated, using a list of qualities if necessary (see the activity above: 'My scroll of qualities').

- You can invite the children to add qualities and skills and write them down (in an exercise book or on their worksheet)."

*If the children are unable to think of any situations, you can suggest examples: spontaneously doing a chore at home, an academic, sporting or cultural achievement, helping and supporting someone close to them, making someone happy, organising a surprise for someone, etc."*

## Something I enjoy doing and think I do well

*(Extract from the Prodas Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Positive self-assessment C1.5
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills
□ Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

"The facilitator explains that the members of the group and they themselves are going to take some time for reflection and personal expression, which will allow them to get to know themselves and others better, by trying, today, to think of a personal experience on the following theme: *Something I enjoy doing and that I think I do well*. Once they have thought of an experience, the participants are asked to identify, in addition to the thing they think they do well, the feelings they experience, the thoughts that go through their minds, and the behaviours they adopt during that experience.

When a participant speaks, the facilitator helps them formulate their story if they have difficulty doing so, then rephrases their statement so that they feel heard, understood and accepted. Once they have finished, if they have not expressed their feelings, thoughts and behaviours, the facilitator helps them to identify these: - If I have understood your story/experience correctly, you told us that the thing you like to do and that you think you do well is… Is that right?

The facilitator allows the person to complete, correct or validate their reformulation. - How do you feel when you manage to do that? Do you tell yourself anything in particular at that moment? – How do you react when you see the result? – Thank you very much for sharing this story! Thanking each person for sharing their experience, which benefits the entire group, is essential.

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

# The skills tree

*(Extract from the 'Le Voyage des Toimoinous, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Promotion Santé Pays de la Loire PSS schoolbag)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Positive self-assessment C1.5
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills
□ Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

## The skills tree




Duration

30 minutes to 1 hour (depending on the age of the participants)

Equipment

✓ 'I know.../I have' worksheet
✓ A3 or A2 piece of paper for the tree
✓ Glue or tape

### Reminder of the objectives

- → to be aware of one's own skills,
- → learning to value oneself.

### Outline and instructions

Before starting, the facilitator asks the participants:

- What they know how to do,
- Whether they think they know how to do many different things?
- Whether their skills can make their daily lives easier?

Using the 'I know.../ I have...' worksheet, ask the participants to choose three (and only three) skills they currently have.

Next, draw a tree (preferably on an A3 piece of paper, to keep a record) and invite each participant to come and stick their skills on it to represent the leaves of the tree.

The facilitator asks everyone in turn:

- *How they acquired these skills?*
- *What do they use them for on a daily basis? At school? At home?*
- *Is it possible to pass them on to others? Why? How?*

Then, generally speaking:

- *Are all these skills innate?*
- *How can we develop them?*

The facilitator will also be able to note the differences and similarities that exist between the participants and the fact that skills can be complementary.

The tree can be reused in other activities with the same group in order to measure, for example, the development of each person's skills, and any sharing that might have taken place within or outside the group.

### Strengths

This technique allows you to highlight what you know how to do and to have it valued by the group.

# The notebook of strengths

*(Extract from the ScholaVie tools, ScholaVie - Psychosocial skills at school)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children (from age 6-7); ⊠ Young people; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Positive self-assessment C1.5
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills
□ Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** strengths notebook below

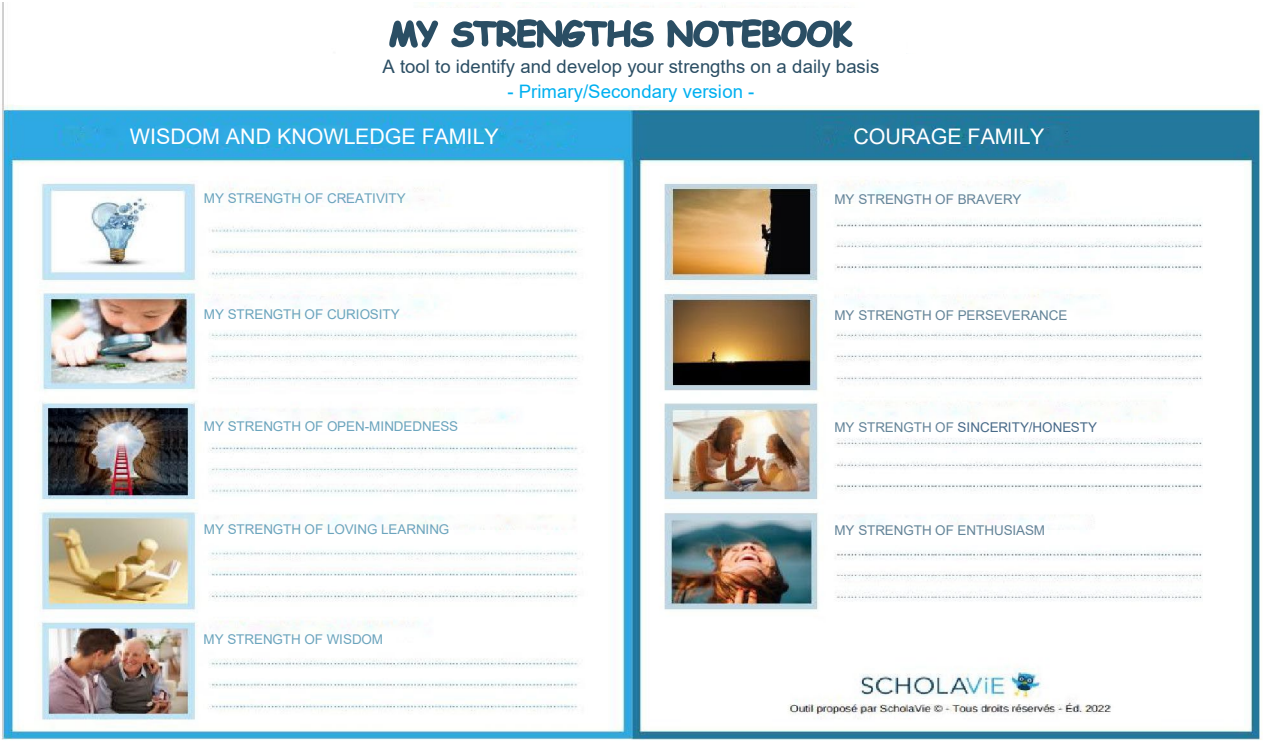
"This tool can be used individually or in a group (team, class group, etc.). It helps to consolidate understanding of the concept of strength, and to facilitate the identification of signature strengths and how to develop them on a daily basis. It also allows us to become aware of less developed strengths and, if necessary, to take action to make greater use of them.

- **Individually**

Each student has a strengths notebook. Over a given period, which can vary from one week to a school term, each time they use a strength, they can write down a few words about how they used it, what they felt while using it, etc. They can also simply make a cross, a circle or any other symbol each time they use the strength in question. At the end of the allotted period, an opportunity for observation and feedback is offered: what strengths were used most, how were they used, what were the feelings and emotions, what difficulties were encountered, what difference did using their strengths make for them, etc.

- **In a group**

The strengths notebook becomes the class notebook. Each time a student uses one of the 24 character strengths, an explanatory sentence or a symbol can be written by it. At the end of the allotted period, a feedback session is offered: what strengths were most used in the class, how were they used, what strengths were least developed, etc."



## TRANSCENDENCE. OPENNESS AND MEANING



MY STRENGTH OF WONDER



MY STRENGTH OF GRATITUDE



MY STRENGTH OF HOPE/OPTIMISM



MY STRENGTH OF HUMOUR



MY STRENGTH OF THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

## MODERATION AND TEMPERANCE



MY STRENGTH OF CLEMENCY/FORGIVENESS



MY STRENGTH OF HUMILITY/MODESTY



MY STRENGTH OF PRUDENCE



MY STRENGTH OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

SCHOLAVIE
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## JUSTICE



MY STRENGTH OF TEAM SPIRIT



MY STRENGTH OF FAIRNESS



MY STRENGTH OF LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

## HUMANITY



MY STRENGTH OF LOVE



MY STRENGTH OF KINDNESS/GENEROSITY



MY STRENGTH OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

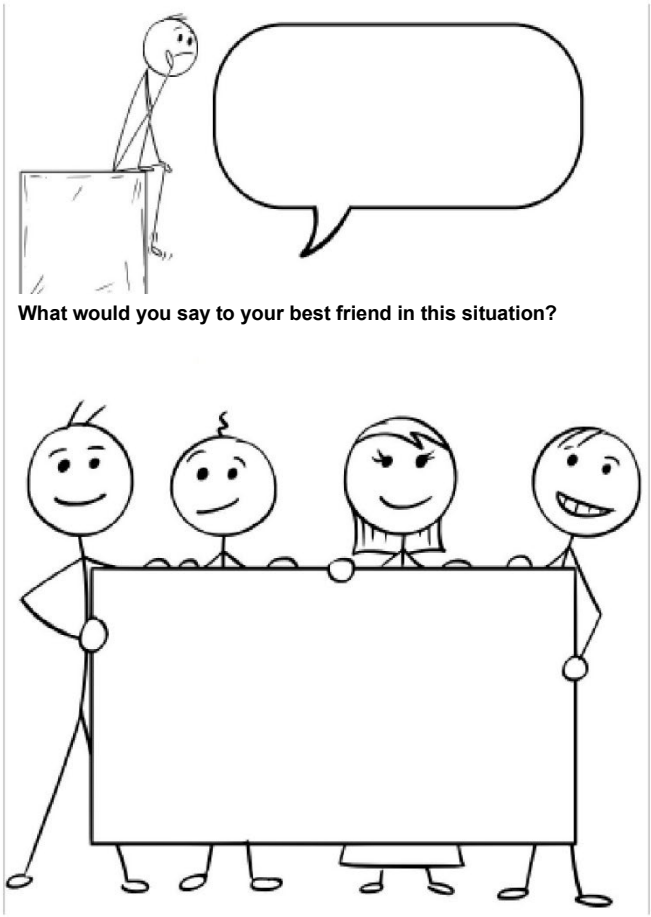
## MY COMMENTS

SCHOLAVIE
Outil proposé par ScholaVie © - Tous droits réservés - Éd. 2022

# The hidden world of emotions
## An emotional skills development programme for children

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou, 2024)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children (from age 6-7); ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Positive self-assessment C1.5
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills
⊠ Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** see template below




"The proposed exercise aims to encourage children to develop a compassionate attitude towards themselves, like a good friend might have.
The facilitator invites the children to think back to a recent situation in which they felt disappointed in themselves, and frustrated at not being competent or effective enough. Next, they ask the children to imagine that a good friend is describing this situation that happened to them. The facilitator then asks the children the following question: 'What would you like to say to them to support them, encourage them, show them that you understand them?'
If they want, they can use the individual sheet to take notes and thus keep a record."

## Success Rituals

*(Extract from Reynaud L, 2021* [80])

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Positive self-assessment C1.5
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills
⊠ Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
**Format:** □ Individual; □ Group

"The posture of adults in an educational role. When the exercises have been completed, highlight the skills or qualities used by the children by giving them precise feedback with examples. The facilitator must be honest and appropriate. 'For this drawing activity, you stayed sitting down the whole time, you were patient.' 'You coloured within the lines, you only went out the lines three times. You were precise'.

'All the time I was reading the story, you stayed calm and silent. I was could read you this story easily.'
'During the game of 'British bulldog' you ran fast and made quick changes of direction.'
'I saw that you tried to answer the question I asked. It's the first time you've dared. You were brave.'
'I saw that you stayed sitting throughout the exercise. But, I understood that you really wanted to go outside. You were patient and we were able to finish what we had to do'."

# The gift of strengths

*(Extract from Reynaud L, 2021 [80])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Positive self-assessment C1.5
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills
☐ Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

## E I The gift of strengths

**5-10 minutes, 'About strengths' tool and/or strengths medals.**

This ritual should be used without restriction, as it has considerable benefits. It complements the previous rituals.

On coming back into the class, pupils who wish to do so are invited to choose a strength they would like to gift to a classmate. Thus, each pupil is recognised by their peers, through the prism of their strengths which they receive as gifts. Additionally, this consolidates the knowledge they have about themselves, as well as about others. They offer the strength card for the strength observed and recognised in the other person, or a medal or sticker, together with a few words or a gesture, if possible.

In all instances, it is important to verbalise the strength in question as much as possible, to give examples of how this strength was used and to encourage the children to express the feelings and emotions experienced when they gift a strength as well when they receive one, through words or gestures.

**Examples:** A pupil might choose to offer the strength of kindness to another because they helped them tidy up the kitchen area and that made them happy.

Another pupil could offer the strength of bravery to one of their classmates because they hurt themselves during the workshop and didn't even cry. The child receiving the gift might respond: thank you for this strength, it makes me happy, it makes me feel good, I feel stronger, etc.

It is important that you lead and participate in this gift distribution process by identifying the strengths developed by a child, a pair, a group of children or the class as a whole. Ensure that everyone receives at least one strength as a gift during the week.

**Example:** You can give all the members of a workshop the strength of work or team spirit, because they have been able to work well together, calmly and attentively.

Encourage the children to observe the strengths of others, especially those who are not always in the classroom but contribute to the wellbeing of the school: the teaching assistant, the headteacher, the staff who look after them in the canteen, etc. You can also ask the pupils to give gifts of strength at home by involving parents in this initiative to ensure its success.



# A personal achievement

*(Extract from the Cartable des compétences psychosociales [Psychosocial Skills Toolkit], Promotion Santé Pays de la Loire)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Positive self-assessment C1.5
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills
☐ Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** pencils; a list of qualities and the individual 'personal achievement worksheet' below

The psychosocial skills schoolbag



## A personal achievement

## Experiment/Role play

**Step 1:** Give out the individual worksheet and invite the participants to reflect on a personal achievement. "You are going to take a few moments to yourself to reflect and write down something/an action you have done that you are proud of, that made you happy. Anything you write will not be shared without your consent."

The facilitator can ask for examples and explain that it can be all sorts of things, things that were quick or that took a lot of time, that were done alone or with more people.

**Step 2:** Form groups of three, possibly four, participants and give the instruction "in groups, you will each take turns recounting or reading out your achievement to the others who will listen attentively. At the end of the account, the other members of the group will present the qualities they have recognised as necessary for this achievement. Lists of qualities are available to help you. Next, you can write on your sheet the qualities that have been attributed to you and that you also recognise in yourself."

This step is repeated for each participant.

The activity ends when all the participants from all the groups have told their stories.

## Awareness/Analysis

Invite the participants to feed back their experiences of the activity to the whole group.

- 'Did you enjoy this activity? What did you enjoy about this activity?'
- How did you feel during the activity, during the 1st part, and during the 2nd part when you were presenting your experience, and then when you were assigned qualities?
- 'Was it easy? Difficult? Were some steps easier than others? Thinking about your achievement? Receiving qualities? Attributing qualities? Why is it difficult?

The pleasure of recalling a nice memory, of feeling recognised by others, of becoming aware of our abilities, of making others happy. Pride at receiving such qualities...

Awkwardness at receiving qualities, at being highlighted, at not recognising oneself in the attributed qualities. Fear of not thinking of an achievement, of expressing oneself in front of others, of the gaze of others, etc.

An unusual activity, etc.

**Alternatives**
1, Step 2: Invite them to write their first name on the back of their individual worksheet. Collect all the sheets and pick one at random. The participant whose worksheet it is, is invited to read out their work. The others listen and then attribute the qualities and skills that were needed for this achievement.

2. Taking turns, pick a beginning of a sentence: 'What I know how to do...', 'I am good at...', 'One day, I was successful in...', 'Once, I was happy with myself when...'. Each participant completes the sentence. The facilitator helps the group to identify and name the qualities needed for the stated achievement. Extension: note down and then categorise the qualities mentioned. Opportunity to work in the same vein on the group's identity, its resources and the theme of cooperation.

3. Instead of a list of qualities, it is possible to distinguish between qualities and skills. See the My qualities-My skills activity. In this case, use version 2 of the individual worksheet.

**Equipment**
Pencils; a list of qualities and the individual 'personal achievement worksheet'

**Source**
Université de paix, Namur



## A personal achievement

- "What things make the activity enjoyable? Make it easier?"

Knowledge of others, sharing in small groups, an environment that promotes listening, the quality of listening, reciprocal listening, etc.

The fact of sharing in relation to a positive dimension of oneself

## Expansion/Synthesis/Generalisation

Sum up based on the various topics that emerge:

- The unusual nature of the exercise and the reasons that can explain feeling awkward, the importance given to the gaze of the other.
- Ways to recognise one's qualities: by relying on the perspective of others, with whom one may agree or disagree, by recognising what makes us proud of ourselves, by recognising our successes.
- The benefit of recognising one's own qualities and those of others: 'What is the benefit of recognising one's own qualities and those of others?'
  → Gaining confidence, having a positive self-image, feeling proud, etc.
  → Changing the way we see ourselves and others. Fostering relationships, a pleasant classroom atmosphere, etc.

Perhaps expand on the conditions that promote self-knowledge and communication within a group. A climate of trust, calm, time, verbal/non-verbal attitude, the participation of everyone.

Perhaps extend this to other everyday situations:

- 'Have you ever had someone tell you about your qualities? Have you been congratulated?'
- 'Have you ever congratulated someone?'

## Resources to be distributed and completed

The psychosocial skills schoolbag



### List of qualities

**A**
Affectionate/Ambitious/
Attentive...

**C**
Calm/Candid/
Cautious/Charming/
Cheerful/Confident/
Courageous/Creative/
Critical/Curious...

**D**
Decisive/Determined/
Discreet/Driven...

**E**
Efficient/Energetic/
Enthusiastic...

**F**
Fair/Foresighted/
Funny...

**G**
Generous/Good...

**H**
Hardworking/
Hardworking/Helpful/
Honest/Honest...

**I**
Imaginative/Independent/
Ingenious...

**M**
Meticulous/Modest...

**J**
Joyful...

**K**
Kind...

**L**
Logical/Loyal/Loyal/
Lucky....

**R**
Reasonable/Reassuring/
Respectful...

**N**
Natural/Nice...

**O**
Objective/Optimistic/
Organised/Original...

**P**
Patient/Peaceful/Persistent
/Playful/Polite/Prudent/
Punctual...

**S**
Sensitive/Skilful/Skilful/
Spontaneous/Strong...

**T**
Tactful/Thrifty/Tolerant/True...

**U**
Understanding...

*A personal success*



# Flush out the resources in each activity

*(Proposed by Promotion santé Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes – Soizic Brunet)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Positive self-assessment C1.5
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Enriching one's self-image by recognising one's qualities, personal strengths and skills
☐ Developing a benevolent and constructive relationship with oneself
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

"When many exercises have been done, it is possible to highlight the skills or qualities used by the young people by giving them precise feedback with examples. The facilitator must be honest and appropriate. It is also possible to invite the young people to identify for themselves the skills or qualities used. Note that young people with a more degraded self-image may have more difficulty identifying their resources. It is helpful to base feedback on factual elements.

**When searching for an internship:**
'You've found an internship. How did you do it?' Throughout the discussion, bring out the skills and qualities used in this situation.

Examples of skills: conducting research, making calls, sending emails, following up, refocusing one's search based on feedback, pursuing multiple leads, asking for help, etc.

Examples of qualities: curiosity, autonomy, perseverance, clear-headedness, dynamism, courage, ingenuity, etc.

'Did you make the calls yourself? Was it easy? How did you do it?' Example: 'You managed your stress well', 'your explanations were clear', 'you practiced beforehand', 'you prepared by writing a script', 'you are comfortable speaking and communicating', etc.

**End-of-test self-assessment questionnaire:** at the end of the assessments, invite the young people to take a few minutes for self-analysis, focusing on what worked:

- How did this test go for me?
- What do I think I have succeeded at?
- In my opinion, what made me succeed at this?
- What can I learn from this experience?

**Project at an after-school or youth club**: Invite the young people to be fully involved in putting projects together. Support them in this process to help with the structure, without doing it for them. Help them, during individual or group discussions, to list all the skills and qualities they have used. (Organising themselves, conducting research, gathering information, debating, making choices, being persistent, having ideas (being creative), being punctual, having taken the group into account, having overcome difficulties or tensions, etc.). If the project did not come to fruition. Take this opportunity to analyse where it went wrong. Think about what could be done the next time. If your circumstances allow, try the experiment again to see it through to the end."

# ***Specific cognitive skill 6***

## Strengthening full attention in relation to oneself (C1.6)

**Strengthening full attention** means improving the ability to voluntarily direct one's **attention** to the present sensory experience (whether external or internal), and to fully embrace the observed experience. It therefore involves "self-regulating attention to internal and external events in the present moment and maintaining an attitude that is based on acceptance of the experience of the present moment" [44].

**Full attention is characterised by two cognitive activities that it is useful to master [46]:**

**1. Focusing one's attention on the present sensory experience (information from the external and internal worlds);**

**2. Fully perceiving and embracing the present sensory experience without judging or altering it. Thus, this capacity is based on the subject Self in its receptive cognitive functions (first A of the acronym AADA,** *see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2***).**

**This full attention can be practiced during specific exercises (formal activities) or throughout the day (informal activities).** In both instances, it entails observing one's inner world or the surrounding external world, being able to let the thoughts that are produced pass without seeking to modify them and without interacting with them (through reflection or an inner dialogue), and being able to observe one's present emotions (and volitions) without reacting and without taking action [44].

### 1.Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

**Attention** is a key mental ability that is involved in receptive cognitive functions (*see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2*). Together with perception, attention allows us to acquire, process and integrate information from the outside world and from our inner world [6]. "Attention is the mechanism that allows us to focus our cognitive resources on specific objects, preferably stimuli relevant to our current objectives, while ignoring irrelevant stimuli (selective attention), obtained by directing attention. Our sensory organs receive a large amount of stimulation at all times. However, the number of pieces of sensory information that can be consciously identified at the same time is limited. Attention can be voluntarily shifted or involuntarily captured by (external) sensory events" [45, 46].

Attention is therefore the (cognitive) means whereby information reaches our consciousness. This is the starting point for all actions, whether cognitive (observing, thinking, imagining, etc.) or behavioural (speaking, shouting, singing, moving, etc.). Most often, this 'entry point' is poorly guarded; our attention is not under our (voluntary) control; it is directed automatically, i.e., without us having chosen this and without us even being aware of it (we call this **automatic attention**).

Our attention is constantly captured either by external stimuli (sounds, images, movements, touches, etc.) or by internal stimuli (thoughts, inner speech, emotions, desires, etc.) [4]. Therefore, in the first instance, knowing how to be fully attentive implies being able to direct one's attention consciously and voluntarily (this is referred to as **attentional control**).

After having (re)gained control of one's attention, the next step is to be able to voluntarily direct this attention to the present experience. The information perceptible through attention can then come either from the surrounding physical world, giving rise to an '**experience of the external world**', or from one's inner world or **inner Self**, giving rise to an '**experience of the inner world**'.

The external (or outside) world is perceived through our 5 senses: hearing, sight, smell, touch and taste, which gives rise to **a sensory experience**. Our internal (or inner) world manifests itself through the 5 psychic states of the **inner Self** and gives rise to **an internal sensory experience**: **cognitions** (thoughts, mental images, internal dialogue), **emotions** (affects, feelings, moods, etc.), **volitions or conations** ((im)pulsions, desires, wants, needs, etc.), **bodily sensations**, and global and diffuse **impressions**.

Thus, human beings possess this essential ability to perceive sensations originating in their bodies (such as heart rate, hunger or thirst). Referred to as interoception by the scientific community, this ability to perceive the internal states of the body gives a person information about their physical condition and emotional state, and allows them to be informed about their state of physical and psychological wellbeing [81].

Therefore, full attention requires being able to "directly observe what is happening in one's body or mind at the very moment it is happening" [44].

### 2. Fully observing and embracing the present sensory experience without judging or modifying it

After having voluntarily directed one's attention to the present sensory experience (constructed from the external or internal world), it is necessary to be able to fully embrace what is observed in order to be fully attentive. This entails perceiving what is present, here and now, without analysing, without interpreting and without changing what is happening. An attitude of openness and benevolent acceptance allows us to observe without judgement the raw experience as it unfolds in the present moment (without any interference on our part). Even if we are affected by what the external or internal world is feeding back to us, full attention can help us to remain a neutral, open and benevolent observer.

### 3. Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities on a daily basis

Different types of activity can be used to strengthen one's capacity for full attention (*see summary table below*).

**Table 5. C1.6. Different types of full attention activity, depending on the phenomena perceived (external or internal world) and the structure of the activity (formal or informal)**

| | | External world | Internal world |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Formal activities** | **(1) Seated full attention** | using one's **5 senses**: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste | of one's **5 mental states:** cognitions, emotions, sensations, volitions and impressions |
| | **(2) Moving full attention** | using one's **5 senses** | of one's **bodily sensations** |
| | **(3) Fully attentive breathing** | | of one's **bodily sensations** |
| | **(4) Fully attentive lying** | | of one's **bodily sensations** |
| **Informal activities** | | **(5) Full attention to the external world (5 senses):** during a routine activity, during something enjoyable and during a moment of stress. | **(6) Full attention to the internal world:** upon waking and upon going to sleep, during transitions. |

### • Formal full attention activities

It is possible to distinguish between 4 main types of formal full attention activities (formal activities 1, 2, 3 and 4):

**(1) seated full attention:** sitting on a chair or on the floor, in an upright and comfortable position, motionless, attention is directed either to the surrounding external world or to the internal world. Thus, depending on the exercise, the activity entails observing and fully embracing the experience of the external world or the experience of one's internal world.
In order to practice voluntarily directing one's attention and embracing the present experience of the external world, only one of the five senses can be used at a time: what do I see here and now? what noises and sounds can I perceive? what smells do I detect? what sensations do I feel in the touch of my feet, my back, my pelvis, etc.? what tastes do I experience in my mouth, etc.?
Similarly, when practicing paying full attention to and embracing the present experience of one's internal world, only one of the five psychic states (cognitions, emotions, bodily sensations, volition and impressions) can be perceived at a time: can I focus my attention on what I am thinking, here and now? What emotions am I feeling now? What are my current wants, desires and needs? Can I perceive internal sensations at the level of my body, such as tension, heaviness or relaxed body parts? Do I feel a vague and diffuse impression deep within me?
Seated full attention exercises can vary in duration depending on the audience, context and objectives. In general, it is observed that a minimum of a few minutes (approximately 10-15 minutes) is necessary to be able to voluntarily direct one's attention and perceive the present experience.

**(2) Moving full attention:** this entails being fully attentive while performing physical exercises (stretching, walking, dancing, running, etc.). The motor activities are performed relatively slowly and attention is directed towards the bodily sensations felt when executing the movement. Thus, attention is not focused on the execution of the movement but rather it is directed towards perceiving the sensations that occur in the body at every moment. This moving full attention practice can be maintained throughout the exercise (thus giving rise to a specific moving full attention activity) or offered for a short time (2/3 minutes) during a physical activity.

Moving full attention exercises can also be offered outdoors during a walking activity. In this instance, the task is to be fully attentive to and present in the surrounding world. While walking, attention is focused and remains maintained on the information perceived at each moment. Depending on the exercises, the senses can be used together: what do I perceive while walking? or specifically: what can I see? what do I hear? do I smell any odours? can I perceive anything through touch?, etc.

**(3) Fully attentive breathing**: whatever position is adopted (sitting, standing, lying), this entails keeping still and focusing attention on one's breath (accepting it as it is in the moment). Without trying to change anything, we become aware of the spontaneous movements of breathing that naturally occur in the body. Attention tracks the movements associated with inhalation and then exhalation without seeking to intervene. Attention can be focused on the lower abdomen, the upper chest, the heart or the entire breathing body. Full attentive breathing exercises can be done as a standalone activity for a short time (from 2/3 breaths with full attention to 2/3 minutes) or integrated into a longer full attention exercise (in a seated or lying position).

**(4) Fully attentive lying:** lying on the floor in a straight and comfortable position, this entails staying still and only being active in terms of one's attention. This attention is directed towards the body and the bodily sensations present in the moment. Depending on the exercise, it is possible to progressively feel all the parts of one's body (starting from the feet or the head) by focusing one's attention: can I feel my right foot on the ground? my right calf? my right knee? my right thigh?, etc. It is also possible to focus one's attention on the whole of one's body with more global attention: can I feel my whole body? the sensation of my body on the ground? the physical sensations inside my body? the overall feeling of my body, here and now?

**• Informal full attention activities**

In our daily lives, we are used to acting without intentionally directing our attention. Our attention operates almost autonomously; it is activated automatically and subconsciously. It is like it is 'absorbed' in the motoric (communication, bodily movements, etc.) and/or mental (reflection, judgement, daydreaming, etc.) actions that are carried out throughout the day. Thus, even while we not truly aware of the present situation (internal as well as external), we can say that we are 'lost in our thoughts' and/or that we are functioning 'on autopilot'.

Engaging in informal full attention activities requires introducing a new way of functioning into our daily lives. Usually, during a day, two main modes of operation are used: a mode that could be described as 'reflection' and a mode that could be described as '(re)action'. In 'reflection mode', cognitions (thoughts, judgements, images, dreams, etc.) are automatically activated and arise one after another without voluntary attention, without real control and without a true choice on our part. We think about what we are going to do this evening, what we should or should not have said, the problem that is bothering us; we criticise such and such a person or we criticise ourselves; we imagine our next holiday, we put strategies together to solve our problems, we dream of better days, etc. In '(re)action mode', our attention is focused (more or less automatically) on performing an action. The actions may have been decided voluntarily (for example: going outside to play with a ball); this is called functioning in 'action mode'.

However, these actions may not have been intentionally decided, but be the result of an impulse (for example: kicking a ball because one is angry and the ball is in front of oneself) (*see cognitive skill C2.2*); this is referred to as functioning in 'reaction mode'. In these different modes (reflection mode, (re)action mode), we are in a state of **cognitive fusion** (*see cognitive skill 1.1*), absorbed by what we are doing or thinking.

Engaging in informal full attention activities involves introducing a new way of functioning during the day: a mode that could be described as attention/observation. In this 'attention/observation mode', we voluntarily focus our attention on the sensory experience taking place in the present moment and we fully observe and benevolently embrace this present experience (perceived by our five senses or arising from our five psychic states). This 'attention/observation mode' can be activated at any time of the day in order to take a 'conscious break' and perform a kind of 'freeze-frame' on our mental and/or behavioural activities. This full attention during daily activities can be of short duration (2 or 3 minutes) and can be repeated several times during the day. Throughout the day, informal full attention activities can focus either on the external world or on the internal world. Thus, we can focus our attention on external phenomena and perceive them through an exercise of informal full attention **to the external world (through the five senses) (activity 5)** (one after the other or together); or we can direct our attention to what is happening within ourselves and embrace our psychic states (one after the other or all together) through an activity of informal full attention **to the internal world (activity 6)**."

Certain times of day are particularly favourable to these informal full attention activities, in the form of observation using the five senses **(informal activity 5)** or observation of the five mental states **(informal activity 6)**:

- **Internal full attention upon waking or going to bed (informal activity 6)**: When I wake up and when I go to bed, while I am still in bed, I can ask myself: How do I feel here and now? What are my thoughts? My emotions? My sensations? My needs? My overall impressions?

- **Internal full attention during moments of transition (informal activity 6)**: When I start a new activity (eating, driving, working, playing, etc.), I can ask myself: How do I feel, here and now? What are my thoughts? My emotions? My sensations? My needs? My impressions?

- **Full attention to the five senses during a routine activity (informal activity 5):** during daily actions that are performed on 'autopilot' (such as eating, brushing teeth, showering, etc.), I pay full attention to the present situation: What do I see? What do I hear? What do I smell?, etc.

- **Full attention to the five senses during an enjoyable activity (informal activity 5)**: during enjoyable relaxing activities (such as listening to music, drinking fruit juice, looking at a landscape, walking the dog, walking in nature, etc.), I can be fully attentive to the present experience perceived by my five senses: What do I see? What do I hear? What do I smell?, etc.

- **Full attention to the five senses during a stressful moment (informal activity 5)**: before, during and/or after an emotionally intense situation (an exam, an argument, a deadline, etc.), I am fully attentive to the external world (What do I see? What do I hear? What do I smell?, etc.). Then, I can move on to a **fully attentive breathing** exercise (*see emotional skill: regulating one's stress in volume II*).

*Strengthening full attention generates four main beneficial effects [82]:*

- **It increases our capacity for self-control and choice:** voluntarily directing one's attention and fully embracing the present experience increases one's ability to regulate impulses and make conscious choices. Thus, full attention helps to reduce impulsivity and increase behavioural control. Observing one's present sensory experience brings about a distancing that enables one to no longer be carried away by one's impulses. We no longer merge with our experience (*see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2*) and are no longer acted upon by our thoughts, emotions and impulses. We become more aware and capable of deciding on our actions;
- **It improves concentration and learning**: by strengthening our ability to control our attention, we are better able to stay focused on the task at hand. Through this voluntary attention, we can increase our ability to concentrate and work. An attitude that is open to the present moment also facilitates creativity and decision-making;
- **It facilitates emotional regulation:** full attention promotes the embracing of emotions and allows one to fully open up to one's emotional experience in the moment. This capacity for **experiential acceptance** (as opposed to **experiential avoidance**, *see cognitive skill 1.1*) constitutes a prerequisite for proper emotional regulation (*see emotional skills*). It enables one to better manage difficult emotions and increases pleasant emotions [52, 83];
- **It improves one's relationship with oneself**: observing without judgement and fully embracing one's internal experience also changes one's relationship with oneself. Full attention helps us to no longer fear and avoid our subjective experience; it allows us to be less critical and condemning of who we are and what we feel. By embracing and accepting what we are experiencing, the tensions and conflicts within ourselves decrease. They leave room for greater peace and benevolence towards oneself. This benevolent presence in relation to one's experience allows one to develop a peaceful relationship with oneself; it increases our capacity for **self-compassion**. “Self-compassion is a concept referring to an attitude of kindness and benevolence towards oneself, to an emotional state where the person allows themselves to be affected by their own suffering in situations of hardship or failure, as well to recognise and accept their emotions and limitations without judgement [84, 85]. Self-compassion involves generating the same compassion for oneself that one might give to others. Consequently, it does not denote a self-centred narcissistic interest, but rather a conscious caring behaviour and a shared sense of humanity" [86, 87].

*Developing this skill hinges on two conditions:*

- **Accepting to change our relationship with ourselves and our thoughts [88]:** The mind regularly wanders and we frequently merge with our thoughts without realising it (*see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2*). The immediate goal is not to prevent these digressions but rather to change our relationship to them and to know how to come back to the present experience. This involves changing our normal mental functioning in order to be able to detach ourselves from our mental representations (thoughts, judgements, ruminations, daydreams, etc.) and to be able to observe them (this is called **metacognition**); in the same way that we can observe all other psychic and physiological productions (emotions, volitions/conations, sensations, impressions), and all the external phenomena perceived through our five senses.
- **Wanting to embrace one's experience with benevolence and neutrality [88]:** seeking to observe our feelings and sensations with curiosity, without interpreting or judging them makes such acceptance possible, rather than seeking to modify them. When we are tempted to modify them, we can seek to refocus on the present experience and its perception as it manifests itself (pleasant, unpleasant, intense, light, etc.) by simply observing, embracing and describing our perceptions as they arise.

## Key takeaways (C1.6)

**Conceptual definition:** **Strengthening full attention** develops "the ability to perceive one's thoughts, emotions, desires, needs and sensations in the here and now (...). This entails being able to direct one's attention to one's present lived experience (cognitions, emotions, sensations, etc.) and being able to fully embrace one's own feelings whatever their nature (pleasant, unpleasant, surprising, destabilising, etc.) [1]. This skill relies on the receptive cognitive functions of the subject Self. Thus, it mobilises the abilities of the subject Self-observer to perceive, in the moment, its inner world (the inner Self) as well as the surrounding external world.

**Operational definition:** **Three core psychological practical skills can help strengthen full attention:**

1. **Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience**: the sensory experience stemming from the external world perceived through the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) and the sensory experience from the internal world perceived through the five psychic states (cognitions, emotions, volitions/conations, sensations and impressions);
2. **Observing and fully embracing the present sensory experience** without judging or modifying it;
3. **Engaging in various (formal and informal) full attention activities (in relation to the internal and external worlds) throughout the day**: formal seated, moving, breathing and lying full attention activities; informal full attention activities in relation to the external world through the five senses (during a routine activity, an enjoyable activity or a stressful moment) and in relation to the internal world (upon waking and going to bed, during transition times).

## Key takeaways (C1.6 *continued*)

**Main effects: Strengthening one's full attention enables one to:**

- **Increase one's capacity for self-control and choice:** voluntarily directing one's attention and fully embracing the present experience increases one's ability to regulate impulses and make conscious choices. Thus, full attention helps to reduce impulsivity and increase behavioural control. Observing one's present sensory experience brings about a distancing that enables one to no longer be carried away by one's impulses;
- **Improve one's capacities for concentration and learning**: by strengthening our ability to control our attention, we are better able to stay focused on the task at hand. Through this voluntary attention, we can increase our ability to concentrate and work. An attitude that is open to the present moment also facilitates creativity and decision-making;
- **Regulate emotions more easily:** full attention promotes the embracing of emotions and allows one to fully open up to one's emotional experience in the moment. This capacity for experiential acceptance (as opposed to experiential avoidance) constitutes a prerequisite for proper emotional regulation (*see emotional skills*). It enables one to better manage difficult emotions and increases pleasant emotions;
- **Improve one's relationship with oneself**: observing without judging and fully embracing one's internal experience helps one to dwell less on fear and criticism and to be less avoidant of our subjective experience. By embracing and accepting what we are feeling, the tensions and conflicts within ourselves decrease. They leave room for greater peace and benevolence towards oneself, which increases our capacity for self-compassion.

**Main conditions: Strengthening one's full attention requires**:

- **Accepting to change our relationship with ourselves and our thoughts:** The mind regularly wanders and we frequently merge with our thoughts without realising it. We cannot prevent these digressions, but we can change our relationship to them and learn to come back to the present experience.
- **Wanting to embrace one's experience with benevolence and neutrality:** seeking to observe our feelings and sensations with curiosity, without interpreting or judging them makes this acceptance possible, rather than seeking to modify them. When we are tempted to modify them, we can seek to refocus on the present experience and its perception as it manifests itself (pleasant, unpleasant, intense, light, etc.) by simply observing, embracing and describing our perceptions as they arise.

# Examples of activities to develop the PSS
## C1.6 Strengthening full attention

### Fully attentive breathing

*(Extract from 'Les bienfaits de la nature sur la santé globale' [The benefits of nature on overall health], Montreal Heart Institute, 2021 [89])*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)
**Psychological knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience
□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience
⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities on a daily basis
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

"Sit comfortably, guided by your inner feelings, in the way you want to sit, neither based on what others think is right, nor based on how others judge you; you think from the inside, you do the best you can.

Be kind to yourself, focus your attention on your breathing, on each inhalation and exhalation; for example, by following the movement of your belly as it rises slightly on the inhale and falls on the exhale; be fully present for each of your inhalations, following them meticulously, from the beginning of the process to the end, when the inhale transitions into the exhale, etc."

### Freeze-frames during the day

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson M, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Strengthening one's full attention (in relation to oneself) C1.6
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience
□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience
⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities on a daily basis
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

"During the day, you are invited to take several mini-breaks (of a few breaths, one to two minutes). During these 'freeze-frames', focus your attention on what is happening, here and now:

- I observe, I hear, I feel everything that is happening outside of me.
- I feel what is happening inside me.
- I focus my attention on my breath."

## My 6-step internal weather report

*(Extract from Kotsou I, Farnier J, Shankland R, Mikolajczak M, Leys C, 2022 [50])*

**Audience**: ⊠ Children;⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

**1) Stop**: the first step consists of slowing down and taking the time to stop in order to get out of autopilot and be present in our current experience.

**2) Sensations**: this step involves becoming aware of what is felt in the present moment in the manner of a body scan (i.e. by feeling all the parts of one's body in turn).

**3) Mental**: the third step is devoted to observing our thoughts and the functioning of our mind, and we can put this inner state into words if we want.

**4) Emotions**: the fourth step is devoted to observing our states of mind, our feelings and emotions, and we can put these experiences into words if we want.

**5) Breathing**: the fifth step invites us to focus on our breathing, facilitating synchronisation with the present moment.

**6) External**: finally, a suggestion is made to focus on sensory stimulations that come from the outside world (what we hear, what we smell, what we see) in order to reconnect with our environment.

## A boat on the waves

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson M, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

"– Ask the children to lie down, close their eyes and place their hands on their stomach below the level of the navel (to feel abdominal breathing).

– Invite the children to focus their attention on their breathing (the sea) and on their hands (the boat). The movements of the breath make the hands rise and fall like the waves of the sea make a boat go up and down.

- Inhalation: the boat goes up
- Exhalation: the boat goes down.

– Remind the children to breathe normally, following their usual breathing pattern. Suggest that they focus their attention on the boat going up and down.

– Finally, you can suggest that the children vary their breathing speed.

- Good weather with no wind (everything is calm, small waves): slow and gentle breathing.
- The wind is picking up (medium waves): breathing speeds up.
- A storm (big waves): very deep breathing.
- Back to good weather with no wind (everything is calm, small waves): slow and gentle breathing.

***Variation:*** instead of your hands, you can place an object on your stomach (small cushion, bag of rice, small folded paper boat, etc.)."

# The path of attention

*(Extract from the ScholaVie tools, ScholaVie - Psychosocial skills at school)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective: Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)**

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** templates below

## Using the tool

The activity can be carried out **as a whole class** or in **small groups**. It is also possible to play it **individually**.

### Preparation (10 mins)

- Read this guide and choose whether you want to offer the activity in group or individual format.
- Print as many copies as there are groups, or pupils for the individual format.

Below are **two ways to use** this tool in the classroom with your pupils:

- **Follow the path over several days**, progressing along the path in a linear fashion and offering one activity each day (from 1 to 6) during an attention break. *Example: I start the path by doing activity 1 with the pupils - STOP - following the written instructions.*
- For ad hoc use, **you can also use a die**. In this case, the pupil rolls the die and **does the full attention activity corresponding to the number** on the die. *Example: I roll the die and get the number 3. I then do the 'Detective of my body' exercise for 3 minutes, following the written instructions.*

## Feedback

At the end of the exercise, we recommend that you take some time with your pupils to consolidate the psychosocial skills they have worked on and to grasp the role they can play at school and in their learning:

- **Phase 1: First, propose self-observation** - *How did you find this exercise? What have you learned about yourself? About your classmates? How are you feeling now?*
- **Phase 2: Conclude by initiating metacognitive reflection** - *How can these breaks help you to learn better? How can you use this to feel good at school? Why do you think they are important?*

To promote **pedagogical freedom**, this tool, like all those offered by ScholaVie, can be **adapted according to needs and/or co-constructed with pupils** in order to involve them as much as possible and increase their level of engagement.

# THE PATH OF ATTENTION

A tool to develop one's attentional capacity.

- Primary version -

## 1 STOP! 3 mins.

When I hear the signal, I freeze and observe:
- What am I **doing**
- How am I **sitting**
- Am I **OK**
- The **sounds** I hear, the **odours** I can smell
- The **people** next to me
- My **breathing**, etc.

## 2 Yum? 3 mins.

I eat a food as if I were discovering it for the first time:
- I **look** at it, I **touch** it, I **feel** it;
- I place it on my **tongue**, I **bite** into it, I **swallow** it calmly and I **observe** what happens in my body and in my head.

## 3 Detective of my body 3 mins.

I settle in comfortably, sitting or lying down:
- First, I focus on my **breathing;**
- Next, on **each part of my body**, one after the other: feet, legs, etc.
- What is going on?

## 4 Let's go! 3 mins.

I walk slowly, carefully observing:
- the movements of my **body**, my feet, my arms;
- the **feel** of my footsteps on the ground;
- my **breathing**;
- the **sounds** I hear;
- the **smells**;

## 5 Breathe! 3 mins.

I close my eyes. I put one hand on my **heart** and the other on my **stomach**. I focus on my breathing:
- I feel **the air** entering through my nostrils or my mouth, my stomach rising and falling, the beating of my heart, etc.
- Then, I open my eyes and **stretch** like a cat.

## 6 Listen to the music! 3 mins.

I sit down comfortably, I can close my eyes and I listen to the music.
- Does it make me feel good?
- Is it loud or not?
- Do I like it?
- What does it make me think of?

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# THE PATH OF ATTENTION

A tool to develop one's attentional capacity.

- Secondary version -

## 1 Take a break

3 mins.

I am a real detective and I observe:
- How I am sitting or standing and whether it is comfortable.
- Am I hot, am I cold, am I just right?
- I look to see who is next to me.
- I close my eyes, I put my hand on my heart and I feel it beating.

## 2 Eating with full attention

3 mins.

I choose to eat a food as if I were discovering it for the first time:
- I **look** at it, I **touch** it, I **feel** it;
- I;
- I place it on my **tongue**, I **bite** into it, I **swallow** it calmly and I observe...

## 3 Performing a body scan

3 mins.

I get into a comfortable position, sitting or lying down:
- First, I focus on my **breathing;**
- Then, on **each part of my body**, from top to bottom and in turn, and I explore the sensations I feel.

## 4 Walking with full attention

3 mins.

I take a few steps, awakening all my senses:
- The movements of my **body**, my **breathing**;
- The **feel** of my footsteps on the ground;
- The **sound**, **visual** and **olfactory** landscape around me, etc.

## 5 Breathing with full attention

3 mins.

I focus my attention on my breathing and:
- I visualise the path of my **breath**, the movements of my **body** during inhalation and exhalation;
- I **observe** what is, without changing it, I let my breathing settle in quietly. Then, I open my eyes and stretch if I feel the need to.

## 6 Listening to music with full attention

3 mins.

I choose a piece of music and listen to it while being fully present in the experience of the moment:
- the **melody**, the **rhythm**, the **lyrics**;
- my **feelings**, my **thoughts**, the **images** that come to mind, etc.

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# Body scan

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson M, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience
⊠ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience
⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

"– Invite the children to lie comfortably on their backs, then close their eyes. Next, ask them to simply perceive, feel and observe with curiosity what is happening in this part of the body (without judging, understanding, comparing, etc.).

– At a slow pace, name each of the body parts:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| the forehead | the right shoulder | the chest | the right thigh | the whole head |
| the cheeks | the right arm | the stomach | the right calf | the entire chest |
| the chin | the right hand and fingers | breathing in the stomach | the right foot,<br>the toes,<br>the sole of the foot | the whole body |
| the back of the skull | the left shoulder | | the left thigh | beyond the body |
| the neck | the left arm | | the left calf | |
| | the left hand and fingers | | the left foot,<br>the toes,<br>the sole of the foot | |

***Variations** : To make the body scan easier and/or more fun, you can perform it with the help of a support:*

- ***The child's touch (hand):** the child focuses their attention on each part of their body and, without moving, tries to feel the bodily sensations.*

- ***'Medical' imagery:** the child imagines that they are playing doctor and that their attention is a kind of radio that allows them to perceive everything that is happening in their body. Thus, they go round and feel all the parts of the body.*

- ***'Animal' imagery:** the child imagines that a small butterfly lands successively on each part of their body.*

- ***'Sun' imagery:** the child imagines that a ray of sunshine comes and warms each part of their body.*

- ***'Sound and/or light' imagery:** a sound (xylophone, triangle, bell, etc.) is heard when it is time to change body part. The child projects an 'invisible light' into each part of their body."*

## What are you feeling in your body right now?

*(Extract from Claeys Bouuaert M, 2022)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

⊠ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

"It can be helpful, especially when something emotionally intense happens in a group, or simply to 'come back to oneself,' to calm, to breathing, to the present moment, to invite the pupils to explore this self-awareness exercise:

- Right now, what sensations in your body are attracting your attention?
- Take a moment to breathe and feel... just embrace what is there...

We can then go around the circle and invite the pupils to express, in one word, what they are feeling in their body at this moment. A possible extension could include drawing, individually or as a group, or a longer sharing session."

## In tune with a sound, a feeling

*(Extract from the Prodas Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** CD or USB key with recorded sounds, audio equipment, sheet of paper divided into four sections for each participant

**"Aims:**
To develop awareness of one's own emotions
To highlight the differences and similarities in feelings between individuals

**Outline:**
The activity consists in asking the children to listen to four different sounds, with a pause after each sound. During this pause, each child writes down for themselves on a sheet of paper the feeling(s) that the sound evokes for them, and any experiences they have had related to this feeling.
After listening to the four sounds, the facilitator goes through the sounds one by one and each participant can, if they wish, share with the rest of the group the feeling(s) they identified and wrote down.
The facilitator then asks the group of children questions to highlight the differences or similarities in their feelings about the same sound: - *"Did we all feel the same thing about the first sound?"* - *"Did any of the feelings mentioned surprise you?"*
The sounds offered can be animal sounds, wind, sea, rain, storm, playground, funfair, bells, fire engine siren, horns, music, etc.
This activity can be done several times a year with different sounds."

# Anchoring oneself in the present moment

*(Extract from the TEAL (Tous Épanouis à l'École [Everyone Thriving at School]) programme by Floriane Boyer and Rebecca Shankland)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

## Activity 1: Anchoring oneself in the present moment

COGNITIVE SKILL → Capacity for self-awareness

### Instructions

The facilitator explains to the pupils that today's activity aims to help them feel grounded and rooted in the present moment, like a tree.

**Step 1:**
They ask the students to describe the different parts that make up a tree, while emphasising the importance of the roots which ensure that the tree is stable.

### Equipment

- None

**Step 2:**
The facilitator encourages the pupils to stand with both feet firmly planted on the ground. They suggest they close their eyes and visualise themselves as a solid tree, with roots sunk deep into the earth.

While they are breathing deeply, the pupils are invited to imagine their roots plunging deep into the ground. The facilitator encourages them to embrace the sensations in their feet, legs, abdomen and chest, thus connecting to their firmly rooted body.

**Step 3:**
Next, the pupils are invited to sway gently back and forth, from side to side, as if they were being gently rocked by the wind while remaining rooted. The facilitator invites them to perceive the balance of their tree even when turbulence occurs.

**Exercise from the FOVEA programme, adapted for children:**
Shankland, R., Tessier, D., Strub, L, Gauchet, A., & Baeyens, C. (2020). Improving mental health and well-being through informal full attention practices: An intervention study. Applied Psychology Health & Well-Being. 13, 63-83. doi. 1Q.HH/aohw.12216.

### Debriefing

- How did you feel when you visualised your roots?
- When might this exercise be useful to you?

To conclude the activity, the facilitator suggests that the pupils visualise themselves doing the activity at a time of the week that seems relevant to them.

# Inner Journey

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

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

⊠ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

## Activity 1: Inner Journey

COGNITIVE SKILL → Capacity for self-awareness

### Instructions

During this session, the pupils are invited to pay particular attention to what is present within them, focusing on their emotions and the sensations associated with them.

### Equipment

None

First, the facilitator invites the pupils to become aware of their bodies and to feel their points of contact:

"Take a few moments to feel the sensations in your body. Feel your feet in contact with the ground, the different parts of your body touching the chair, your arms resting on the armrests, etc. Observe your breathing and feel the air going in and out of your nostrils, as well as the movement of your stomach.

Let your thoughts pass like clouds in the sky, without trying to hold onto them."

Next, the facilitator encourages the pupils to embrace their emotions and the physical sensations associated with them, without trying to repress or transform them, and asks them: "What word can you use to describe this emotion? What do you feel in your body when you experience this emotion?"

### Debriefing

- What changes in your emotions did you feel while doing this activity?
- How do you feel after this activity?

## The hidden world of emotions

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou. 2024)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal

**Main objective**: Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** see template below

### Man SCORE: Stop-Conscious-Observation-Respiration-External



5-step memo



1 I slow down, I take the time to stop.



2 I become conscious of what I am feeling in my body.



3 I observe my thoughts.



4 I pay attention to my breathing.



5 I pay attention to what is coming from the external world (what I hear, what I see, what I feel).

# The path of attention - The attention fortune teller

*(Extract from the ScholaVie tools, ScholaVie - Psychosocial skills at school)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal

**Main objective**: Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

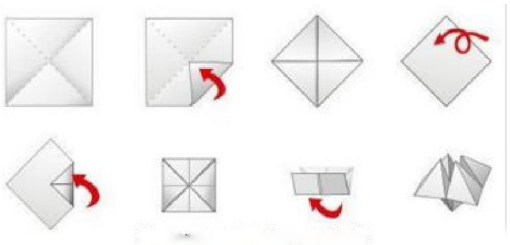
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** see template below

## Using the tool

**Preparation (10 to 20 mins)**

- Read the instructions and choose which version to use (the blank version to fill in with your pupils or not).
- Form small groups of four pupils. It is also possible to run the activity individually, especially in its blank version, giving each pupil the freedom to write their own full attention exercises on their fortune teller.
- **Print** one copy per group, or per pupil in your class for individual use, and **make the fortune tellers**, either beforehand or together with your pupils, following these instructions:



Source. *apprendre-reviser-memoriser.fr*

**Play alone or with others in 3 steps (5 to 30 mins)**

- One of the players holds the fortune teller in their hands and asks the other to say a number between 1 and 10.
- They open and close the fortune teller as many times as necessary to reach the indicated number.
- Next, they ask the other player to choose one of the 4 faces visible to them and then ask them to do the activity they have landed on. *For example: "I close my eyes and visualise a place where I would like to be" - the classmate then closes their eyes and takes a moment to visualise that place.* We suggest you set a time of around **1 minute per exercise**, and communicate it to the students.

## Feedback

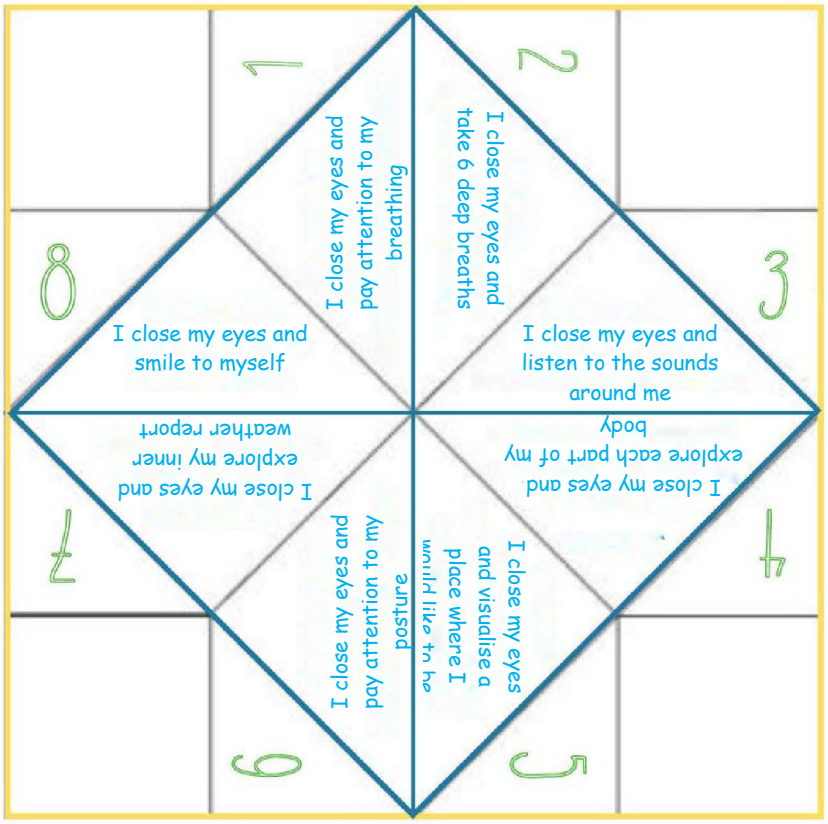
At the end of the exercise, we recommend that you take some time with your pupils to consolidate the psychosocial skills they have worked on and to grasp the role they can play at school and in their learning:

- **Phase 1: First, propose self-observation** - *How did you find this exercise? What have you learned about yourself? About your classmates? How are you feeling now?*
- **Phase 2: conclude by initiating metacognitive reflection** - *How can the skills you have developed through this exercise help you to learn better? How can you put them to good use at school and in the classroom? Why do you think they are important?*

To promote **pedagogical freedom**, this tool, like all those offered by ScholaVie, can be **adapted according to needs and/or co-constructed with pupils** in order to involve them as much as possible and increase their level of engagement.

# THE ATTENTION FORTUNE TELLER

A tool for connecting with the present moment.




- Primary and secondary version

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# Full attention

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

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Strengthening full attention (in relation to oneself) (C1.6)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Voluntarily directing one's attention to the present sensory experience

□ Fully embracing the perceived sensory experience

⊠ Carrying out different formal and informal full attention activities

**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

"We are going to engage in an introductory session to the practice of full attention, and for this we are going to perform a body scan...

I am going to ask you to sit comfortably in your chair, keep your back straight, uncross your legs and let your hands rest on your thighs or knees.

If it does not cause you any pain, then you can sit upright without leaning against the back of the chair... *(For those who prefer, you can also sit cross-legged on the floor, on a mat with a cushion placed under your bottom for more comfort...).*

Place your tongue against the roof of your mouth, and breathe calmly through your nose, without trying to change your breathing pattern...

(Body-chair contact) You can close your eyes if you wish... and focus first on the parts of your body that are in contact with the chair... Focus on the sensations in those parts of your body. Feel the weight, the sensations of warmth in contact with the chair, perhaps you can feel the sensations of your clothes which are an intermediary between your skin and the support of the chair... Now, place all your attention on the places where your body comes into contact with itself. Are your hands interlaced? Are your legs touching one another? Pay attention to these areas of contact. Finally, focus on the space your body occupies... Does it take up a lot of room? Does it take up little room? Can you feel the boundary between your body and the space around you?

(Head-shoulders) Now, pay very close attention to your head... (Silence), try to perceive how your head rests on your shoulders through the front and back of your neck. Perceive its balance, its heaviness or its lightness... Perhaps you perceive sensations that affect your whole head or perhaps more specific areas... (Silence)... Now, pay attention to the sensation of the air touching your cheeks and your forehead... Is the air cool? Or is it warm? Do you find it pleasant?

(Shoulders and back) Now, direct your attention to your shoulders, but also to your back as a whole... pay attention to your posture, to the sensations that pass through this part of your body, whether they are pleasant sensations, like a gentle feeling of warmth or less pleasant ones like localised or diffuse muscle tension... Simply observe the sensations and take note of them, with kindness...

(Belly-stomach) You can now focus your attention on your chest, your belly and your pelvis... What sensations do you feel in these parts of your body...? Perhaps you feel internal sensations, such as hunger? Being full? Notice then, how strong this sensation is...

(Arms-hands) Now, focus your attention on your arms and hands... Are your arms tense? Relaxed? What weight do they carry? What tension do they exert in relation to your shoulders? Finally, pay particular attention to your hands... The contact of your skin with your thighs? Are your hands relaxed? Are they tense, holding one another? Simply observe...

Very often our minds wander through internal dialogues… Perhaps you notice that your mind drifts at times and that it is difficult to stay focused on an exercise… That is ok, be kind to yourself. Each time a thought intrudes on your mind, acknowledge it and let it go like a cloud passing across the sky… Then, gently reconnect with the present moment, with the sensations you feel here and now…

(Buttocks-legs, calves, feet) Still simply observing your sensations… Now, pay attention to the sensations that run through the lower part of your body… First, your bottom resting on the chair… (Silence)… Then, direct your awareness to your thighs… (Silence)… Then, to your calves… (Silence)… Now, bring your conscious attention to your feet… Pay attention to where your feet are in contact with the floor, perhaps you can perceive the contact with the material of your socks or the texture of your shoes… Are the tips of your feet warm? Lukewarm? Cold? Is this a pleasant feeling, an unpleasant one…? Simply observe your sensations… (Silence)…

(Breathing) Now, focus your attention on your breathing, without trying to change its rate or depth… simply concentrate on the sensation produced by the air going in and out… (Silence)… Perhaps you can feel the sensation of the air going in and out at your nostrils or perhaps at the nasal passage… Along its path, is the air cool? Or is it warm? (Silence)… Perhaps it is easier for you to feel the sensation created by the air entering and leaving your lungs… The movement of your chest can help you imagine the complete path of the air… This oxygen-rich air which, with each breath, enters through your nostrils, travels along the nasal passage, passes through the trachea, enters your lungs, and then exits in the opposite direction… (Silence)…

With a little imagination, you can even lose yourself in the pleasure of feeling this air travel through your trachea, bronchi, bronchioles, and finally the alveoli… Becoming aware that each alveolus filled with air and oxygen allows your entire body to breathe and live… If you are comfortable with this movement of air through your respiratory system, you can even imagine that with each inhale, the air enters through your nostrils, passes through your lungs, and travels down your body to your feet… Then, in one motion, it rises again to exit where it entered… Become aware of the sensations produced by the air's journey through your body… Sensations of temperature, humidity or dryness, the expansion of your rib cage, the oxygenation of your body…

With kindness towards yourself, ask yourself this question: '*How do I feel here and now?*' Take a slightly deeper breath, and when I count to three, you can open your eyes… 1, 2, 3…".

## *General emotional skill 1*

# STRENGTHENING EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

# STRENGTHENING EMOTIONAL AWARENESS (E1)

**"Being aware of one's emotions** (…) is the ability to recognise and understand what we are feeling. This emotional skill requires the ability to understand how emotions work (…) and to be able to identify (these emotions) appropriately" [1].

**Strengthening emotional awareness** is based on a **better understanding** of how emotions work and their usefulness. This PSS is also based on **better accepting and embracing** one's emotional experience and the ability to **name** it.

**This first general emotional PSS (E1) encompasses two specific emotional PSS.** Several psychological knowledge items and practical skills enable us to **develop and strengthen each of the specific PSS:**

- **Specific emotional PSS 1: in order to understand emotions (E1.1), the core psychological knowledge and practical skills to acquire are**:

  1. Knowing the nature of emotions (their different components, their essential links with cognitions and behaviours, their mode of production through psychological needs and triggers and the various types of emotion);

  2. Knowing the function of emotions (information function and impulse for action function);

- **Specific emotional PSS 2: in order to identify one's emotions (E1.2), the core psychological knowledge and practical skills to acquire are**:

  1. Perceiving the emotional experience present within oneself;

  2. Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived.

# Specific emotional skill 1

## Understanding emotions (E1.1)

An emotion is a particular internal state that has a neurobiological basis. It is comprised of several components. It constitutes one of the five psychic states of the inner Self (*see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2*). It plays an essential role in satisfying psychological needs and is triggered in response to an event (whether internal or external). It makes it possible for the organism to come into motion by activating the body, thus preparing it for action to preserve its psychological balance, allow its adaptation to the context and ensure its survival. An emotion has various characteristics related to its nature and function [50].

**Table 6. E1.1 (a): The main characteristics of an emotion in relation to its nature and function**

| | | | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Nature** | **Internal components** | Overall subjective feeling | *Apprehension* |
| | | Bodily sensations | *Stomach pains* |
| | | Physiological manifestations | *Acceleration of the heart and respiratory rate* |
| | **External components** | Facial expression and paralanguage | *Tense face and trembling voice* |
| | | Reflex actions | *Jerky movements* |
| | **Related dimensions** | Related thoughts | *'I'm not going to manage it'* |
| | | Associated behaviours | *Taking your mobile phone* |
| **Function** | **Triggering event** | | *A complicated assignment due tomorrow* |
| | **Psychological need** | | *Needs for recognition and achievement* |
| | **Action** | | *Working hard and asking someone for help* |

**Improving one's understanding of emotions involves:**

**- better knowledge of the nature of emotions (their different components, their essential links with cognitions and behaviours, how they are produced by psychological needs and triggers, and the various types of emotion);**

**- fully understanding their functions (an information and an action function, in order to satisfy one's psychological needs).**

## 1. Having better knowledge of the nature of emotions

- **Emotions are made up of several components [47, 50, 90-92]**

The multi-component nature of an emotion is currently recognised in the psychological sciences [50, 92]. Emotion encompasses internal components, which take place inside the organism, and external components, which are manifested outside of oneself [47, 91, 92].

**<u>The internal components of emotion</u> encompass the manifestations that take place within oneself and of which we may be more or less conscious:**

- **A general subjective feeling** that can be more or less well characterised, and which allows us to define the emotion (e.g., feeling annoyed, joyful, sad, etc.);
- **Perceptible bodily sensations** (e.g., a racing heart, knot in the stomach, tight throat, etc.) and **physiological changes** (e.g., an accelerated heart rate in anger or fear, changes in breathing rate, neuronal activation, etc.).

**<u>External components</u> encompass manifestations that are visible outside of oneself**:

- **Reflexive motor reactions in terms of the face** (e.g., facial expressions, gaze, crying, bursting out laughing, etc.) **and in terms of gestures** (e.g., clenched fists, shaking, head nodding, etc.);
- **Reflex manifestations in terms of paralanguage** (e.g. tone of voice, speed, volume, etc.).

**Table 7. E1.1 (b): The different components of emotion**

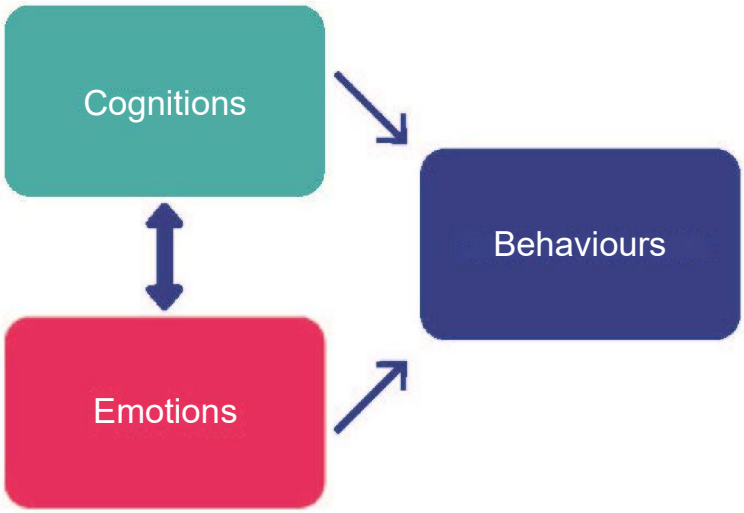
| EMOTION | |
|---|---|
| **Internal components:** | **External components:** |
| *- overall subjective feeling*<br>*- bodily sensations*<br>*- physiological manifestations* | *- facial reflex reactions*<br>*- reflex paralanguage*<br>*- reflex gestures* |

- **Emotions are linked to cognitions and behaviours**

Emotions bring about **changes at the cognitive level**; they influence our perceptions, thoughts and memory [50]. At the same time, our perceptions, thoughts and memory influence how we feel emotionally and our recognition of emotions; therefore, we can now say that emotions and thoughts are associated. Thus, there is constant interaction between thoughts and emotions. Some people may access their thoughts more easily and others their emotions, but in all cases emotions and cognitions are linked.

Emotions also generate an action tendency that pushes us to start moving (e.g., laughing, typing, running, etc.) [90, 91]. Thus, they facilitate the execution of our behaviours, which vary according to the type of emotion felt (e.g., attacking or defending in anger, fleeing in fear) [50].

**Figure 4. E1.1 (a): The links between emotions, cognitions and behaviours**



- **Emotions are caused by a triggering event, in response to psychological needs [7, 9]**

**An emotion is the organism's response to psychological needs**. Emotions are caused by two factors that are important to distinguish: **a triggering event** and **a psychological need** (*see the list of psychological needs: cognitive skill C1.3*) [47, 50].

**Emotional triggers** can be external events (e.g., a judgemental comment) or internal events (e.g., a thought such as 'I'm not going to manage it'). Contrary to popular belief, these events are the triggers of the emotions, not their origin. When we feel an emotion, we tend to focus on the event (especially an external event) that triggered that emotion. We look for 'a cause' outside of ourselves, as if the event were intrinsically the carrier of the emotion.

On the contrary, the organism produces the emotion to enable it to **meet its psychological needs**. Psychological needs are inherent to individuals' psychological functioning. They can be satisfied by psychological nutrients that are essential to individuals' adaptation, integrity and growth [50, 93]. Meeting psychological needs helps maintain homeostasis (that is, a state of equilibrium) in the body and the psychological wellbeing of the individual. From a very young age, individuals naturally seek to meet their intrinsic psychological needs in order to maintain their balance.

**Emotions perceived as unpleasant (fear, anger, sadness, etc.)** are produced when psychological needs are not met.

> *For example, I may feel sadness because my need for recognition (or self-esteem) is not met when an adult tells me I am rubbish at football (external event) or when I think that 'I will never succeed, I'm not good at playing football' (internal event).*

**Emotions perceived as pleasant (joy, love, pride, etc.)** are produced when psychological needs are met.

> *For example, I can feel joy because my need for recognition (or self-esteem) is satisfied when an adult tells me that I am really gifted at football (external event) or when I think that 'I am good, I play football well' (internal event).*

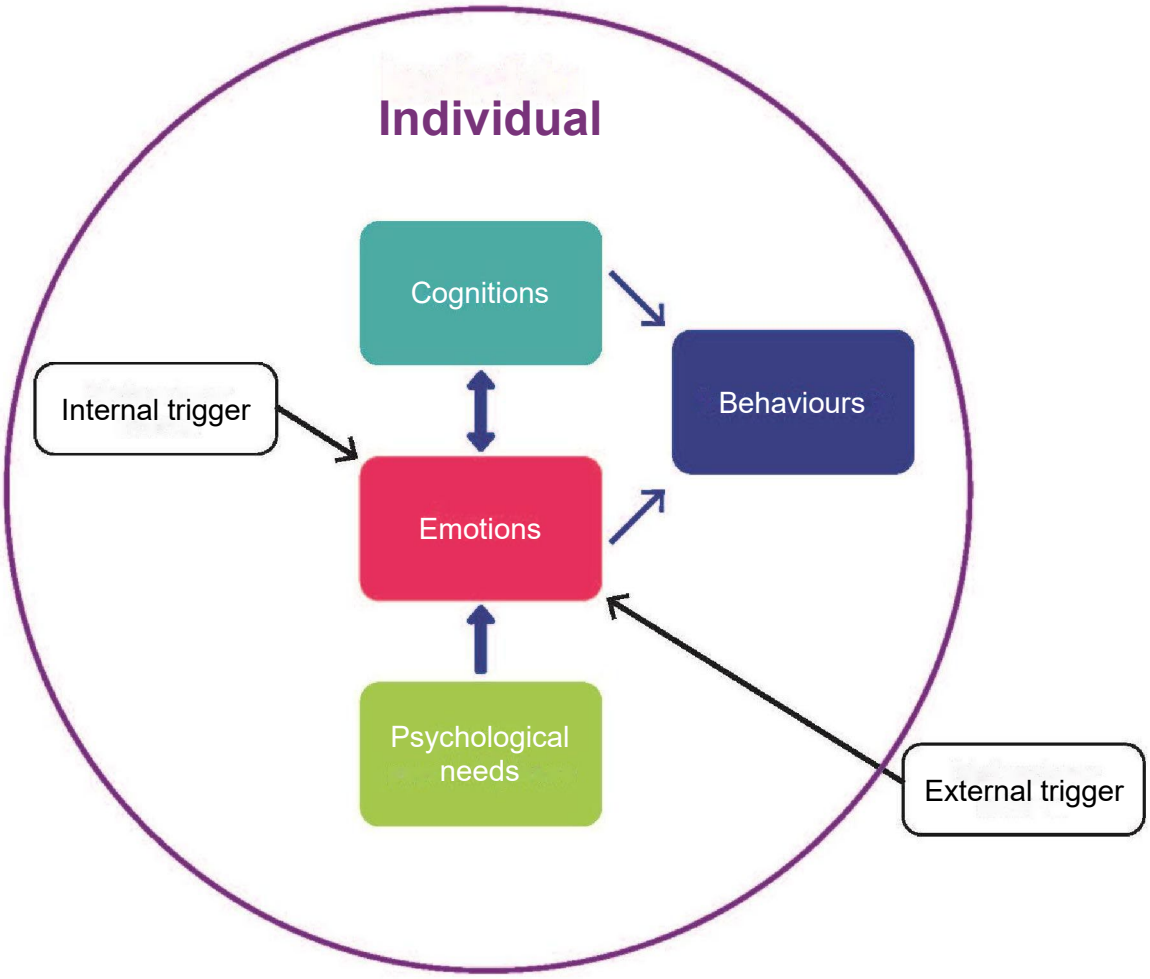
**The valence of an emotion** (pleasant/unpleasant) is therefore determined by the satisfaction or non-satisfaction of a psychological need. **The intensity of the emotion** (strong/weak) is a function of the extent of satisfaction or dissatisfaction; the greater the dissatisfaction, the more intense the emotion.

**Emotions are therefore the result of triggers (external and/or internal) and psychological needs (more or less satisfied or not satisfied).**

- **There are different types of emotions**

There are different classifications of emotions. Some **emotions are said to be 'fundamental'** or 'primary' or 'universal'. They are present in all human beings regardless of their culture. They appear early in a child's development [50, 94]. Although their number may vary depending on the author, the main fundamental emotions include: **joy, love, anger, fear, sadness, surprise and disgust**. It is therefore possible to classify emotions into **7 fundamental emotion families [47, 50, 94-96]. Secondary or complex emotions** are then constructed from these fundamental emotions; these allow for nuances and specify the intensity. These can vary between cultures.

**Figure 5. E1.1 (b): Links between emotions, psychological needs and triggering events**




Another distinction allows us to differentiate **emotions using two dimensions**: **valence,** i.e. the quality of the feeling (pleasant versus unpleasant) and **intensity**, i.e. the strength of the feeling (weak versus strong) [46, 90, 91, 97]. From the first months of life, the baby distinguishes emotional valence by differentiating between a pleasant feeling and an unpleasant feeling [92]. The intensity of an emotion refers to the strength of the sensations felt, ranging from very weak feelings to very intense feelings that are difficult to bear.

Thus, for each fundamental emotion, it is possible to **distinguish an emotional gradient** based on the level of intensity felt. For example, for the pleasant emotion of joy, one can feel an emotion of joy of moderate intensity (in which case the adjective 'content' can be used to describe one's state) or a more intense emotion of joy (in which case the terms 'happy' or 'enthralled' would be used, for example). For the unpleasant emotion of fear, one can experience a moderately intense emotion of fear (for example: feeling 'worried') or an emotion of fear of strong intensity (for example: feeling 'panicked' or 'terrified').

# 2. Understanding the function of emotions

### Emotions have an essential informative function

Emotions convey essential information to maintain a person's psychological balance. It is therefore possible to attribute them a function of '**messengers**' and guides [47, 50, 90, 91, 94].

As mentioned figuratively by Kotsou *et al.* 2022 (pg. 7), "our emotions are the indicators on our internal dashboard. Metaphorically, we can depict emotions as the indicators on the dashboard of our inner cockpit. When an indicator flashes green, it represents a pleasant emotion; it indicates the satisfaction of an important need for the individual, linked to their values. The brain then sends energy to invest a little more in that direction, to share the success socially and to broaden our attentional field towards new opportunities. Conversely, a red light indicates the frustration of an important need and the necessity to react. Therefore, our attention is monopolised by the problematic information and the body is prepared for action. This system is constantly alerting us to what seems important to consider. If we could unplug the power cable from this system, it would bring a certain calm, but would make us blind and indifferent to all the other important signals to consider in our environment. That would be very risky!"

Thus, unpleasant emotions (e.g., anger) can signal unmet psychological needs. Pleasant emotions (e.g., joy) can inform us about psychological needs being met. **Therefore, all emotions are useful and necessary since they transmit information to us that is essential in maintaining our psychological balance [47, 50, 90, 91].**

### Emotions drive us to act in order to satisfy our psychological needs

Emotions not only convey information, they also carry an action tendency, an impulse, which pushes us to act to meet our psychological needs. The etymology of the term emotion '*e-movere'* (to set in motion in Latin) reminds us that an emotion is a very powerful form of motivation to act. The primary function of emotion is to guide action (…). For example, moving away from an individual if they frighten us. Our emotions 'choose' the behaviours we will express [98]. In recent years, this motivational function has been the subject of a series of arguments in its favour through the protocols arising from several modern theories of emotion" [94].

Emotions drive us to act and to respond to our psychological needs in order to (re)find our internal balance or psychological homeostasis [1, 97]. All emotions are therefore useful and essential to our survival [50, 90, 91]. Unpleasant emotions (fear, anger, sadness, etc.) inform us that our needs are not being met and that it is necessary to take action to restore and maintain our psychological wellbeing [99]. Pleasant emotions (joy, love, pride, etc.) let us know that our psychological needs are being met. Being aware of them allows us to fully enjoy them, express them, share them with others and maintain a lasting level of psychological wellbeing.

*Understanding emotions generates two main effects:*

- **A greater ability to accept one's emotions and to pay attention to one's inner world** *(see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2)***:** by understanding that all emotions are useful and necessary, as they constitute indicators/information that enable a person to better identify their needs and maintain their psychological balance, it is easier to accept one's emotional feelings (whether pleasant or unpleasant). Scientific research shows that accepting unpleasant emotions promotes psychological wellbeing (which is not the same as accepting the situations that trigger them). This emotional acceptance makes it possible to overcome the (subconscious) mechanism of experiential avoidance (or emotional avoidance) that is constructed on the basis of beliefs that have been inherited and conveyed collectively for a very long time (*see prerequisites below*).
- **A greater capacity to satisfy one's psychological needs**: the information transmitted by emotions allows us to orient ourselves, regulate ourselves and thus restore our psychological balance. Many of our (individual and relational) difficulties stem from our tendency to reject unpleasant emotions, which are perceived as negative, intolerable or unacceptable (emotional avoidance mechanism). However, not accepting this range of emotions means depriving ourselves of the information they provide and therefore of the ability to meet our psychological needs. Unpleasant emotions that are thus 'unperceived' and not taken into account tend to accumulate and amplify (potentially leading to somatic difficulties such as migraines, sleep problems, eating disorders, etc.).

*Understanding emotions relies on two conditions:*

- **Recognising common preconceptions about emotions**: throughout history and in many cultures, emotions have been perceived as troublesome or even dangerous, and opposed to rational thought which was considered the only source of appropriate behaviour [94]. "This view that emotions have a disruptive effect lies at the heart of several philosophical currents" [94]. However, when reading these authors, we could ask ourselves, 'How could processes that appear so debilitating and destructive have slipped through the net of natural selection?' Today, neuroscience and the psychological sciences show us that this opposition between thought (or reason) and emotion, leading to the overvaluation of reason/thought and the rejection of emotions, is not founded. We then speak of Descartes' error to evoke this primacy given to reason and these separations between thought and emotion which go against empirical observations and the knowledge accumulated over the last few years. There is currently a scientific consensus that emotions and cognitions are interrelated [92, 94]. This joint operation of emotions and cognitions appears to be evident both at the level of information processing and how behaviours work, and at the level of their neurological foundations. "A very widespread but erroneous view is that emotions and cognition are located in different parts of the brain and play different roles within the brain, which would also be reflected in our behaviour [100]. Thus, according to this neuromyth, certain regions of the brain are responsible for our emotions (such as the so-called limbic system) and the more evolved cortical regions are dedicated to cognition. However, not only are the cerebral structures linked to emotions and cognition not isolated from one another, but different studies often characterise one and the same region as either 'cognitive' or 'emotional' [101]. Therefore, the current models suggest that emotions and cognitive functions act in tandem and diffusely, with a neural substrate that is widely distributed within neural networks.

From this perspective, emotions support attention, working memory, encoding, memory consolidation and processes related to executive control (e.g., inhibition). These cognitive processes are also necessary for academic learning. Consequently, emotions support pupils in the classroom and can interact with learning" [92].

- **A change in the relationship to emotions and emotional vocabulary**: certain emotions (especially certain unpleasant emotions) are still perceived individually and collectively as shameful or even taboo phenomena. A better understanding of emotions implies being able to identify our perceptions and inhibitions, and to question our relationship to emotions both for ourselves and for others. Our new understanding should allow us to see emotions as a phenomenon that is as natural as the law of universal gravitation. Paradoxically, recognising the usefulness of emotions and accepting our emotions as part of our human nature, just as the law of gravitation is part of physical nature, can allow for a less painful emotional experience and better adaptation [52]. The notions of so-called positive and negative emotions should also be open to questioning in order to facilitate understanding of the usefulness of all emotions. "The very fact that we refer to these as *negative* emotions is proof of the general and harmful attitude we have towards them" [52]. Knowing the crucial function of those emotions that are perceived as unpleasant should therefore be facilitated by modifying the emotional vocabulary, in particular by abandoning pejorative qualifiers such as ‘negative/positive’.

## Key takeaways (E1.1)

**Conceptual definition:** **Understanding emotions** entails having a better understanding of the nature and function of emotions [1].

**Operational definition:** **Two items of** psychological **knowledge** enable us understand emotions:

**1. Knowledge of the nature of emotions:** the different internal components (subjective feelings, bodily sensations, etc.) and external components (facial expression, paralanguage, etc.), the interrelation between emotions, cognitions and behaviours, the production of emotions in reaction to psychological needs and triggering events (external or internal) and the different ranges of emotions;

**2. Understanding of the function of emotions:** their informative function (indicators of internal state and of the satisfaction or non-satisfaction of psychological needs) and their function as an impulse for action in order to satisfy our psychological needs.

**Main effects:** **Understanding emotions enables one to:**

**- Better accept one's emotions and more easily pay attention to one's inner world:** by understanding that all emotions are useful and necessary as they constitute indicators/information that enable a person to better identify their needs and maintain their psychological balance, it is easier to accept one's emotional feelings (whether pleasant or unpleasant).

**- Better satisfy one's psychological needs (and increase one's psychological balance in the long term)**: the information transmitted by emotions allows us to orient ourselves, regulate ourselves and thus restore our psychological balance. Many of our (individual and relational) difficulties stem from our tendency to reject unpleasant emotions, which are perceived as negative, intolerable or unacceptable (emotional avoidance mechanism). However, not accepting this range of emotions means depriving ourselves of the information they provide and therefore of the ability to meet our psychological needs.

## Key takeaways (E1.1 *continued*)

**Main conditions: Understanding emotions requires:**

**- Recognising our common preconceptions about emotions**: throughout history and in many cultures, emotions have been perceived as troublesome or even dangerous, and opposed to rational thought which was considered the only source of appropriate behaviour. Today, neuroscience and the psychological sciences show us that this opposition between thought (or reason) and emotion, leading to the overvaluation of reason/thought and the rejection of emotions, is not founded. We then speak of 'Descartes' error' to evoke this primacy given to reason and these separations between thought and emotion which go against empirical observations and the knowledge accumulated over the last few years. There is currently a scientific consensus that emotions and cognitions are interrelated.

**- Changing our relationship with emotions and our emotional vocabulary**: Certain emotions (especially certain unpleasant emotions) are still perceived individually and collectively as shameful or even taboo phenomena. A better understanding of emotions implies being able to identify our perceptions and inhibitions, and to question our relationship to emotions both for ourselves and for others. Paradoxically, recognising the usefulness of emotions and accepting our emotions as part of our human nature, just as the law of gravitation is part of physical nature, can allow for a less painful emotional experience and better adaptation. The notions of so-called positive and negative emotions should also be open to questioning in order to facilitate understanding of the usefulness of all emotions. Knowing the crucial function of those emotions that are perceived as unpleasant should therefore be facilitated by modifying the emotional vocabulary, in particular by abandoning pejorative qualifiers such as 'negative/positive'.

# Examples of activities to develop the PSS
## E1.1 Improving one's understanding of emotions

## Margot's day

*('Le Voyage des Toimoinous, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Promotion Santé Pays de la Loire psychosocial skills schoolbag)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Understanding emotions E1.1
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Having better knowledge of the nature of emotions
⊠ Understanding the function of emotions
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** inflatable balloon

### Margot's day

Source: *The skills schoolbag,* Pays de la Loire Ireps

TOOLS

**Equipment**

Inflatable balloon

'Margot's Day'

**Reminder of the objectives**

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

**Outline and instructions**

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

Facilitate a discussion based on the following questions:

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

*"What does the balloon represent?"*

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

*"Who is Margot really angry with?"* (Introduce the concept of scapegoating - expressing anger against someone who has nothing to do with the real reason for our anger)

*"What do you think of Margot's reaction? Especially when she answers Sylvie?"*

*"What does Margot want? What is troubling her?"* (Introduce the concept of frustration)

Extension: invite the group to express what can be learned from this story and this exchange. Review and expand on the key points identified by the pupils.

- Anger is an emotion; it is linked to frustration, and the need for justice and respect.
- Anger is an emotion that is triggered by an EVENT and it produces a physical REACTION, a bodily tension.
- This bodily reaction gives a SIGNAL of what is happening inside us: a feeling of injustice, disrespect or an unmet need.
- It can lead to an EXPLOSION if the person does nothing to ease their tension.

In conclusion, it is important to listen to the signals given by the body and to calm the tension caused by the anger before another event causes new tension.

## Strengths

This technique helps to facilitate a discussion on the topic: *"Have you ever seen someone explode in front of you for no apparent reason? How did you react?"*

To better understand Margot's needs at each event: What does she need? What can she do to satisfy her need?

Explore ways to better cope with rising anger. The children can work in groups, each with different instructions:

- What are some good ideas for 'deflating' the balloon as the day progresses?
- How could Margot have reacted to express her anger in a different way? In particular, at the various times when she is in contact with someone (her classmate Sylvie, her brother Daniel).

Pool the group's ideas. Give them value in collective and/or individual documents.

## Alternative

Margot's story is taken from the guide referenced below. It is perfectly possible to replace it with another story created for the same purpose.

Depending on the time available, you can deepen knowledge of the body language that indicates anger: taking turns in a circle, each person is invited to come forward and mime anger, then to identify how anger is expressed in the body.

### Margot's day

It is 7:30 in the morning. Margot wakes up with a start. She is late. "Damn," she says. "I forgot to set my alarm again last night."

*(Inflate the balloon a little)*

Quickly, she gets up and looks for her pink t-shirt... which she finds under a pile of dirty washing. She kicks the pile of clothes.

*(Inflate the balloon a little more)*

Margot arrives at school stressed and irritated. The bell rings and Margot goes into the classroom. "Geography test," the teacher announces. "Oh drat," thinks Margot, "I completely forgot to revise my geography!" Plus, her mother had warned her that if she got a bad mark on this test, she wouldn't let her go to the mountains for the weekend with her father! Margot nibbles the end of her pen.

*(Inflate the balloon)*

During the break, Sylvie, her best friend, asks her how the geography test went. "Mind your own business," Margot replies.

*(Inflate the balloon)*

When she gets home from school, she finds her younger brother Daniel sitting in front of the television. Margot sits down comfortably next to him. "Mum said it was your turn to prepare dinner tonight," Daniel tells her. "What are we going to eat? I'm hungry!"

Margot jumps up. "I'm always the one who has to do everything in this house. You never take care of anything."

*(Inflate the balloon)*

Angry, Margot goes into the kitchen, opens the cupboard and takes out a packet of spaghetti. She opens the packet angrily and the spaghetti scatters all over the floor. At that moment, her mother comes into the room.

**Source:** *Pour une éducation à la non-violence [For an education in non-violence],* J. Gerber, 2006

# The multiple causes of emotions

*(Extract and adaptation from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson M, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Understanding emotions E1.1
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Having better knowledge of the nature of emotions
□ Understanding the function of emotions
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** List of needs (see C1.3)

"Recall a situation where you felt the emotion mentioned. For each situation, identify the trigger (external or internal) of this emotion as well as your psychological need(s) (see list of psychological needs: cognitive skill C1.3) in this situation."

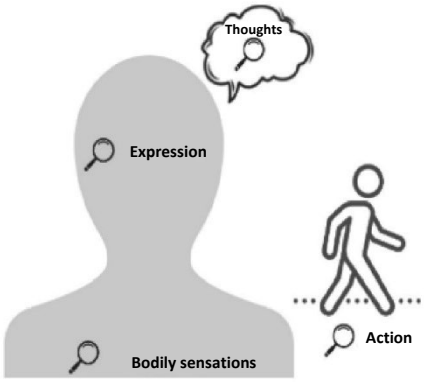
| Emotion felt | Situation (in a few words) | Trigger (external or internal) | My psychological need |
|---|---|---|---|
| **FEAR** | | | |
| **ANGER** | | | |
| **SADNESS** | | | |
| **SURPRISE** | | | |
| **DISGUST** | | | |
| **LOVE** | | | |
| **JOY** | | | |

# Improving one's emotional skills

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou, 2024)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Understanding emotions E1.1
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Having better knowledge of the nature of emotions
□ Understanding the function of emotions
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment**: see template below

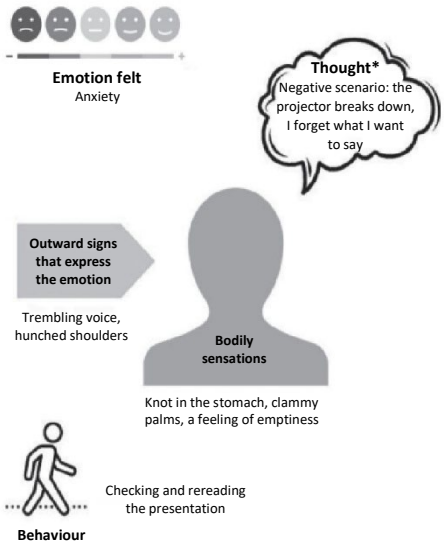
Now, like an adventurer, you are going to explore the other clues that will enable you to discover the different components of an emotion. Take your personal magnifying glass and set off in search of the tracks left in its wake: bodily sensations, associated thoughts or memories, the expression of the emotion and the action tendency it generates. To help you get used to recognising your emotions, you can do the following exercise.




**The example of Alice**

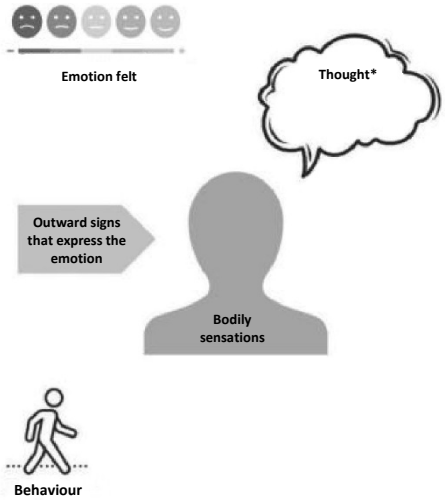
Alice has to give an oral presentation of her project to all of her colleagues. The presentation will take place in one hour. Alice feels a knot in her stomach, her hands start to get clammy and she experiences a feeling of emptiness. She imagines negative scenarios such as: what if I forget what I want to say? What if the video projector breaks down? With her shoulders hunched and her voice trembling, she decides to reread the presentation several times to make sure she knows it well, she also checks that the video projector is working properly several times.

**Using Alice's situation, observe in the following drawing the indicators that make up this emotional situation.**




**Now it's your turn!**

Recall a recent situation in which you experienced a moderately intense unpleasant emotion. Imagine an emotional thermometer ranging from 1 to 10, with 0 being an absence of emotion and 10 the most unpleasant emotion experienced. Choose an emotional situation with an intensity of 3 to 5. Recall the different aspects of this experience: what happened, what you felt, the sensations in your body, what you thought, and how you reacted. Complete the drawing below:



**Reflection**

Now, take a few moments to go back over this exercise. Here are some questions that may guide your thinking.

.....
.....
.....

What have you observed, discovered and learned by identifying the different components of an emotion?

.....
.....
.....

What differences did you observe between the exercises on unpleasant emotions and those on pleasant emotions?

.....
.....
.....

Which characteristics were the easiest to identify? And which ones did you find the most difficult?

.....
.....
.....

What difference will these discoveries make for you in the future, in your daily life?

.....
.....
.....

## Discussions about emotions

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson MO, 2021 [47])*

"Suggest that the children exchange views about emotions.

- What is an emotion? How do emotions manifest themselves?
- Invite the children to give examples of emotions and manifestations of emotions.
- Why are emotions important?
- Do you like emotions?

– First, write all the answers on the board and invite them to discuss their ideas freely and to give examples. Try to create an open debate. If the exercise seems difficult for the children, present real-life situations and ask them how they felt at the time.

– Secondly, using the children's examples, present the main facts about emotions.

– **emotions are useful**; they are 'like messengers'; they express a need.

– **emotions are inside oneself:** they manifest themselves concretely in the body.

– **Emotions have an impact** on our thoughts and behaviours.

– **emotions are classified into 7 main families** according to their valence (pleasant/unpleasant) and their intensity (low/high)."

# Group mime

*(Extract from the 'Le Voyage des Toimoinous, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] Programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Promotion Santé Pays de la Loire psychosocial skills schoolbag)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Understanding emotions E1.1
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Having better knowledge of the nature of emotions
□ Understanding the function of emotions
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** pre-prepared emotion cards, container

## Emotions: group mime




**Duration**

Variable depending on the number of participants.

15 mins.**Equipment**

- ✓ Sufficient space
- ✓ Container
- ✓ Emotion cards

### Reminder of the objectives

- → to enrich my vocabulary about emotions,
- → to work on the signs that enable me to identify emotions within myself (what I feel in my body or in my head).

### Outline and instructions

The children are divided into several sub-groups (to be adjusted according to the number of children).

Each sub-group picks an emotion at random from a set of emotion cards prepared by the facilitator.

The group will have to perform a group, static (not moving) mime corresponding to the emotion chosen (as if they had to pose before taking a group photo).

The other participants must guess what emotion it is.

Next, the facilitator poses the following questions:

- ✓ *How did you work out which emotion was being mimed? (What were the physical signs?)*
- ✓ *How does our body feel when we experience this emotion? (What effects does it have on me/what sensations do I feel?)*
- ✓ *What purpose can this emotion serve? (What is its use?)*
- ✓ *In what situations can we feel this emotion, in real life?*

Depending on the time available and the age of the children, the facilitator can plan several rounds for each group, and therefore adapt the number of emotions to be picked.

**The 4 fundamental emotion families:**
FEAR family: uneasy, panicked, guilty
JOY family: happy, enthusiastic, relaxed
SADNESS family: unhappy, sorrow, disheartened
ANGER family: annoyed, dissatisfied, angry, etc.

# 7 emotion families game

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson MO, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Understanding emotions E1.1

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Having better knowledge of the nature of emotions

□ Understanding the function of emotions

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** the table of the 49 emotions and materials for making emotion cards

**"Building emotion card sets:** Take time with the children to introduce the 49 emotions grouped into 7 families and classified by their intensity (see table below). You can make the sets of 49 emotion cards individually or in small groups, using emoticons, drawings or photos (glued) while clearly stating the name of the emotion on the card.

**Play with the emotion cards:**

– Give the children a set of 49 emotion cards individually or in small groups.

– Then give several instructions:

- *Show me the 7 primary emotions (the children should hold up the cards above their heads).*
- *Make a pile of all the emotions close to fear; sadness; love; etc.*
- *Show me at least 3 very strong emotions; then 3 very weak emotions.*
- *Make 2 piles: one pile with all the pleasant emotions; one pile with all the unpleasant emotions.*
- *Show me an emotion that is sometimes pleasant and sometimes unpleasant (=surprise)*

***Extension:***

*– You can ask the children to illustrate their answers with examples of situations in which they have felt that emotion.*

*– You can suggest playing the happy families game (about emotions) using these emotion cards."*

| Valence | 7 Families | Intensity | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Very weak | Weak | Moderate | Medium | Strong | Very Strong | Extremely strong |
| + | JOY | Confident | Satisfied | Content | Happy | Joyful | Enthralled | In ecstasy |
| + | LOVE | Soothed | Tender | Affectionate | Loving | Passionate | Adoring | In veneration |
| - | FEAR | Concerned | Uneasy | Anxious | Scared | Panicked | Terrified | Horrified |
| - | ANGER | Displeased | Irritated | Annoyed | Angry | Exasperated | Furious | Enraged |
| - | SADNESS | Moved | Upset | Hurt | Sad | Depressed | Stricken | Devastated |
| - | DISGUST | Bothered | Inconvenienced | Resentful | Repulsed | Disgusted | Disillusioned | Revulsed |
| - or + | SURPRISE | On alert | Surprised | Embarrassed | Astonished | Struck | Stunned | Astounded |

# The hidden world of emotions
# An emotional skills development programme for children

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou, 2024)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Understanding emotions E1.1

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Having better knowledge of the nature of emotions

□ Understanding the function of emotions

**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group

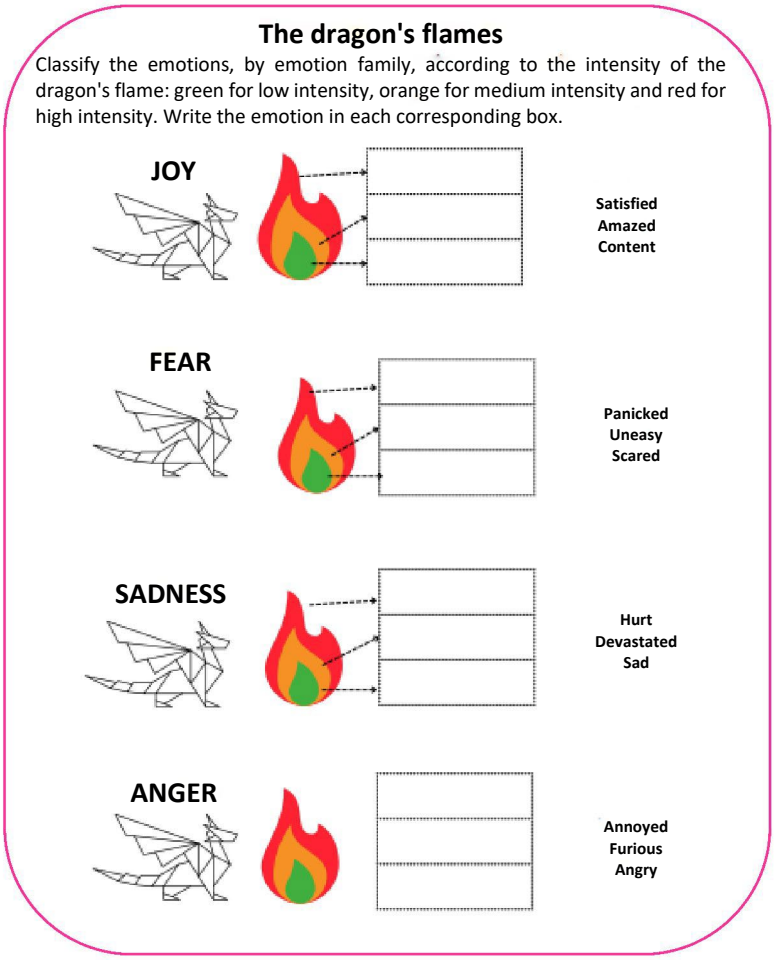
**Equipment:** 'The dragon's flames' template below

## "Activity: The dragons' flames

Each dragon represents an emotion: the air dragon represents joy, the water dragon sadness, the earth dragon fear and the fire dragon anger.
Each dragon's flame will be of a different intensity depending on whether the emotion is weak or strong. You will need to classify the emotions in the right part of the flame: 1 is low intensity, 2 is medium intensity and 3 is high intensity.

First, the facilitator offers examples from the disgust and love emotion families to illustrate the activity.

The activity can be done either individually using the worksheet or in groups. In the latter case, write each emotion on a piece of paper, then distribute the papers at random and ask the children to place them on the flames of the different dragons displayed on the board."



## The hunt for emotions

*(Extract from the Pilou and Filou Programme - Approach to supporting the development of psychosocial skills in children from 18 months to 5 years old. Centre de psycho-éducation du Québec & Ensemble pour la Petite Enfance. 2023 Edition)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Understanding emotions E1.1
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Having better knowledge of the nature of emotions
□ Understanding the function of emotions
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** visual aids with characters

"In a school setting, outside of lesson time, it is possible to promote awareness of emotions and feelings by asking children to look in picture books for images of characters experiencing an emotion, then allowing them to explain how they identified that these characters were expressing a particular emotion (body position, facial expressions, etc.) and finally to imagine what might have happened to them."

## Emotion hoops

*(Extract from the Pilou and Filou Programme - Approach to supporting the development of psychosocial skills in children from 18 months to 5 years old. Centre de psycho-éducation du Québec & Ensemble pour la Petite Enfance. 2023 Edition)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Understanding emotions E1.1
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Having better knowledge of the nature of emotions
□ Understanding the function of emotions
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** Hoops or chalks

"■ Objectives: To recognise and express facial expressions that signify joy, sadness or anger.
■ Approximate duration: 10 to 15 minutes
■ Equipment needed: Hoops - chalks
■ Suitable times: Outdoor/indoor games
■ Outline: The professional lays the hoops out and draws happy, sad and angry emoticons in them. The children jump from hoop to hoop and at the signal 'stop' or the sound of music they freeze and mimic the emotion illustrated in their hoop.

# ***Specific emotional skill 2***

## Identifying one's emotions (E1.2)

**The process of identifying one's emotions** mobilises two dimensions of the Self: **the inner Self** and its emotional states which correspond to one of the 5 internal psychic states, and **the subject Self** which seeks to perceive its emotional states by mobilising its cognitive capacities (*see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2*). This skill requires two cognitive actions to be implemented (via the subject Self): **Attention** to and observation of the emotional information present and **Analysis** of the observation present (which correspond to the first 2 As of the **AA**DA acronym in relation to the **subject Self**).

**Identifying one's emotions relies on, on the one hand, the ability to perceive the emotional experience present within oneself and, on the other hand, the ability to adequately name the emotion (or emotions) perceived.**

## 1. Perceiving the emotional experience present within oneself

The first cognitive action to perform in order to identify one's emotions corresponds to the first A of the acronym (**A**ADA): Paying attention to and observing the emotional experience that arises within oneself in the moment. This involves voluntarily directing one's attention to one's internal states and observing the present emotional experience. Individuals' ability to perceive their emotional signals and to become aware that they are experiencing an emotion is also called **emotional awareness** [102]; we can also speak of **self-empathy** to refer to the ability to perceive and identify one's own emotional experience [47].

To facilitate the identification of an emotional experience, one needs to be able to accept and embrace the emotions felt without modifying or interpreting them, whether these emotions are perceived as pleasant or unpleasant. This perception of the raw emotional experience involves a process of **experiential acceptance** that is defined as a "voluntary and intentional attitude for engaging with one's private experiences, whether these are viewed as positive or negative" [44]; this process is contrary to the widely used everyday defence mechanism of **experiential avoidance** (see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2).

**Accepting the existence of emotions, recognising their usefulness and wanting to observe them are useful prerequisites for being able to perceive one's emotions.** Once these prerequisites have been met, listening to the various components of emotions can help to identify them:

– What bodily sensations are present?
– What subjective feeling(s) is/are present?
– What is the level of intensity present inside me?

## 2. Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived

The second mental action to perform to order to identify one's emotions corresponds to the second A of the acronym (A**A**DA): Analysing the information presented using what has been learned in order to name the emotion perceived. This process of emotional labelling is not simple; it requires matching a felt emotional experience to an appropriate semantic category [48]. It relies in particular on two types of learning [75]:

1) The ability to match internal feelings with a type of emotion (*see table E1.2 (a) below*);

2) The ability to put the perceived emotional experience into words through knowledge of a sufficiently rich emotional vocabulary (*see table E1.2 (b) below*).

To facilitate learning how to match feelings with fundamental emotions, some bodily sensations and subjective feelings associated with the fundamental emotions are presented below as examples.

**Table 8. E1.2 (a). Examples of sensations and feelings that can be associated with the fundamental emotions**

| Fundamental emotions | Examples of the bodily sensations and feelings associated with the emotion |
|---|---|
| **Joy** | A sensation of expansion, deep breathing, an expanded rib cage, a feeling of energy and sparkle, lightness, motivation, etc. |
| **Love** | Sensations of expansion, warmth, kindness, openness, deep breathing, desires, etc. |
| **Fear** | Trembling, tension/twitching, stomach ache, difficulty breathing, sensation of suffocation, sensation of tightness or having a lump in the throat, etc. |
| **Anger** | Weight on the chest, rapid breathing, clenched jaw, muscle tightness, hot flashes, the feeling that you are going to explode, sensation of strength/energy/power, etc. |
| **Sadness** | A lump in the throat, a tight heart, physical weakness/slowness, a sensation of fatigue / exhaustion, a sense of helplessness, etc. |
| **Disgust** | Nausea, urge to vomit, an unpleasant taste in the mouth, constricted nostrils, a desire to retreat, feeling of repulsion, etc. |
| **Surprise** | Wide-open eyes, a sensation of astonishment, incomprehension, the impression of being very energetic, a state of shock, bodily reactions, etc. |

To facilitate the acquisition of a rich emotional vocabulary, some verbs, nouns and adjectives associated with the basic emotions are presented below as examples.

**Table 9. E1.2 (b). Some examples of verbs, nouns and adjectives that can be used to name the fundamental emotions**

| Fundamental emotions | Verbs and expressions | Nouns | Adjectives |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Joy** | To smile, to radiate with joy, to be on cloud nine, to feel light hearted, etc. | Cheerfulness, bliss, joy, happiness, enthusiasm, etc. | Satisfied, content, joyful, happy, cheerful, enthusiastic, etc. |
| **Love** | To adore, to be crazy about, to fall in love with, to be passionate about, to cherish, to venerate, etc. | Tenderness, friendship, affection, passion, adoration, etc. | In love, passionate, enamoured (with), fanatical, etc. |
| **Fear** | To fear, to be apprehensive, to dread, to panic, to be anxious, etc. | Fear, worry, stress, apprehension, panic, anguish, terror, dread, etc. | Concerned, worried, stressed, preoccupied, fearful, anxious, nervous, distressed, tormented, etc. |
| **Anger** | To get angry, to get annoyed, to be indignant, to explode with anger, etc. | Annoyance, irritation, aggravation, fury, exasperation, rage, etc. | Annoyed, angry, irritated, furious, indignant, exasperated, flustered, outraged, hostile, etc. |
| **Sadness** | To regret, to lament, to feel melancholic, etc. | Sorrow, anguish, regret, melancholy, suffering, despair, etc. | Anguished, sorrowful, upset, tormented, despairing, dejected, depressed, inconsolable, etc. |
| **Disgust** | To disgust, to horrify, to make one want to be sick, etc. | Disgust, horror, retching, indigestion, nausea, etc. | Nauseated, disillusioned, weary, disenchanted, nauseous, etc. |
| **Surprise** | To startle, to be surprised, to be thrilled, etc. | Astonishment, stupefaction, amazement, wonder, awe, etc. | Stunned, astonished, amazed, dumbfounded, impressed, blown away, staggered, bewildered, flabbergasted, etc. |

*Identifying one's emotions generates two main benefits:*

- **It initiates emotional regulation:** perceiving and naming one's emotional experience appropriately is a prerequisite for other emotional skills: expressing one's emotions, regulating one's emotions and managing one's stress (*see emotional skills E2*) [102]. "Since it is necessary to realise that one is feeling an emotion in order to develop and mobilise most other emotional skills, emotional awareness constitutes the starting point for appropriate emotional regulation" [102]. It also has a direct impact on the emotional state because it helps to reduce emotional intensity [50]. In fact, "Identifying and naming our emotions already initiates a process of emotional regulation" [50].

- **It improves our identification of others' emotions:** being able to accept one's own emotional experience, to perceive it and to name it, promotes openness to the emotional experiences of others and the ability to correctly identify these experiences. However, identifying emotions not only entails identifying our own emotions, but also being able to recognise an emotion felt by others, by means of their facial expression, for example [91]. Thus, the ability to recognise our own emotions (also called the ability for self-empathy) contributes to recognising emotions in others and promotes our empathetic skills (*see social skill S1.2*).

*Identifying one's emotions is based on three conditions:*

- **Neuropsychological development and language skills**: the ability to name emotions develops gradually during childhood. It is believed that initially, children identify emotions based on their valence and that their knowledge focuses on the fundamental emotions [103-105]. Subsequently, differentiating between emotions improves from childhood to adulthood, evolving towards identifying and naming more specific emotions.

- **Abandoning the experiential avoidance mechanism:** in order to identify one's emotions, it is necessary to accept and feel one's internal experience, even when this is perceived as unpleasant or even painful. This constructive mechanism is called **experiential acceptance** *(see cognitive skill C1.1).*

- **The capacity for empathy of adults in educational positions:** the development of this skill to identify one's emotions depends in particular on how adults in educational positions embrace, perceive and name the emotions that manifest themselves in children. Parental **empathy** or '**parental mentalisation**' which is "the process whereby the caregiver is able to describe the infant's mental experience and present it again to the infant, translated into the language of actions that the infant can understand, constitutes a fundamental process in developing emotional regulation and self-organisation capacities.(50) It enables the child to lead the identification of emotions and the integration of emotional experience to understand their internal states or those of social partners" [102] (s*ee social skill S1.2*). Conversely, "childhood experiences with an attachment figure who does not identify or verbalise, or even invalidates the child's emotional states, would be likely to lead to emotional disturbances involving the individual's ability to represent their own emotional states and those of others (...), an overall deficit in **emotional awareness**" [106].

## Key takeaways (E1.2)

**Conceptual definition:** **Identifying one's emotions** is the ability to perceive and name one's emotions appropriately [1].

**Operational definition:** **Two psychological knowledge items** make it possible to identify one's emotions:

**1. Perceiving the emotional experience present within oneself**, which requires accepting the emotional experience, wanting to observe it and daring to feel it fully (even when it is experienced as unpleasant);

**2. Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived**, which involves being able to match one's internal feelings with a type of emotion and being able to put the perceived emotion into words using a sufficiently rich vocabulary.

**Main effects:** **Identifying one's emotions allows one to:**

**- Initiate emotional regulation:** perceiving and naming one's emotional experience appropriately is a prerequisite for other emotional skills: expressing one's emotions, regulating one's emotions and managing one's stress (*see emotional skill E2*). This basic skill also has a direct impact on the emotional state because it helps to reduce emotional intensity. In fact, "Identifying and naming our emotions already initiates a process of emotional regulation" [39].

**- Improving our identification of others' emotions:** being able to accept one's own emotional experience, to perceive it and to name it, promotes openness to the emotional experiences of others and the ability to correctly identify these experiences. However, identifying emotions not only entails identifying our own emotions, but also being able to recognise an emotion felt by others, by means of their facial expression, for example [77]. Thus, the ability to recognise our own emotions (also called the ability for self-empathy) contributes to recognising emotions in others and promotes our empathetic skills (*see social skill S1.2*).

## Key takeaways (E1.2 *continued*)

**Main conditions: Identifying one's emotions requires:**

- **Having a certain level of neuropsychological development and language skills**: the ability to name emotions develops gradually during childhood. It is believed that initially, children identify emotions based on their valence and that their knowledge focuses on the fundamental emotions [89-91]. Subsequently, differentiating between emotions improves from childhood to adulthood, evolving towards identifying and naming more specific emotions.

- **Abandoning the experiential avoidance mechanism:** in order to identify one's emotions, it is necessary to accept and feel one's internal experience, even when it is perceived as unpleasant or even painful. This constructive mechanism is called experiential acceptance *(see cognitive skill C1.1).*

- **Adults in educational positions demonstrating empathetic skills:** the development of this skill to identify one's emotions depends in particular on how adults in educational positions embrace, perceive and name the emotions that manifest themselves in children. Parental empathy or 'parental mentalisation' which is "the process whereby the caregiver is able to describe the infant's mental experience and present it again to the infant, translated into the language of actions that the infant can understand, constitutes a fundamental process in developing emotional regulation and self-organisation capacities [93]. It enables the child to lead the identification of emotions and the integration of emotional experience to understand their internal states or those of social partners" [88] (*see social skill S1.2*). Conversely, "childhood experiences with an attachment figure who does not identify or verbalise, or even invalidates the child's emotional states, would be likely to lead to emotional disturbances involving the individual's ability to represent their own emotional states and those of others (...), an overall deficit in emotional awareness" [92].

# Examples of activities to develop the PSS
## E1.2 Identifying one's emotions

### I feel… when…

*(Proposed by Promotion Santé ARA - Inspired by the Psychosocial Skills Toolkit of Promotion Santé Pays de la Loire)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** E1.2. Identifying one's emotions

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

□ Perceiving the present emotional experience

⊠ Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

**"Activity: I feel… when…**

**Experiment/Role play**

We suggest you try an activity called 'I feel… when…'. We are going to read out some different situations to you and you have to tell me how you would feel if you were in this situation and what your first emotion would be. To do this, you will go and stand by the emotion placed on the floor (or stuck on the wall).

Please note that this is a personal exercise; you will position yourself based on what you think you would feel if this situation happened to you.

**Situations to be read aloud** (these examples should be adapted according to the audience).

After each situation, ask the participants why they feel that particular emotion. We suggest starting with the people who have chosen the least popular emotion.

- I am given a gift
- I just found out that my neighbours are moving house
- There is a massive thunderstorm
- It is break time and it is raining
- I get up in the morning and there is 15 cm of snow
- We are going to put on a play for the school…

**Awareness/Analysis**

Facilitate a discussion based on the following questions:

What did you feel during the activity? Did you find this activity easy or difficult?

What did you observe? What happened during the activity? Did everyone experience the same emotions in the same situation? Why? What did you think to yourself while listening to what the others had to say?

Bring out or explain the concept of 'need', an important factor that is at play in emotions.

**Expansion/Synthesis/Generalisation**

What does this activity teach us about emotions? What can we learn from this activity?

Take note of the participants' responses and sum up by concluding that emotions form part of life, and that we have the right to feel anger, joy, fear, sadness, etc. Faced with the same situation, we do not all feel the same thing. Feelings can be shared or different. Sometimes we can be astonished by other peoples' feelings. Discuss the fact that emotions vary in nature and intensity depending on the situation, the moment, the people involved, etc.".

## Improving one's emotional skills

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou, 2024)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** E1.2. Identifying one's emotions

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Perceiving the present emotional experience

⊠ Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived

**Format:** ☐ Individual; ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** smartphone, exercise book or notebook, emotional dial (below)

# My emotional dial

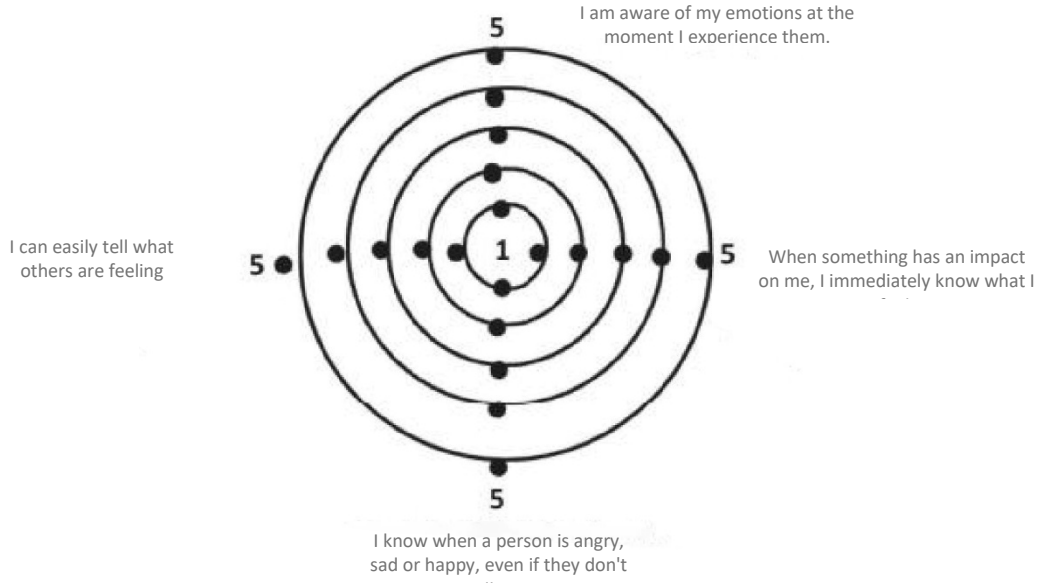
To familiarise yourself with the practice of identifying emotions, here is a resource that will guide you in identifying your emotions throughout the day.

For this, you can set your phone's alarm to vibrate at regular intervals during the day. With each vibration, take a few moments to reconnect with yourself by asking yourself the following question: What emotions am I feeling right now? You can write them down in a notebook or in your exercise book. You can use the table of emotions and the following questions to help you:

- Is the emotion associated with physical activation (increase in energy, agitation) or, on the contrary, with physical inhibition (calm, loss of energy, etc.)?
- Is this emotion directed at someone (anger, guilt, love) or at a particular event?
- What is my subjective assessment of the situation? Is it a danger (fear), an injustice or frustration (anger), an emotional lack (sadness, loneliness, etc.), an unexpected event (surprise, disappointment), a personal fault (guilt), a social embarrassment (shame) or a repulsive situation (disgust), etc.?

For each statement, rate yourself on a scale from 1 (the statement does not describe you at all or you never react in this way) to 5 (you recognise yourself completely in the description or this happens to you very often).

Sample of the diagram that can be used for each module:




| | |
|---|---|
| I am aware of my emotions at the moment I experience them. | **1-5** |
| When something has an impact on me, I immediately know what I feel. | **1-5** |
| I know when a person is angry, sad or happy, even if they don't tell me. | **1-5** |
| I can easily tell what others are feeling. | **1-5** |

These questions are taken from the PEC questionnaire (Brasseur et al., 2013).

Once you have your emotional list for the day, you can also use the emotional dial below to help you navigate through your emotions. To do this, rearrange the emotions on the dial so that at the end of each day you have your emotional 'selfie'!

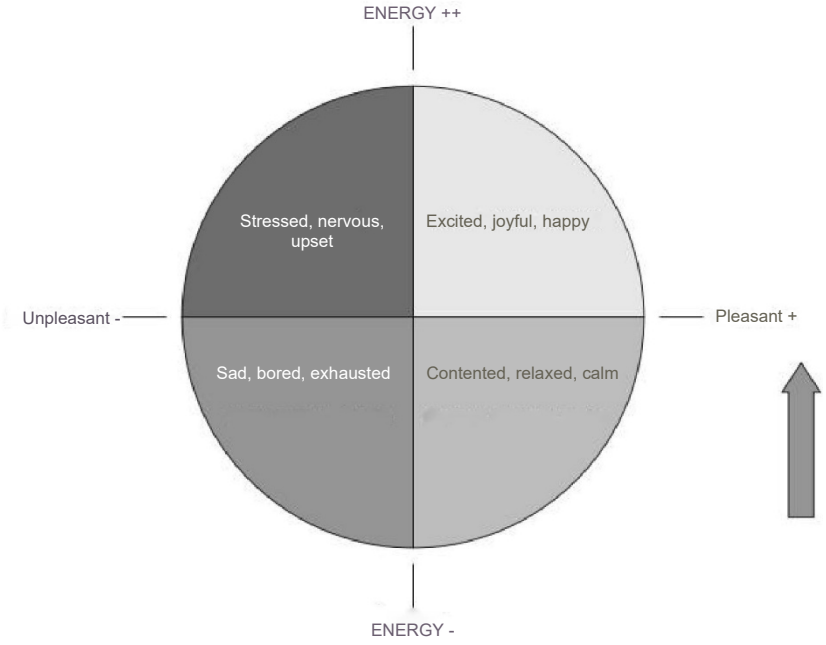



Figure inspired by the multidimensional model of Feldman-Barret and Russell (1998) to which we have added shades of grey to indicate the degree of emotional activation.

## My personal emotions in a situation

*(Extract from* Lamboy *B, Shankland R & Williamson MO, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Identifying one's emotions E1.2
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Perceiving the present emotional experience
⊠ Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** exercise book or note book

"Here are several situations that you have probably experienced in the past. These situations can trigger different emotions. Try to remember how you felt the last time you experienced this situation. Write down the emotion or emotions you felt during this situation."



# The hidden world of emotions
## An emotional skills development programme for children

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou, 2024)*

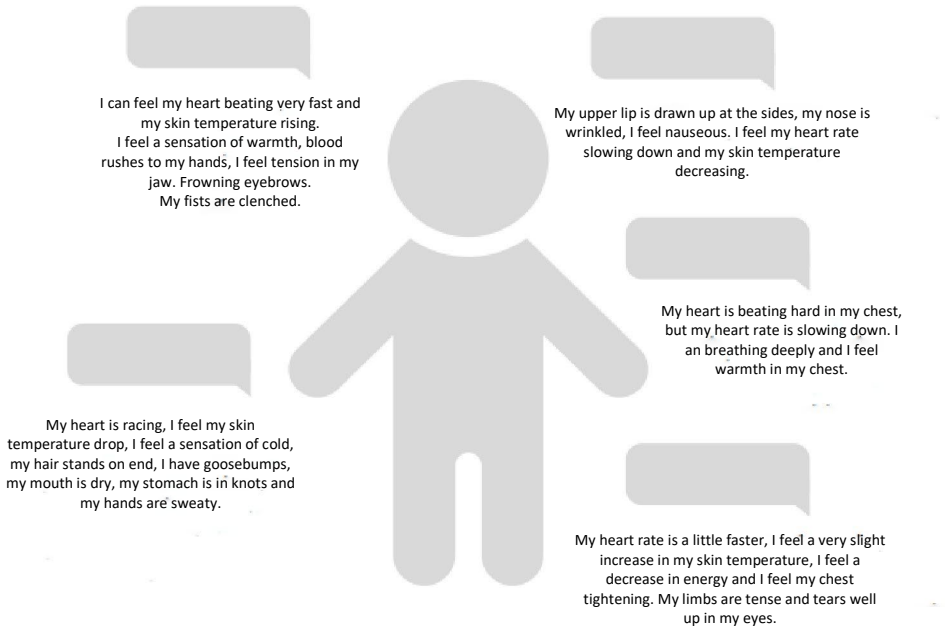
**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Identifying one's emotions E1.2
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Perceiving the present emotional experience
□ Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** print out of the activity below, a pen

### Activities 1 and 2: My body speaks to me

**Activity 1 - For each emotion suggested, choose a colour, then draw inside the silhouette the part of the body where you feel the sensations of the emotion. You can do a quick scribble, or draw a circle or a shape. Joy - Anger - Disgust - Sadness - Surprise - Love - Fear**



**Activity 2 - Write inside each bubble the emotion that corresponds to the sensations described.**




**Fear - Joy - Sadness - Disgust - Anger**

## Expressing emotions in everyday school life

*(Extract from the Prodas Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults

**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Identifying one's emotions E1.2

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Perceiving the present emotional experience

⊠ Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived

**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

"In a school setting, outside of class time, it is possible to:

- Increase opportunities for students to focus on their feelings, with ritual health check-ups in the morning and/or afternoon: offer them the chance to share their current state with the rest of the group. This ritual can take the form, for example, of a system of images (sun/cloud/storm, smileys, etc.): the child then chooses the image that best corresponds to their feelings and can elaborate orally if they wish to say more.
- During sports activities, encourage the children to put their feelings/emotions related to physical exertion into words (out of breath, muscle tension, fatigue, relaxation, satisfaction, etc.).
- During graphic art activities, encourage the children to express what they feel when they see a work of art.
- Etc.".

# The little ruler for emotions

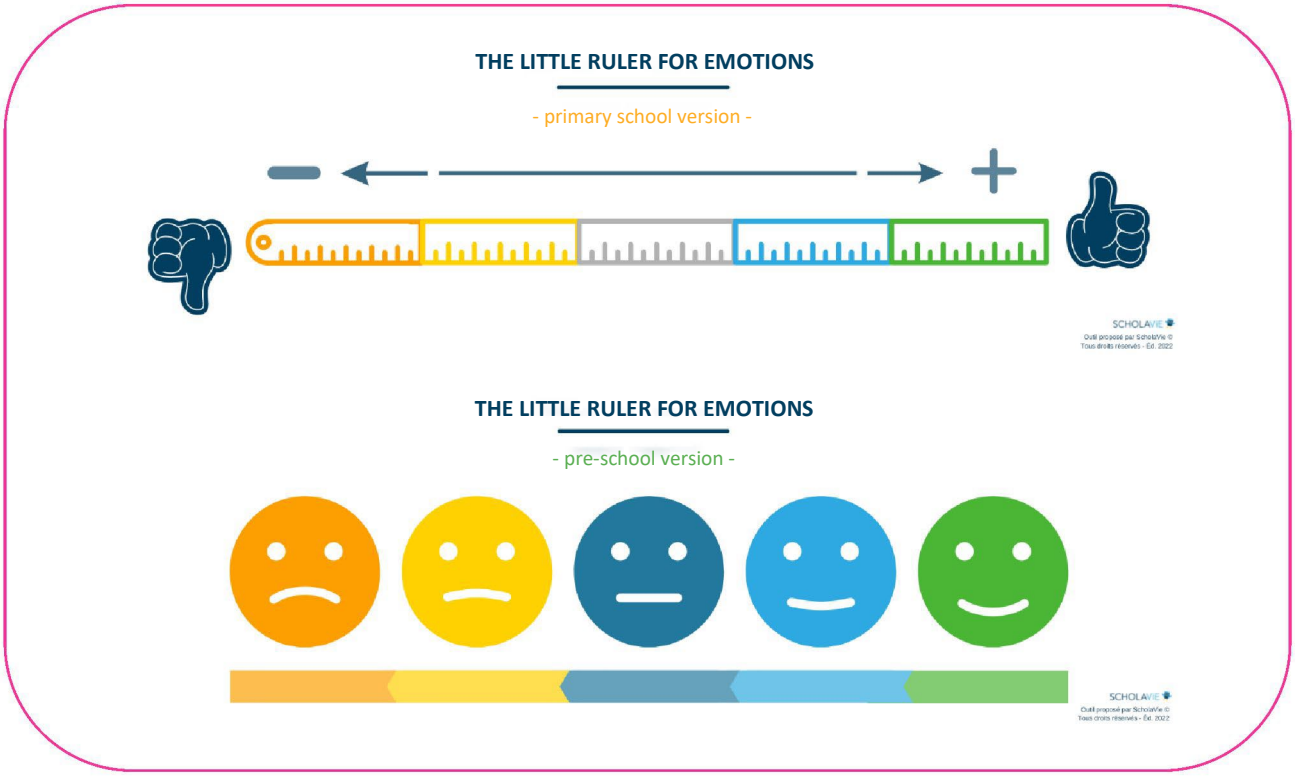
*(Extract from the Scholavie Tools), ScholaVie - Psychosocial skills at school)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Identifying one's emotions E1.2
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Perceiving the present emotional experience
⊠ Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; □ Group
**Equipment:** Print out the little ruler below

"You can use this tool in many ways, here are a few examples.

**On a personal level:** As part of individual support, to help a pupil express the emotion experienced, by asking them to point, circle, verbalise or otherwise describe the emotion they feel at that moment. Establish a ritual: Print out a ruler for each of your students. Laminate it if possible. Using an erasable marker or a paperclip, ask your pupils to assess their emotional state during the day by circling, putting a line through, or moving the paperclip over the emotion related to what they feel. Then, place the ruler on the corner of their table. This process will allow you to quickly identify the emotional position in which the student finds themselves and provide them with more personalised support.

**At group level:** Ask the students to think about a situation they have experienced. Then, ask them to choose the emotion they felt at that moment. Conversely, ask the pupils to choose an emotion, then to describe a time when they felt that emotion. Establish a ritual: hang the ruler in your classroom, visible to everyone. Evaluate the overall atmosphere of the class by pointing to the associated emotion. Examples: there is a lot of noise, I indicate the anger emotion/scale; the pupils are playing calmly, I indicate the satisfaction emotion/scale. This process will allow you to express your own emotional state to the entire class in order to easily regulate the ambient noise or to congratulate your pupils on their good behaviour.



# The narrated walk (group activity)

*(Extract from the Prodas Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)*

**Audience:** □ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults;
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Identifying one's emotions E1.2
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Perceiving the present emotional experience
⊠ Naming the emotion (or emotions) perceived
**Format:** □ Individual ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** print out of images or photos of emotions or faces

**"Outline:**
The facilitator puts emoticons or photos of faces representing about twenty different emotions and feelings, some pleasant and others unpleasant, on the wall or floor. Then, they read out a text that is focused on facts, which does not express the narrator's emotions (see the sample text below). They can also write their own text. They read the text slowly and pause at each situation mentioned in the text.

During the pauses, each participant positions themselves next to the emoticon or photo that best corresponds to what they would have felt in that situation. The facilitator leaves a few seconds so that the whole group can see everyone's feelings and then resumes reading until the end of the story.

At the end of the activity, the facilitator offers the group some time for discussion. They can ask a few questions to get the discussion started, such as: "How did you feel during this activity? Did you enjoy it?" Was it easy or difficult to identify your emotion(s)/feeling(s) in the situation described?"

If the group enjoyed the activity and is willing to do it again another day, the facilitator can also suggest that a volunteer participant write a text of the same kind as the one that was read out, i.e. a text that proposes situations likely to evoke varied feelings, but which does not name these feelings.

The participant can, for example, describe a day, a weekend or an evening. They will read their text out to the rest of the group to repeat the activity.

Sample text for the activity:

*"6:30 in the morning! The alarm goes off. I open my eyes (pause).*
*I can hear the bin lorry right outside the window (pause).*
*I put one foot on the ground, then two. I get up and go straight to the bathroom to have a shower (pause). There is no hot water this morning (pause).*
*Now, I am in the kitchen, having a leisurely breakfast, making toast and listening to music (pause).*
*I look at the clock... 7:15... I just missed my bus, I am going to be late for my internship (pause).*
*I leave the flat, I walk along a main road, it is raining (pause).*
*I happen to run into a friend I have not seen in a very long time (pause).*
*The bus arrives, it is packed, I get on (pause).*
*Now, I am at my internship. The manager arrives, she looks angry; I go up to her and start apologising (pause).*
*But she cuts me off and tells me curtly that there will be more work today (pause).*
*At lunchtime, a colleague and I go to the park next door, to sit on a bench and eat a sandwich together (pause).*
*There are children right next to us, playing and laughing (pause).*
*Now, I am back at my workplace. I am trying to catch up on what I did not do this morning (pause).*
*My manager arrives and gives me extra work: an order that arrived this morning, which must be delivered before 5 pm, because there is no one else to do it (pause).*

*I know I will finish later if I accept and tonight I cannot because my family, who I have not seen for a long time, is arriving (pause).*
*I look at my manager and tell her that I am an intern and that I am not here to pick up the work that employees do not want to do (pause).*
*I am going to pick up my family at the station (pause).*
*Tonight, we are all at my place, it is a bit small but I can see that everyone is happy. The meal is delicious (pause). Midnight, the evening is over, I am going to bed (pause).*

Equipment to prepare for the activity:
Emoticons or photos of faces to hang on the wall or place on the floor, and text to read out."

*General social skill 1*

# DEVELOPING CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

# DEVELOPING CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (S1)

**"The ability to develop constructive relationships** can be defined as the ability to adopt favourable relational behaviours to initiate relationships, interact with others and build social bonds, particularly with peers" [1]. "**The ability to communicate constructively** can be defined as the ability to adopt verbal and non-verbal behaviours that are favourable to interacting with others, even in difficult situations" [1].

**Developing constructive relationships** entails better **understanding** the relational attitudes and behaviours that promote quality communication and relationships. This PSS also relies on the **ability to accept** the experience lived by the other, by being able to name it, and the behaviours of the other that give us satisfaction and to be able to name them.

**This first general social PSS (S1) encompasses three specific social PSS. Several psychological knowledge items and practical skills enable us to develop and strengthen each specific PSS:**

- **Specific social PSS 1: in order to communicate effectively and positively (S1.1), the core useful psychological knowledge and practical skills are**:
  1. Avoiding verbal attitudes and behaviours that damage the message and the relationship;
  2. Knowing how to develop supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication);
  3. Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication).
- **Specific social PSS 2: in order to communicate empathetically (S1.2), the core useful psychological knowledge and practical skills are:**
  1. Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication;
  2. Listening empathetically (empathetic understanding and silent listening);
  3. Speaking empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening).
- **Specific social PSS 3: in order to develop bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3), the core useful psychological knowledge and practical skills are**:
  1. Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships;
  2. Knowing the different prosocial behaviours;
  3. Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude).

# ***Social skill 1***

## Communicating effectively and positively (S1.1)

Communication represents the ‘interactive dimension of the relationship’; it serves to transmit information [52]. It allows a message to be shared between at least one sender (or speaker) and one receiver (or interlocutor), using both **verbal content** (verbal language: words, sentences) and **non-verbal** content (voice, intonation, gaze, facial expression, gestures, postures, movements of the body) [108]. Beyond this function of transmitting information, communication also has important relational and emotional implications at both the individual and collective levels. Thus, "the stakes of communication are of two kinds": **informative** (or operational: to inform oneself, to recount, to explain, to describe, to propose, to ask, etc.) and **psychological** (or symbolic: to give and receive affection, to impose one's values, to strengthen one's self-esteem, to influence the other, to find one's place, to establish one's power, etc.) [109].

In connection with this dual challenge (informative and psychological), effective and positive communication relies on the practice of two dimensions [108, 110].

- **On an informative level: a good understanding of the message** between the sender and the receiver;
- **On a psychological level: recognition and validation of the other**, as well as of oneself, against the backdrop of an authentic relationship based on mutual respect.

Thus, an effective and positive mode of communication requires, on the one hand, modifying certain practices that hinder understanding and mutual harmony and, on the other hand, strengthening practices that promote message appropriation and consideration of the person [109].

**Attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship do not allow for effective and positive communication, unlike supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours, or the formulation of clear and appropriate requests to the other person.**

## 1.Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship

For cultural, social and psychological reasons, effective and positive communication is currently not (yet) very widespread in France. Sometimes, we use complex and abstract sentence structures that make our message ambiguous, or resort to harsh and demeaning attitudes and words that can belittle the other person (intentionally or unintentionally), or focus on things that bother us and are wrong. During the course of a day, without necessarily realising it, we can make many criticisms and negative statements without necessarily taking the time to express pleasant and positive things. Psychology researchers use the term '**negativity bias**' to refer to this tendency to focus on negative aspects (via attention, reflection, memorisation, prediction and communication that focuses on what is not working) [46].

**Effective and positive communication** aims to reverse these usual modes of operation, thus avoiding any negation of the other, whether in form or substance.

**A useful step in developing effective and positive communication** is knowing and recognising those communication habits that deteriorate understanding of the message and the relationship with the other person, so that one can intentionally choose to not use them anymore. These obstacles to fluid and harmonious communication can take different forms: verbal behaviours, non-verbal behaviours, relational intentions (that is, the more or less conscious objectives that one tries to achieve through interaction or what one seeks to do beyond what one says). The table below presents the main obstacles to communication with regard to understanding the message on the other hand, and to consideration of the other on the other [1, 47, 110].

**Table 10. S1.1 (a): Some obstacles to communication from the perspective of verbal behaviour, non-verbal behaviour and relational intentions.**

| | Obstacles to understanding the message | Obstacles to considering the other |
|---|---|---|
| Verbal behaviours | - **ambiguous phrases**<br>*E.g. I haven't prepared all this equipment for nothing!*<br>- **sentences that are too long with too much content**<br>*E.g. I'm fed up with this tip of a desk, there's no room left for a piece of paper and we can't find a pen that works anymore, even though I've asked you fifty times to tidy it up; you don't listen to anything I say…*<br>- **sermons, shaming**<br>*E.g. Not all children in the world are fortunate enough to have access to all this equipment…*<br>- **generalisations**<br>*E.g. Why do you always hit your friends?*<br>- **impersonal phrases, expressions, clichés, etc.**<br>*E.g. And yes, we don't always get to do what we want in life!*<br>- **a request in the form of a question** (instead of the imperative)<br>*E.g. Can you put your things away? (instead of: Put your things away!)*<br>- **statement in the negative form** (instead of affirmative form)<br>*E.g. I don't want any more noise (instead of 'I want peace and quiet')*<br>- **incomprehensible sentences,** using jargon that is inaccessible to the listener | - **coarse or vulgar vocabulary**<br>- **derogatory vocabulary, whether direct or indirect** (particularly through comparison)<br>*E.g. Paul knows how to play nicely*<br>- **insults**<br>- **threats**<br>*E.g. If you carry on like this, it's not going to end well*<br>- **criticisms and judgements**<br>*E.g. You're incompetent*<br>- **denying or playing down what the other person says**<br>*E.g. (No), he couldn't have done that*<br>- **denying or playing down what the other person feels**<br>*E.g. (No), it's not a big deal, go and play with someone else (when a child is crying and complaining about another child)*<br>- **interrupting**<br>- **Incongruous and irrelevant content** (off-topic, unrelated to the other person's concerns)<br>- **inappropriate requests** (not appropriate to the other person's abilities and needs) |
| Non-verbal behaviours | - **non-verbal behaviours that contradict verbal behaviours**<br>*E.g. Saying 'I'm listening' with your arms crossed*<br>- **fidgeting**<br>*E.g. Tapping on a desk, doodling, fiddling with a mobile phone, etc.* | - **not looking**<br>- **not paying attention**<br>- **not responding**<br>- **using an ironic, contemptuous tone**<br>- **looking up at the sky**<br>- **using a loud and aggressive voice**<br>- **shouting**<br>- **making aggressive gestures and movements** |
| Relational intentions | - **seeking to impose one's reality**, values, desires, point of view, way of functioning, etc.<br>- **trying to keep information to oneself** and not sharing it with the other person<br>- **seeking to show off**, to show one's superiority | - **seeking to reject,** to distance the other<br>- **seeking to dominate the other**, to establish one's power<br>- **seeking to belittle the other**<br>- **seeking to hurt the other**<br>- **seeking to subjugate the other** |

## 2. Knowing how to develop supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)

**Negativity bias** causes us to focus our attention on and emphasise the negative aspects of a situation more greatly. Thus, it is possible to look at and express what is positive and all that is satisfying in our daily lives less, and to wait for exceptional situations to express our contentment and validate the behaviours and attitudes of others.

However, it is important to remember that it is at the heart of (daily) interactions that **affective and relational needs** (need for love, recognition and affiliation) are played out *(see the list of psychological needs in cognitive skill C1.3*). Positive communication helps to satisfy these psychological needs. Attitudes and verbal behaviours of acceptance, support and appreciation are too often underestimated, yet they are perceived by the beneficiary as such, as proof of esteem, recognition and love [110]. In addition to playing a crucial role in satisfying psychological needs, recognition and validation also have an important educational function. Validating positive behaviours helps to explain to a child what satisfies us and what we expect from them.

First, **positive communication** is fuelled by our ability to **focus our attention** on the attitudes and behaviours of the other person that give us satisfaction (and which we are not always aware of as we may consider them to be 'normal'). Next, it entails **expressing to the other person**, on the one hand **the attitude or behaviour that gives us satisfaction**, and on the other hand **our pleasant emotional feeling**. The table below sets out the main verbal and non-verbal behaviours that underlie positive communication (and which enable us to validate constructive behaviours and express our satisfaction) [1, 47, 110].

**Table 11. S1.1 (b): The main verbal and non-verbal behaviours and relational intentions that promote positive communication**

| | Focusing one's attention on satisfactory things | Expressing satisfactory attitudes and behaviours | Expressing one's satisfaction |
|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal behaviours | | - **valuing the 'little' satisfying everyday behaviours**<br>*E.g. Well done! You've put all the toys away!* | - **expressing pleasant (emotional) feelings**<br>*For example, it is lovely to see you playing together nicely!*<br>- **using an 'I-message' with a pleasant emotion**<br>*For example, It makes me very happy when you help me like this* |
| Non-verbal behaviours | - **observing the 'little' satisfying everyday behaviours**<br>*E.g.: constructive social behaviours (listening, sharing, helping, politeness, etc.), calm attitudes, autonomy (dressing, independent play, cleanliness, etc.), participating in communal life, etc.*<br>- **having (regular) periods of availability by being fully present and open to the other** | - **embracing and appreciating it** when satisfactory behaviours are demonstrated | - **showing affectionate and supportive gestures**<br>*E.g.: a high-five, stroke of the hair, hug, applause, wink, etc.* |
| Relational intentions | - **respecting the other**<br>- **accepting the other**<br>- **discovering the other**<br>- **being present for the other**<br>- **indulging ourselves in the relationship** | - **encouraging positive attitudes and behaviours from the other**<br>- **recognising the abilities of the other**<br>- **affirming the other** | - **sharing one's pleasant emotions - showing consideration and affection towards the other** |

## 3. Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication)

**Effective communication** implies that the message we send can be clearly understood by our interlocutor. Bearing in mind that every conversation has an informative and a psychological dimension, this form of communication requires, on the one hand, **that we be very clear in our behaviours and intentions** and on the other hand, **that we can adapt** to the communication context and to our interlocutor (personal characteristics and feelings present).

The table below sets out the main verbal and non-verbal behaviours that underlie effective communication and that allow the other person to access the meaning of our message, particularly in the context of requests [47, 110-113].

**Table 12. S1.1 (c): The main verbal and non-verbal behaviours and relational intentions that promote effective communication, particularly in the context of requests**

| | Clear messages | Messages appropriate to the listener and the context |
|---|---|---|
| **Verbal behaviours** | - **simple sentences** (vocabulary and syntax)<br>- **short sentences**<br>- **specific sentences** (not general concepts and generalisations)<br>- **affirmative sentences**<br>- **personal involvement** through pronouns: I, me, etc.<br>- **repeat the request** if necessary | - **take turns speaking** (take the time to listen to the other)<br>- **use vocabulary and syntax that is appropriate to your interlocutor** (age, level of language and knowledge, context of the relationship, etc.)<br>- **use vocabulary and syntax appropriate to the context** of the communication |
| **Non-verbal behaviours** | - **pause in silence** to allow the message to be assimilated<br>- **stay calm** | - **keep the right distance** (neither too close to nor too far from one's interlocutor)<br>- **turn one's attention** towards the interlocutor and look at them<br>- **have a suitable voice volume** (neither too loud nor too quiet)<br>- **adopt a pleasant face and tone of voice**<br>- **express oneself at the right time** (when the other person is available, when one is calm, etc.)<br>- **identify the other person's emotions and needs** and adjust accordingly<br>- **ascertain the agreement (or not)** of one's interlocutor |
| **Relational intentions** | - **ask for something specific** (clear objective)<br>- **transmit precise information** | - **consider the other**<br>- **accept and recognise the uniqueness of the other** |

*Communicating effectively and positively generates two main beneficial effects:*

- **Quality relationships:** effective and positive communication facilitates better appropriation of the message and avoids misunderstandings (at the root of many relational difficulties); it demonstrates to the other the consideration and respect that one has for them, which promotes understanding and cohesion [47, 108, 110].
- **The satisfaction of emotional and relational needs** (*see the list of needs in cognitive skill C1.3*): effective and positive communication allows the other person to feel considered, respected and valued, which helps to satisfy their need for recognition and promotes good self-esteem. Harmonious relationships, and shared attention and affection meet individuals' needs for social affiliation and love.

*Communicating effectively and positively relies on three prerequisites:*

- **A match between form and substance:** the verbal and non-verbal behaviours of the person who communicates effectively and positively must be consistent with their perceptions and feelings; it is about being authentic rather than pretending to be supportive and validating by using 'superficial' positive terms. "It is obvious that in order to be positive, communication must be coherent in terms of substance and form, and between the content and how it is expressed, and this content must be congruent with behaviour" [110].
- **An absence of power dynamics between oneself and the other:** even though effective and positive communication can be used in the context of asymmetrical relationships (teacher/pupil, educator/young person, parent/child, etc.), it requires a relationship with the other that is respectful and honest without one person seeking to dominate or manipulate; "Speech is often confused with power: it is its most obvious instrument (...) to introduce into the relationship an irremediable power dynamic, based on the devaluation, destabilisation or rejection of the Other. The objective (…) is to position oneself (or at least perceive oneself) as the strongest, the most intelligent, the most powerful, endowed with a quality denied to the interlocutor… Positive communication uses a diametrically opposed strategy: it relies on an egalitarian relationship (…) a deep self-control, to forge the paths of cooperation and convergence" [110].
- **Positive self-assessment**: effective and positive communication requires the ability to recognise the qualities and skills of the other. This implies having previously developed a benevolent relationship with oneself, and a positive and unbiased self-image in order to be at peace in the relationship (*see cognitive skill C1.5*).

## Key takeaways (S1.1)

**Conceptual definition:** **Communicating effectively and positively** requires being able to recognise and overcome obstacles to fluid and constructive communication. This form of communication involves avoiding hurtful postures and verbal expressions (lack of attention, rejection, irony, mockery, aggression, rudeness, etc.) and is fuelled by the ability to develop supportive and encouraging attitudes and terminology (attention, validation, encouragement, warm gestures, etc.).

**Operational definition:** **Three practical skills support effective and positive communication**:

**1. Avoiding verbal attitudes and behaviours that damage the message and the relationship**, which implies being able to recognise obstacles to message comprehension and to consideration for the other person at the level of verbal behaviours, non-verbal behaviours and relational intentions (i.e. what one seeks to do beyond the words one says).

**2. Knowing how to develop supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)** by paying more attention to the behaviours of others that give satisfaction, by validating them and by expressing one's satisfaction.

**3. Formulating clear and appropriate requests to the other person (effective communication)** requires expressing clear messages and knowing how to adapt to the communication context and to one's interlocutor (personal characteristics and feelings present).

**Main effects:** **Communicating effectively and positively allows one to**:

**4. Build quality relationships:** effective and positive communication facilitates better appropriation of the message and avoids misunderstandings (at the root of many relational difficulties); it demonstrates to the other the consideration and respect that one has for them, which promotes understanding and cohesion.

**5. Satisfy one's emotional and relational needs** (*see the list of needs in C1.3*): effective and positive communication allows the other person to feel considered, respected and valued, which helps to satisfy their need for recognition and promotes good self-esteem. Harmonious relationships, and shared attention and affection meet individuals' needs for social affiliation and love.

## Key takeaways (S1.1 *continued*)

**Main prerequisites: Communicating effectively requires:**

- **Matching the form with the substance of the message:** the verbal and non-verbal behaviours of the person who communicates effectively and positively must be consistent with their perceptions and feelings; it is about being authentic rather than pretending to be supportive and validating by using 'superficial' positive terms.

- **Abandoning a power dynamic between oneself and the other:** even though effective and positive communication can be used in the context of asymmetrical relationships (teacher/pupil, educator/young person, parent/child, etc.), it requires a relationship with the other that is respectful and honest and that does not seek to dominate or manipulate; "speech is often confused with power: it is its most obvious instrument (…) to introduce into the relationship an irremediable power dynamic, based on the devaluation, destabilisation or rejection of the Other. The objective (…) is to position oneself (or at least perceive oneself) as the strongest, the most intelligent, the most powerful, endowed with a quality denied to the interlocutor… Positive communication uses a diametrically opposed strategy: it relies on an egalitarian relationship (…) a deep self-control, to forge the paths of cooperation and convergence" [95].

- **Positive self-assessment (skill C1.5)**: effective and positive communication requires the ability to recognise the qualities and skills of the other. This implies having previously developed a benevolent relationship with oneself, and a positive and unbiased self-image in order to be at peace in the relationship.

# Examples of activities to develop the PSS
## S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively

## Validating positive behaviours

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson MO, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** □ Children; □ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship
⊠ Using more supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)
□ Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication)
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** Table

"Using the table below, make a list of the little positive things that the children do on a daily basis, in groups, individually, indoors, outdoors, etc. (without looking for exceptional behaviours). Complete the first column of the table, making sure to describe the specific behaviour of the child(ren) (e.g., the children read the book in silence; Lucas answers calmly and appropriately; Lisa waters the plants, etc.) rather than a general attitude (well-behaved, obedient, etc.). In the second column, write down what you say to the children: about their behaviour (e.g., you are reading your book in silence) and about how you feel (e.g., that is good, I appreciate this moment of calm and concentration)."

| | What the child(ren) do(es) | What I say (or do) - about the behaviour - about what I feel (words, gestures) |
|---|---|---|
| **School behaviour:** work, learning, successes, etc. | *E.g. Nino gave in a piece of homework without any spelling mistakes (whereas he usually makes a lot of them).* | *E.g. Well done, Nino! There are no spelling mistakes in your homework. I like reading a text like that.* |
| **Positive social behaviours:** listening, sharing, helping, politeness, etc. | *E.g. The children are calm and orderly before going into the classroom.* | *E.g. You are all lined up neatly. I am proud of you.* |
| **Participation in group life:** tasks, activities, etc. | *E.g. Paul watered the plants.* | *E.g. That's good, Paul, you remembered to water the plants. I can count on you!* |
| **Independence:** dressing, cleanliness, homework, etc. | *E.g. The children tidied up and cleaned their belongings after the activity.* | *E.g. I see that everything is tidied up properly and clean. Well done! I appreciate it very much.* |
| **Calm behaviours and attitudes** | *E.g. Adam and Lucas played nicely during the break (whereas they are usually boisterous).* | *E.g. You played nicely and quietly during the break. I am very satisfied.* |
| **Other** | | |

## Expressing positive behaviours

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson MO, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship
⊠ Using more supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)
□ Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** paper/pencil

"This activity will enable the children to develop their ability to recognise and express positive behaviours (even with a person with whom they do not share a particular affinity).

- Form pairs, avoiding grouping children based on affinity. To do this, you could suggest drawing the name of a classmate from the group at random.
- Next, invite the children to identify and then write down the positive behaviours that their partner has already demonstrated.
- You can suggest that the children take turns reading out (in pairs or in a large group) the positive things they have written about the other child. *For example:*

  - *Mohamed let me go ahead of him in the canteen so I could eat with my friend.*
  - *Clara shared half of her sweets with me.*

**Extension:** you can suggest that a few of them perform the scene in front of the whole group."

# Clear and ambiguous messages

*(Extract from the Prodas Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship
□ Using more supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)
⊠ Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** Role play scenarios

## "Aims

- Developing self-awareness and social interactions
- Identifying the person's feelings and the real message within an ambiguous message
- Identifying your own feelings and needs in an interaction so you can express them clearly

## Outline

### Step 1:

Each of the three dialogues (see dialogues below) is performed by two volunteers. Optionally, they can be allowed to rehearse for a few minutes beforehand.

### Step 2:

Before the volunteers read or act out each dialogue, the group is given a brief description of the situation and the protagonists. The group is instructed to try to identify the real needs and desires of each of the characters.

### Step 3:

When the volunteers have finished reading or acting out the dialogue, they are warmly thanked, and then the group is invited to reflect on the scene, on what happened between the two characters, and on how the second person responded to the first.

You can guide the discussion by asking the following questions:
*"- In your opinion, what did this character really want to say?*
*- Does the second person understand what the first person is communicating to them?*
*- In your opinion, why didn't they just say it?*
*- What effects does this unclear message produce between the characters?*
*- Suppose the other character really understood, even if the message lacked clarity, what could they have replied? There could be several answers...*
*- It is common for people to emit messages that are not clear. This phenomenon affects everyone. What can cause us to emit messages that are not clear?*
*- How do we feel when someone seems not to understand us?*
*- How can we help someone clarify their message? For example: "Are you telling me that...?", etc.*
*- Do you see any benefit in asking someone to rephrase when you're not sure you've understood their message? - What can help us when we have trouble expressing ourselves, and/or identifying the message we want to emit? What feelings does this message evoke in us?"*
You can also allow the participants to talk about messages they themselves formulated that were not understood, or messages they received that were unclear to them."

## Role-playing scenarios and dialogues

### Dialogue 1: Two classmates

*A - "Pfff... This task is really difficult. I'm always having trouble."*
*B - "Ah yes, that's true."*
*A - "But you, you usually do very well. You always get very good marks. You're much better than me at this. I really don't know how I'm going to do it..."*
*B - "Oh... "*
*A - "I'm sure you could show others how to do these exercises if you wanted to. I'd really like to know how to do it.*
*B - "Uh... I never thought of doing that."*
*A - "Yeah, I'm sure you could help those who are struggling, like me for example."*
*B - "Don't worry about it. You just need to concentrate and you'll be able to do it."*

### Dialogue 2: Two classmates

*A - "What are you going to do this afternoon once you get home?"*
*B - "I don't know... I might go to the park."*
*A - "I don't have anything to do this afternoon."*
*B - "Oh... "*
*A - "I don't have any friends who are free to do something with me."*
*B - "Oh... "*
*A - "I'd like to meet someone... Are you going to the park?"*
*B - "Maybe"*
*A - "Are you going with someone?"*
*B - "No"*
*A - "I really like going to the park"*
*B - "Oh really?"*
*A - "Yes, I love it."*
*B - "Oh... "*

### Dialogue 3: An adult and a child

*Situation: The adult needs to look after the child for a little while because their parents are busy. This is the first time they have met.*
*A - "Hello. Are you the one who's going to look after me?"*
*B - "Yes, I am. Come in. We can play a game if you want."*
*A - "Can I play with the little lorry?"*
*B - "Of course"*
*A - "What if I break it?"*
*B - "You won't be able to break it, it's made of metal, see?"*
*A - "What would you do if I broke a window in your house?"*
*B - "Uh... I don't know. Do you want me to read you a story?"*
*A - "Do you ever get angry with children?"*
*B - "I don't know. I... "*
*A - "Do you like to tease children, or play tricks on them?"*
*B - "What's wrong? Come in, OK?*
*A - "OK, OK."*

# The right words for respectful relationships

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

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship
□ Using more supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)
⊠ Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

## Activity 2: The right words for respectful relationships

SOCIAL SKILL → Effective communication

### Instructions

**Step 1: Explanation to the whole group**

The facilitator informs the pupils that one way to resolve conflicts is to use 'clear messages'.

They explain to them that this a formula that allows one to express their feelings and needs. They then perform a role play in front of the group.

Example:

- When you call me 'The nerd/The idiot' in front of others.
- That hurts me.
- I'm asking you to stop and call me by my first name.
- Did you understand?

### Equipment

Worksheet: Clear messages

**Step 2: Identification of the different stages with the whole group**

After this role play, the facilitator asks the students to identify the different stages of the clear message they observed:

- Describe the facts
- Explain what you felt
- Make a clear request
- Check that the other person has understood

Step 3: Pairs

The facilitator suggests that the pupils divide into small groups to try out the 'clear messages' technique.

The pupils take it in turns to tell the group about a conflict situation they experienced with a classmate, then try to formulate a 'clear message'. The group gives feedback to the pupil on what it has understood.

- If the message has been understood correctly, the pupil replies 'It's clear.'
- If it has been misunderstood, the pupil replies, 'It's not clear'. Then they start again until they succeed in getting their message across.

## Debriefing

- What useful things did you learn from this exercise?
- What does this make you want to do differently in your daily life?

The facilitator explains to the pupils that this technique is not suitable for situations of major conflict, or when one is in danger. It can only be used if the aggressor is willing to listen to and consider the message being emitted. If they mock what is being said, this technique will not be effective and will have to be stopped.

# What if we spoke differently

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

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective: S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively**
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship
□ Using more supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)
⊠ Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication)
**Format:** ⊠Individual; ⊠ Group

What if we spoke differently

Source: ***The skills schoolbag***, **Ireps Pays de la Loire**

TOOLS

Duration

20 mins.

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

Equipment

✓ A board or flip chart to jot down the group's comments and arguments.

✓ 'Situation cards' to get the participants involved.

## Reminder of the objectives

✓ Allows you to rephrase a message to make it kinder and more constructive.

## Outline and instructions

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

**The facilitator initiates a group discussion:**
"*What do you think of this situation?" Of the message given?*" specifying that it was an aggressive message and highlighting its characteristics.

**Next, the facilitator analyses the message with the participants using the questions below:**

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

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

## Strengths

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

## Points to be aware of

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

# Round of encouragement

*(Extract from Reynaud L., 2021 [80])*

**Audience :** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship
⊠ Using more supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)
□ Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

## C I Round of encouragement

**Aim** Formulating positive encouragement.
**Duration** 5-15 minutes.
**Equipment** A box, some labels (examples are provided in the digital resources).



Everyone, whether they are an adult or a pupil, is an agent of self-confidence and can nurture others' self-confidence by encouraging them. To be effective, this encouragement must be immediate, specific, positive, sincere, and validate strategies, effort, progress, behaviours, etc. This post-workshop coming together ritual serves as an opportunity to share what was observed as positive during the workshops, to formulate effective encouragement and to share it constructively.

**The pupils sit comfortably in a circle.**

"Are you happy when someone says something nice to you about your work, your behaviour, your progress, your drawings? What do you like to be told? For example: 'You can be proud of yourself, you managed to do this activity, you helped Jade tie her shoelaces, colour her drawing, etc.'?

When someone tells you that, how do you feel? It's nice, it feels good, it's heart-warning, it's like getting a present each time? And all the credit is yours, it's thanks to you, your efforts, your behaviour.

You too can say these nice things to others and give them this present. It could be a thank you, a well done, an encouragement, a small sign. And you'll see, it will do you good too! So, are you ready to give lots of success presents to those around you?"

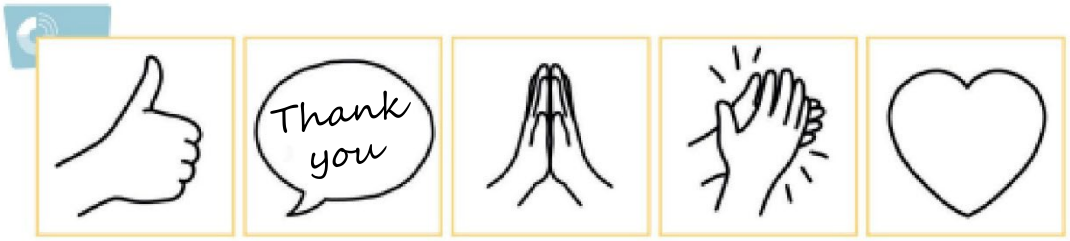
**Note:** With pre-school children, it will essentially be up to the teacher to lead the ritual and choose the presents to be given.

Several options are possible for this activity to be done successfully:

- From the labels provided, each pupil chooses the one that best suits what they want to express: a well-done, a thank you, a heart, a thumbs up, etc.

Then, they can give it directly to their classmate.

- The activity can be purely oral: pupils are then invited to go up to their classmate to congratulate them.




You can ask the pupils how they felt when sharing encouragement and appreciation: "It feels good, I like it, it's nice, I feel good, it makes me happy, it makes me joyful, I feel stronger, etc." Remind the children that it is important to feel encouraged by others: their friends, their teacher, their parents, etc. It is just as important to know how to ask them for help when they need it.

Other peoples' belief in our abilities is very beneficial for self-confidence. Rudolf Dreikurs wrote that encouragement is to a child what water is to a plant. We are all gardeners of the plants and living beings that surround us, including children!

Being connected to one's emotions and feelings, so as to better manage them, is the final lever for developing self-confidence. To achieve this, the teacher must develop their pupils' emotional skills and provide them with tools. This is the subject of the rituals in the following chapter.

## The peer supporter

*(Extract from Reynaud L., 2021 [80])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type :** ⊠ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship
⊠ Using more supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)
□ Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

# F I The peer supporter

Ages 4-6 years, variable duration, spread over time, stickers with the first names or photos of the pupils.

Each pupil writes their name on a piece of paper and folds it into four before putting it in a bowl. Younger children are invited to stick their photo on it. Each pupil picks the first name or photo of another pupil in the class and keeps their identity a secret. Their mission is to become their peer supporter, their guardian angel for a day. They must look after their wellbeing and happiness. How? By being kind to them, possibly by giving them small gifts, helping them, etc.
Everyone has a peer supporter. Their identity may or may not be kept secret. At the end of the day, everyone is asked to say whether they worked out who their peer supporter was and what they thought of the experience. To help younger children express their feelings, suggest keywords such as: joy, happiness, pride, surprise, gratitude, etc.

# Barriers to communication

*(Extract from the Prodas Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.1 Communicating effectively and positively
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Avoiding attitudes and verbal behaviours that damage the message and the relationship
□ Using more supportive attitudes and verbal behaviours (positive communication)
□ Formulating clear requests that are appropriate to the other person (effective communication)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

## "Outline

The facilitator and volunteers demonstrate the various barriers to communication using role plays/simulations. The group discusses the effects of the barriers to communication after each role play.

**Step 1**: The facilitator writes the following expressions on the board or on a large sheet of paper so that the participants can read them upon entering the room:

Interrupt/Attack or blame/Dominate the conversation/Judge, assess/

Give advice/Interpret/Question/Criticise, ridicule.

The facilitator asks the participants to come up with a title for the list on the board. They write down their suggestions and the group discusses them briefly. Then, the facilitator also suggests a title for this list: 'Barriers to communication'. Next, they suggest examining together whether or not each of these behaviours risks hindering communication.

**Step 2**: To briefly illustrate each of the barriers to communication, two volunteers are asked to stand in front of the group or to stay in their places to speak; one of the two volunteers tells a story and the one listening responds with the attitude that corresponds to one of the eight barriers to communication.

The volunteer who is going to tell a story is free to choose what they will talk about, but for this activity the subject should not be very emotionally-loaded (because it involves experiencing listening attitudes that are often felt as unpleasant by the speaker). The facilitator can give an example themselves or participate in the first role play.

The volunteer then recounts the experience they have chosen and their partner responds by adopting the attitude that corresponds to one of the aforementioned barriers to communication.

The facilitator then asks the volunteer who told the story the following question: "*Did you feel listened to?*"

**Step 3**: Next, the facilitator asks the group to work out which barrier to communication was being illustrated. When the group identifies a barrier, it is highlighted on the board and a group discussion is proposed, based on the following questions: *"What effects did these interruptions/judgements/advice/questions, etc. have on the person speaking?"*

**Step 4**: Repeat the scenarios with several volunteer pairs who will illustrate a different listening attitude from the barriers to communication. Each time, this step will be followed by a group discussion, until all eight obstacles have been analysed. It is possible to take several sessions to go through all eight obstacles if necessary and if, of course, the activity is fun for the group.

**Step 5**: Finally, the facilitator suggests that the group think of a positive behaviour that facilitates communication and act it out: while one person speaks, their partner will then adopt as many positive behaviours as possible. At the end of the demonstration, the person is asked how they felt listened to and a discussion is initiated with the rest of the group.

Do not conclude that the listening attitudes experienced during the activity are always harmful and should never be used. When we first become aware of these barriers to communication, we may feel like pointing a finger at someone and saying: "*That's what you very often do.*" But sometimes we can also realise that we ourselves use attitudes that are barriers to communication; sometimes we do this without being aware of it. As the participants become increasingly aware of the effects of these barriers to communication, their nature, and the unpleasant feelings they cause in others, they will be able to develop greater self-control and learn to avoid them.

# ***Social skill 2***

## Communicating empathetically (S1.2)

Over the course of the past few decades, the concept of empathy has been understood in different ways [44, 114-116]. In the English language, its introduction dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, from the translation of the term *Einfühlung*, which conveyed an aesthetic feeling of appreciation of abstract works. However, the definition of the concept of empathy is multifaceted and fraught with ambiguity, particularly due to its proximity to others such as sympathy, compassion, emotional regulation or even benevolence [117]. "Since its introduction into English as a translation of the German *Einfühlung*, the term *empathy* has been fraught with ambiguity and has gone through many difficulties in definition. In particular, the distinction from 'sympathy' or 'compassion' is rarely unambiguous and (…) the voluntary or involuntary, active or passive nature of the phenomenon does not always appear to be clear" [54]. "Benevolence and empathy are extremely close and are on the same page. Being benevolent means taking care and looking after oneself and others by viewing things with understanding, love and without criticism, which is related to the dynamics of empathy" [118]. However, as Favre *et al.* [117] point out, "the lack of a clear distinction from other phenomena of an emotional nature, such as sympathy (compassion) or emotional contagion, has led to confusion that is detrimental to scientific communication and to the advancement of research in this field, which is nevertheless increasingly relevant."

Therefore, in order to facilitate its implementation in the context of interpersonal communication, it is necessary to have a precise, specific and operational definition of empathy. "Generally speaking, (it refers) to understanding another individual's internal psychological processes, such as their emotional state or thoughts" [46]. More precisely, "empathy represents the ability, acquired during psychogenesis, to grasp what the other feels and thinks, while distinguishing it from what one feels and thinks oneself" [117]. More specifically, in the PSS framework, empathy has been defined as "the ability to perceive and understand the experience of the other (their emotions, their point of view, their needs, etc.) (from one's own point of view) and to know how to put this into words in an appropriate manner" [1].

Thus, in the context of communication, empathy represents a precise and voluntary action on the part of the person receiving the message (that is, the person who is in the position of listening to the other).

This intentional action relies on two different mechanisms (implemented by the **subject Self**), these are:

1) Cognitive in order to access empathetic understanding (the first two As of **AADA**, attention and analysis) and;

2) Verbal to enable empathetic reformulation (the last A of **AADA**: action of a verbal nature).

**The ability to communicate empathetically is nurtured by the ability to know the characteristics of empathetic communication, namely listening empathetically (through empathetic understanding and silent listening) and speaking empathetically (through empathetic reformulation and active listening).**

## 1. Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication

- **Characteristic 1: the listener focuses their full attention on the other person's internal experience, that is, their cognitions, emotions, volitions, sensations and impressions**

Firstly, unlike habitual communication situations, empathy requires that the person listening be able to pay attention and focus on the information present in the other person, particularly their **inner Self**. Therefore, the listener must be able to be a true receiver of the experience lived by the person being listened to. This entails perceiving the sensory experience as it manifests itself within the person being listened to, in the present moment, without seeking to interpret or modify it. This refers to the skill "we have to put ourselves in the place of the other, to try to feel their subjective experience as they themselves feel it" [109]. From 1950, Rogers clarified this essential characteristic of empathy of being able to "perceive [the individual] through [the individual's] eyes: as they see themselves; not to understand [the individual] but to understand with (the individual), to adopt their internal frame of reference."

This perception of the sensory experience present in the other must, however, remain quite distinct from one's own present experience as a listener [117]. Empathy involves "adopting the perspective of the other by grasping the internal state of that other and by differentiating one's emotional experience from that of the other" [106].

**Using our knowledge of the Self (*see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2*), we can summarise this first characteristic of empathetic communication as the voluntary act of focusing all our attention on the inner Self of the other, i.e., on their internal states as they present themselves at the moment (their cognitions, emotions, volitions/conations, bodily sensations and impressions). This first action of a cognitive nature refers to the first A of the actions of the subject Self: AADA.**

- **Characteristic 2: the listener perceives and understands the other person's internal experience, that is, their cognitions, emotions, volitions, sensations and impressions**

Secondly, empathy requires perceiving and understanding the other person's inner Self as it presents itself in the moment. Therefore, this skill mobilises the listener's subject Self in its receptive and analytical cognitive functions, and refers to the first two A's of the acronym **AADA** (*see cognitive skills C1.1 and C1.2*): 1/ Attention, observation and perception of the information present within the other; 2/ Analysis and understanding of information present within the other (and distinct from oneself).

Narme and colleagues [119] highlight these two components of empathy, defining it "as the ability to feel and understand the emotional experiences of others." In order to clearly distinguish these two processes involved in empathetic understanding, some authors speak of 'affective empathy' to describe the ability to feel the emotions of the other (which can resonate within oneself and be perceived from within oneself by emotional contagion) and of 'cognitive empathy' to describe the ability to understand what the other is experiencing and feeling [118-120]. However, it should be emphasised that in both cases, empathetic understanding requires the cognitive capacities (of the subject Self) to be mobilised, which can be of a more 'receptive' nature (perception, attention) or of a more 'analytical' nature (analysis, understanding, reasoning). Narme *et al.* 2010 clarifies these two mechanisms at play; in the first case "the observer who enters into empathy with the other feels an emotion themselves [...] [but underscores that] the observer must be aware of the source of the emotion they feel, without there being confusion between the observer and the target"; in the second case, empathy allows "the observer to distinguish themselves from others, to adopt their perspective, and to attribute thoughts and emotions to them [...] the observer 'puts themselves in their place', they adopt their point of view. This latter concept is reminiscent of the definition of **theory of mind**, the ability to understand the actions of the other by inferring their mental states."

Garelli and Wendland [121] provide a more precise definition of **the theory of mind**, a concept that lies at the heart of attachment theory and which has facilitated the development of the notion of **parental mentalisation**: "The theory of mind refers to an individual's ability to attribute thoughts, feelings and motivations to another, and thus to anticipate or influence the behaviour of the other. Consequently, this is a metacognitive skill (…). The concept of theory of mind, which originated in developmental psychology, was quickly adopted by attachment theorists who focused not on the child's theory of mind capacity, but on that of the parents.

These two dimensions of empathy, mobilising on the one hand our capacity to feel and on the other hand our capacity to understand the experience of the other as they are experiencing it, can be found in the first definitions put forward by C. Rogers. Thus, empathetic understanding refers to "the capacity to understand, accurately and sensitively, the experiences and feelings (...) and the meanings they have for them"; the ability to perceive "the feelings/emotions and the personal meanings that (the person) is experiencing/having accurately" [122].

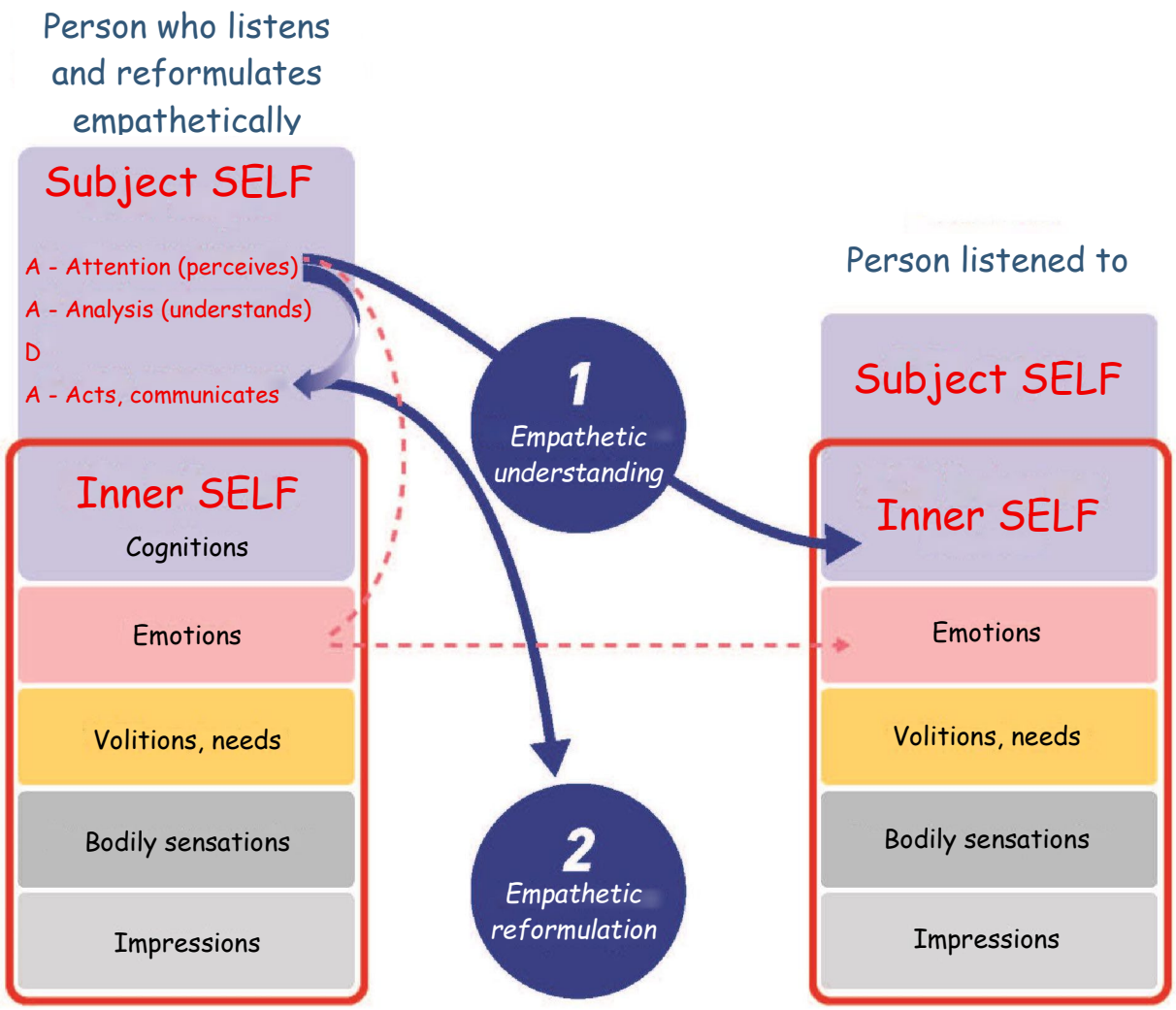
**Using our knowledge of the Self (*see C1.1 and C1.2*), we can summarise this second characteristic of empathy (called empathetic understanding) as the act of perceiving and understanding the inner Self of the other, i.e., their internal states as they present themselves in the moment (their cognitions, emotions, volitions/conations, bodily sensations and impressions). These cognitive actions refer to the first two As of the actions of the subject Self: AADA.**

- **Characteristic 3: The listener puts their understanding of the other person's internal experience, i.e., their cognitions, emotions, volitions, sensations and impressions, into words**

Thirdly, the listener verbalises their empathetic understanding. This means that they put what they have perceived and understood from the other person's experience into words. As C. Rogers specifies in his definition of empathetic communication [122], this entails being able to communicate this understanding to them as faithfully as possible. Thus, "according to Rogers (1983), empathy is the process of putting oneself in the place of others, of entering into their phenomenological world, of looking at events from their point of view, of understanding and feeling their feelings and thoughts correctly, and of sharing this situation with them" [123].

**Based on our knowledge of the Self (*see C1.1 and C1.2*), we can summarise this third characteristic of empathetic communication (called empathetic reformulation) as verbalising what we have perceived and understood about the other person's inner Self, that is, their internal states as they present themselves in the moment (their cognitions, emotions, volitions/conations, bodily sensations and impressions). This last action, which is behavioural in nature, refers to the final A of the actions of the subject Self: AADA.**

**Figure 5. S1.2: Schematic representation of empathetic communication**




## 2. Knowing how to listen empathetically (empathetic understanding and silent listening)

In order to communicate empathetically, it is first necessary to be able to understand the other person empathetically. This involves being able to perceive and grasp the internal experience that the other person is having in the moment.

**In communication situations, empathetic understanding relies on silent listening and three cognitive actions.**

- **Mental action 1: Focusing all one's attention on the internal experience of the other**

The person who is listening withdraws their attention from other stimuli (external and/or internal) and redirects it towards the person they are listening to and their perceptible internal experience. This requires decentring oneself (away from one's own thoughts, concerns, emotions, desires, actions, etc.) and making oneself fully available to the other (their distinct personal experience).

*E.g.: A child comes to see me because they have a problem with another adult; I then stop what I am doing, I devote all my attention to them and listen to them completely.*

- **Mental action 2: Perceiving the internal experience of the other**

In order to perceive the experience of the other, the listener must be able to fully (without it interfering with their own judgements and needs) and sincerely (with deep interest) embrace what the other is experiencing and feeling. Certain non-verbal attitudes can help to demonstrate this embracing attitude: putting oneself at the same level as the person (e.g. sitting down if the other is sitting, squatting down to be at the same height as the child, etc.), benevolent non-verbal communication (e.g. an attentive and open gaze directed at the other, smiling, etc.).

*E.g.: I sit next to the child, I look at them with interest and kindness, I embrace their words and their experience without interfering (even if I do not understand properly or if I disagree with what they are telling me).*

- **Mental action 3: Grasping the internal experience of the other**

Through their attention and perceptions, the listener can grasp the experience of the other.

To grasp the other person's experience, the listener can ask themselves:

- What is the person experiencing right now?
- How do they see the situation? What are their ideas, their thoughts, etc.?
- What are they feeling? What are their emotions, feelings, sensations, etc.?
- What do they want? What do they want to tell me? What are their desires, their needs, etc.?

In order to better perceive and understand the other person's experience, the listener can **facilitate the other person's verbal expression through silent listening and open questions** that invite them to speak freely and explain their internal experience.

*E.g.: Do you want to tell me what's going on? I'm listening... How are you feeling?*

Thus, to arrive at a true empathetic understanding, it is necessary to be fully attentive and available (physically and psychologically), and to offer the other silent and supportive listening, allowing the lived experience to be fully embraced. This entails decentring from oneself for a few moments and managing to put one's own judgements, reflections and desires 'on hold'. During this moment of empathetic listening, it is not a question of knowing who is right or who is wrong, it is about being able to embrace what is happening inside the other person.

*E.g.: I try to enter their world and see how they experience things; I try to perceive what they are feeling; they are not happy with the relationship with the other adult, their attitude and words bother them, they feel rejected…*

It is not necessary for the child to be able to speak or express themselves in order for someone to listen to them empathetically. With toddlers or children who have difficulty speaking, it is possible to rely on non-verbal language and their feelings to be able to perceive what is happening inside them. Consequently, it is very important to differentiate between one's own feelings and what the other person is feeling, in order not to create confusion between oneself and the child.

*E.g.: If the child feels intense anxiety, I can perceive their emotions (as belonging to them) but not carry them (and experience them totally inside myself). This enables me not to be in distress myself and to remain available to what the child is experiencing.*

## 3. Knowing how to speak empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening)

As a second step, the listener verbalises their empathetic understanding. This requires finding the words that best fit the internal experience that the other person is having at that moment. This means formulating our empathetic understanding in the most appropriate and open way possible.

An empathetic listener can use several forms of empathetic reformulation depending on the needs of the communication situation and the other person's experience:

- **Empathetic reformulation focused on the crux of the internal experience:** putting the key element experienced by the person being listened to into words. *E.g.: Do you feel uncomfortable around this person?*
- **Empathetic reformulation focused on the emotion:** putting the emotion (or emotions) felt by the person being listened to into words. *E.g.: Do you feel angry?*
- **Empathetic reformulation focused on needs:** putting the need or desire felt by the person being listened to into words. *E.g.: You need to be understood.*
- **Empathetic reformulation focused on the message:** putting the verbal (or non-verbal) information conveyed by the other person into words:
  - in the form of '**echo' reformulations** that repeat the words (or gestures) expressed by the listener: *E.g. (words): you don't want to work with her? E.g. (gesture): you are banging your fist down. E.g. (gesture): same expressive facial expression.*
  - or in the form of '**synonymous'** reformulations that use words similar to those expressed by the person: *E.g.: Is this not someone you like working with?*

In all instances, after proposing a reformulation, the empathetic person lets the other person verify whether the proposed understanding corresponds to their own lived experience. The aim is to give the person being listened to time so that they can confirm, adjust or correct, as needed, the way their experience was put into words. Indeed, the person has direct access to their own experience, so they are the best able to know what they are experiencing, feeling and thinking.

To promote empathetic exchanges, it is also important to use different forms of reformulation during the conversation. These can also be supplemented by open questions to encourage exploration of the experience of the person being listened to *(e.g., what do you feel? what do you think? what would you need?).* This communication, based on empathetic understanding, empathetic reformulations and open questions, is also called **active listening**.

**Table 13. S1.2.: Summary of all the mental and verbal actions performed during empathetic communication**

| Phases of empathetic communication | Mental and verbal actions |
|---|---|
| 1. Empathetic understanding and silent listening | **1. Focusing attention on the internal experience that the other person is having** (thoughts, emotions, desires, impressions/sensations): total availability to the other person, decentring oneself (away from one's own thoughts, emotions, desires, etc.)<br>**2. Fully embracing the internal experience that the other person is having** (thoughts, emotions, desires, impressions/sensations): interest, openness, non-judgement of the other person's experience<br>**3. Understanding the internal experience that the other person is having** (thoughts, emotions, desires, impressions/sensations): **silent listening** and a few words and phrases of support (yes… I understand… I'm listening, etc.) |
| 2. Empathetic reformulation and active listening | **4. Reformulating empathetic understanding in different forms**:<br>- empathetic reformulation focused on the crux of the internal experience<br>- empathetic reformulation focused on the emotion<br>- empathetic reformulation focused on needs<br>- Empathetic reformulation focused on the message: 'echo' and 'synonyms'<br>and **active listening**: different reformulations and open questions (what do you feel? what do you think about it? what would you need?, etc.) |

*Empathy shown by adults (in an educational role) generates two main beneficial effects:*

- **The child's openness to their own internal experience (or self-empathy):** having an empathetic adult accept, embrace, listen to and frame their internal experience allows the child to access and accept their own internal states (their **inner Self**), which reduces **experiential avoidance**, promotes **experiential acceptance** (*see C1.1 and C1.2*) and strengthens the child's cognitive and emotional skills.
- **The ability to provide an adequate response to the child's needs and problems**: the adequacy of the adult's response to the child's needs depends largely on the adult's empathetic abilities. In fact, the adult needs to be able to perceive and understand the child's internal experience in order to be able to provide a solution that can satisfy and appease their needs (psychological and physiological). This primordial **hetero-regulation** based on the adult's empathy (or co-regulation) will also allow the child to develop, in the long term, their own capacities for emotional and behavioural self-regulation.

*Communicating empathetically generates two main beneficial effects:*

- **Satisfaction of the need for recognition and self-affirmation (see psychological needs C1.3):** a person who is listened to empathetically feels understood, and accepted in what they are experiencing and in who they are; this allows them to satisfy an essential psychological need and strengthen their self-esteem.
- **Quality relationships:** the ability to understand the other person's experience promotes better adaptation in the relationship, while recognising the other person's distress encourages altruism and cooperation. Empathy plays an essential role in human interactions; it constitutes a foundation of relational quality and a means to prevent violent behaviours.

*Communicating empathetically relies on two conditions:*

- **Accepting one's own internal experience (or self-empathy):** if we cannot embrace and understand our own internal experiences (by developing our skills of full attention (*see C1.6*) and emotional identification (*see E1.2*)), we will encounter significant difficulties in understanding those of others [118].
- **Adults who communicate empathetically:** a child's capacity for empathy only grows and develops if those around them communicate empathetically and benevolently [118].

## Key takeaways (S1.2)

**Conceptual definition:** **Communicating empathetically** refers to "the ability to perceive and understand the experience of the other (their emotions, their point of view, their needs, etc.) and to know how to put this into words in an appropriate manner" [1].

**Operational definition:** **Communicating empathetically relies on three psychological knowledge items and practical skills:**

**1. Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication:** unlike for habitual forms of communication, a person who wants to listen empathetically must be able to decentre themselves (from their representations, emotions, desires, etc.) in order to focus all their attention on the internal experience of the person being listened to. Without seeking to change or interpret the other person's experience, this entails trying to feel and grasp it in order to arrive at an understanding of their own thoughts, emotions, needs and feelings as they are experiencing them (making a clear distinction between the other person's feelings and one's own). Finally, it involves being able to verbalise this empathetic understanding of the other person's experience (even if we disagree with the content experienced and expressed).

**2. Listening empathetically (empathetic understanding and silent listening)**: this means redirecting all one's attention towards the person being listened to and making oneself totally available and open in order to perceive and grasp the internal experience as it is lived by the other. This empathetic understanding involves a benevolent acceptance of the other's experience, silent listening, and open questions focused on the other's experience (such as: do you want to tell me what is happening for you? what are you feeling?, etc.).

**3. Speaking empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening):** finally, the listener must be able to verbalise their empathetic understanding in the most appropriate and open way possible. This verbalisation of the experience of the other can be based on different forms of empathetic reformulations depending on the needs of the communication situation: reformulations focused on the crux of the experience of the other, focused on emotion, focused on needs or focused on the message. These empathetic reformulations can be supplemented by open questions (e.g., what do you want? what would you need?, etc.), this is called active listening.

**Main effects:** **Communicating empathetically enables:**

**4. Satisfaction of the need for recognition and self-affirmation** *(see the psychological needs in cognitive skill C1.3)***:** a person who is listened to empathetically feels understood, and accepted in what they are experiencing and in who they are; this allows them to satisfy an essential psychological need and strengthen their self-esteem.

**5. Quality relationships:** the ability to understand the other person's experience promotes better adaptation in the relationship, while recognising the other person's distress encourages altruism and cooperation. Empathy plays an essential role in human interactions; it constitutes a foundation of relational quality and a means to prevent violent behaviours.

**Main prerequisites: Communicating empathetically requires:**

**- Accepting one's own in ternal experience (or self-empathy):** if we cannot embrace and understand our own internal experiences (by developing our skills of full attention (*see C1.6*) and emotional identification (*see emotional skill E1.2*)), we encounter significant difficulties in understanding those of others [105].

**- Having learned from empathetic communication:** a child's capacity for empathy only grows and develops if those around them communicate empathetically and benevolently [105].

# Examples of activities to develop the PSS
## S1.2 Communicating empathetically

## Empathetic listening in practice

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson MO, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** □ Children; □ Teenagers; ⊠ Adults
**Activity type :** ⊠ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.2 Communicating empathetically
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication
⊠ Knowing how to listen empathetically (empathetic understanding and silent listening)
⊠ Knowing how to speak empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening)
**Format:** ⊠ Individual; □ Group

"When a child comes to talk to you, try to listen to them empathetically:

1. Listen to them in silence for about a minute without interrupting them: concentrate fully on what they are saying and experiencing (from their point of view):
   - What are their emotions?
   - How do they see things?
   - What are they trying to express?, etc.

2. Reflect back what they are experiencing in a few simple words and let them adjust this as needed: E.g. "You're angry because Hugo spoke to you rudely"; "You couldn't revise because you didn't go home."

3. Use open-ended questions to facilitate their expression: For example, "What do you think? What happened? What would you like to do?"

# Emotions in a situation

*(Extract from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson MO, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.2 Communicating empathetically
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication
⊠ Knowing how to listen empathetically (empathetic understanding and silent listening)
□ Knowing how to speak empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** Table showing the 9 situations

"Here are nine situations that can trigger emotions. Read each one, then try to imagine the emotion that the person in the story might be feeling.

You can use the table of emotions to help you (see skill E1.1)".

| Situation | Possible emotion |
|---|---|
| *Story 1 (Noah): "I'm at home all alone. I don't know when mum will get back. I hear a noise and I don't know what it is."* | *Can you guess how Noah is feeling?* ..... |
| *Story 2 (Jade): "I used to find maths difficult, but now the neighbour comes to help me go over my lessons. I used to be very nervous about tests, but not anymore. Actually, now I enjoy doing tests so I can show myself everything I've learned."* | *Can you guess how Jade is feeling?* ..... |
| *Story 3 (Zoe): "I was supposed to go to a gymnastics competition today. I've been training on the beam for three months! But yesterday I fell off my bike and hurt my leg. I'm going to miss the competition!* | *Can you guess how Zoe is feeling?* ..... |
| *Story 4 (Nino): "I just moved to a new area. I went for a bike ride to make some friends. I was about to stop to talk to some children of my age when I hit a stone and fell off my bike."* | *Can you guess how Nino is feeling?* ..... |
| *Story 5 (Ines): "In the past, my parents and I used to argue a lot, but we went to group workshops to learn to get along better. Now, we do lots of things together, and we get along much better.* | *Can you guess how Ines is feeling?* ..... |
| *Story 6 (Maya): "I live with my mum. Sometimes, I go to my dad's house at the weekend. I miss him a lot because I don't see him often. I was supposed to see him last weekend, but he couldn't come and get me."* | *Can you guess how Maya is feeling?* ..... |
| *Story 7 (Elias): "My best friend's name is Diego. We have a good laugh together. But the best part is that I can be myself with him. If I'm sad or angry, I can tell him and he listens to me."* | *Can you guess how Elias is feeling?* ..... |
| *Story 8 (Emma): "My dad was away on a trip for several days. It was just the two of us, mum and me, at home. I'm scared at night when my dad isn't there. I hear lots of little noises in the house and I don't know what they are. My dad came back and now I can sleep peacefully at night."* | *Can you guess how Emma has been feeling since her dad came back?* ..... |
| *Story 9 (Paco): "I just got a little brother. I like him, but he cries a lot and he always has to be picked up. My parents take care of him all the time, and I feel like they're not paying attention to me anymore.* | *Can you guess how Paco is feeling?* ..... |

# Empathy in action

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

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.2 Communicating empathetically
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication
⊠ Knowing how to listen empathetically (empathetic understanding and silent listening)
⊠ Knowing how to speak empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

## Activity 2: Empathy in action

SOCIAL SKILL → Empathetic listening skills

### Instructions

**The facilitator explains what active listening is to the pupils:**
"It involves putting yourself in the other person's shoes to try to understand what they are experiencing. Then, we sum up the important things we've learned from their story, so they feel that we have understood."

### Equipment

None

**Step 1: In pairs**

**The facilitator asks the pupils to get into pairs. Then, they give them the following instruction:**

"One of you will tell the other about an unpleasant experience you had at school. The listener will try to put themselves in the place of the person telling the story, in order to understand what they felt. Next, the student who is listening will summarise the important points they have understood, so that the pupil who told the story feels understood."

### Debriefing

The facilitator asks the pupils the following questions:

- How did you know that your classmate was listening to you with interest and understood you?
- How did you make your classmate understand that you were listening attentively and that you understood them?

The facilitator guides the students in identifying the points that enable active listening. The listener can express their attention in different ways:

- through a gaze
- through gestures and facial expressions
- through a reformulation
- through questions

The facilitator gives a demonstration to the whole group, so that the pupils can better grasp the key elements of 'active listening'. A pupil recounts an unpleasant situation and the facilitator responds to them.

**Step 2: In pairs**

Next, the facilitator asks the pupils to split up into pairs again. One student recounts an unpleasant experience while the other listens, trying to apply the key elements of active listening identified previously.

## Debriefing

- How did you feel when you were listened to?
- When can active listening be useful?

# Facilitating a space for speaking and empathetic listening (of the PSS-Prodas type)

*(Adapted from Lamboy B, Shankland R & Williamson M, 2021 [47])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.2 Communicating empathetically
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication
⊠ Knowing how to listen empathetically (empathetic understanding and silent listening)
⊠ Knowing how to speak empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** a talking stick (or an object serving this purpose)

*"**Duration**: approximately 45 minutes (once a week) or 20 minutes (several times a week)*

## What is a space for speaking (and empathetic listening)?

**The space for speaking and listening** is a group communication method. It is a structured group time for speaking, where everyone is free to share a personal experience related to an everyday topic. During this time for speaking, each person learns to express themselves personally (using 'I' messages) and to listen to the other (empathetically).

By participating in the speaking space, both the children and the facilitator experience authenticity, benevolence, self-discovery and discovery of others, and positive and empathetic communication. The space for speaking is not a time for discussion, decision-making, or problem-solving; it is a time for sharing experiences from person to person. The space for speaking and listening is the main activity of the Affective and Social Development Programme **(Prodas).**

It was developed by Geraldine Ball (teacher and professor of educational sciences), Harold Bessell (psychologist) and Uvaldo Palomares (educational psychologist) in the seventies in the US. Since then, it has been translated and adapted in the French-speaking world by Jacques Lalanne and Christian Bokiau (co-authors of this exercise). It has since been deployed in several French regions; and many schools use it in their daily classes.

## Outline of the space for speaking and empathetic listening

**Start-up** *(5 to 10 minutes)*

**Return to calm** *(2 to 3 minutes)***:** to encourage a return to calm and self-reflection, you can offer the children: listening to gentle music, a breathing exercise, a moment of relaxation, a moment of full attention (see PSS worksheet).

**Introduction to the speaking and listening space** *(2 to 4 minutes)*:

- *Present (or reiterate) the objectives of the speaking and listening space*

- getting to knowing oneself (and others) better
- learning to share one's personal experience
- learning to listen to others (empathetically)
- developing genuine and benevolent relationships, etc.

- *Recall the rules of the speaking and listening space*

- each person speaks in turn, when they have the talking stick
- each person recounts a personal experience that actually happened to them, using 'I' statements: *"I experienced this, I did this, I saw this, I felt this, etc."*
- each person is free to express themselves (or to remain silent)
- each person listens to the person speaking, without interrupting them, etc.

**Presentation of today's topic** *(2 to 3 minutes)*:

- The facilitator briefly describes the topic of the day. For example, '*a moment of joy during the summer holidays*'.
- The facilitator speaks first in order to 'break the ice' and illustrate the topic with a personal example.
  In 2 or 3 minutes, they give a factual description of a real experience related to the topic. *For example, 'during the summer holidays, I remember one Wednesday afternoon when it was raining, my 2 children and I made pancakes and we played the game Mille Bornes. It was the first time my youngest child had played this game. He was happy to play with 'the grown-ups'. This time spent playing as a family made me very happy. Then, the eldest made pancakes all by himself. I was pleased during this family time and at seeing that my children had grown up...'*
- The facilitator invites each child to take a moment (in silence) to recall a real-life experience related to the day's topic that they would like to share with the group.

**Expression** *(20 to 30 minutes)*

- Invite the children who wish to do so to take turns holding the stick to recount an experience related to the topic of the day.
- Each person tells their own story without reacting to what the other has said.
- If necessary, remind everyone of the topic, the purpose of the circle and the rules.

**Integration** *(5 to 15 minutes)*

- Invite the children to take some time (in silence) to
  - remember what was said
  - to feel how they feel now after sharing their experiences
- Invite the children to express what they experienced during the time for expression: *Example: How did you experience this time for expression? How did you feel? Were some things easier than others? More difficult? Etc.*
- Invite the children to put the specific nature of this time for expression into words: *Example: How was this experience different from what you usually do?*
- Invite the children to put the usefulness of this time for expression into words: *Example: What can you take away from this experience? How can I use what I have experienced?*

It is recommended that you use a signal or symbol **to close the speaking and listening space,** to denote the end of the time for sharing experiences and the transition to another activity (e.g., a bell, etc.).

## Facilitator's position

- **To facilitate a space for speaking and empathetic listening, the facilitator relies primarily on effective, positive and empathetic communication**
- **The facilitator participates as a person in the space for speaking and listening**
- **In a space for speaking and listening, speaking is personal but not therapeutic**

## Possible topics to suggest

**Topic 1: Emotions**

"I felt worried when..."

"I felt sad when..."

"I had a moment of joy..."

"I was annoyed, but I managed to calm down..."

**Topic 2: Thoughts**

"At one point, I didn't understand something..."

"I started doubting myself when..."

**Topic 3: Relationships**

"One day, I had an argument..."

"One day, I had a nice time with someone..."

"One day, I asked someone for help..."

# Rituals of empathy

*(Extract from Reynaud L., 2021 [80])*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; □ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type:** □ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.2 Communicating empathetically
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
⊠ Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication
□ Knowing how to listen empathetically (empathetic understanding and silent listening)
□ Knowing how to speak empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening)
**Format**: □ Individual; ⊠ Group

## 2 | Rituals of empathy

To listen to others properly, you need to understand them and also be able to put yourself in their shoes. This is what we call empathy. Young children are naturally empathetic on an emotional level, so it is appropriate here, through these rituals, to continue to develop this capacity. And of course, possessing a skill does not mean being competent in it. We must practice it.

Aims

- Developing empathy.
- Developing empathetic listening.

### A | The glasses of empathy

Ages 4-6 years, 5 minutes, cardboard, scissors, coloured tracing paper, sticky tape.

You can surprise and arouse the children's curiosity by wearing a funny pair of glasses that you have made in advance. Glasses with different coloured plastic sheets instead of lenses, yellow and blue to start with, for example. Observe the pupils' reactions and invite them to share their remarks and feelings: "*The glasses are strange; you must see everything in yellow and blue, not like us, not in real colours.*" Next, show another pair of glasses with one red lens and another green lens. Invite a child to wear them and describe what they see, how they can see and how they feel. Allow the children to react freely and invite them to reflect.

"Each of us sees the world around us differently depending on our mood, the emotions we are feeling that day, what is happening at home, at school, etc. There is no right or wrong way to do or see something: there are many different ways that we must respect. Understanding that each person can see and feel things differently depending on the pair of glasses they are wearing means having the strength of empathy. This is knowing that listening to the other person means respecting them, even if they do not see or feel the same thing as us. It means imagining what they might feel in certain situations by trying to put yourself in their shoes, by putting their glasses on. The strength of empathy lies in the ability to understand what our peers are feeling, and to take care of them and their emotions.
This is not always easy, for children as well as adults. But, we can all develop this strength and learn to be empathetic. How? This is what we are going to learn together. By being attentive to others, to what they may feel, think, to their emotions, their joy, their anger, their success, etc. We are going to learn to change our perspective, to change our glasses."

It is important to give the children examples so that they understand properly.

> **Examples:** "That's what you feel and think [pair of blue and yellow glasses]. Now, try another pair of glasses [red and green] to put yourself in your classmate's shoes. Do you see and feel the same thing?"
> "Clara has lost her toy, or someone took Clara's toy while she was still playing with it. How might she be feeling?"
> "What might Max feel when he falls over?" And you, how do you feel when you see someone fall over?"

The glasses should be ready and available to be used daily to have fun seeing things differently and/or experiencing everyday situations from another point of view.
You can organise a workshop to make glasses with different coloured lenses, either before or after the activity.

## Extension

- **Instead of... I... Age 5-6 years, 5 minutes]**

Each week, for example, list small everyday scenarios that you have observed and that are situations that can be reused to develop students' empathy. The remarks are anonymous and may be slightly modified and adapted if necessary to avoid targeting any children and to free up the discussion.

**Examples of situations:**
- A child spent a lot of time building a tall tower from blocks.
- Another one arrived and knocked their tower over.
- A child was alone during the break. They didn't play with anyone.
- The teacher saw their pupils playing nicely together.
- A child found their cuddly toy with the help of a classmate.
- The teacher saw the classroom in a complete mess.

For each situation, ask the pupils to imagine each others' emotions, thoughts and feelings. What would their feelings have been if they had been in the place of that classmate or the teacher?
The glasses of empathy can of course be used.

## Group discussion spaces: everyday opportunities to practice empathetic listening

*(Proposed by Promotion Santé Auvergne Rhône-Alpes – Soizic Brunet)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children; ⊠ Teenagers; □ Adults
**Activity type :** ⊠ Formal ⊠ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** S1.2 Communicating empathetically
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing the characteristics of empathetic communication
⊠ Knowing how to listen empathetically (empathetic understanding and silent listening)
⊠ Knowing how to speak empathetically (empathetic reformulation and active listening)
**Format:** □ Individual; ⊠ Group

"Any allocation of time for group discussion of a common subject (project, problem, operating framework, debate of ideas, etc.) can promote the mobilisation of empathetic communication (listening, attention to the other, reformulation, questions).

For this to happen, adults must provide and maintain a clear, familiar and stable framework. Among other things, this framework ensures acceptance of and respect for points of view, sharing who gets to speak, and the security needed to speak, debate and allow ideas to emerge. These moments need to be repeated and be regular so as to practice.

Pupil councils in classrooms are one example.

Peer mediation projects and mechanisms also promote the regular use of empathetic listening skills.

For them to function properly, it is essential that they are supported in the long term by a team of adults, who are committed beyond the simple implementation of these mechanisms. The adults take over the reins when necessary and help the young people to discern the conditions for implementing these approaches.

The example given by the adult is also valuable in facilitating learning by imitation and ensuring consistency: mobilising one's empathetic listening with the young people and other adults in the setting. Just as with children, group discussions of common subjects and peer mediation allow for the development of empathetic listening skills.

# ***Social skill 3***

## Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)

**Social bonds** are the set of affective relationships between individuals [124]. They form an integral part of human existence and start developing from the earliest moments of life. Newborns need the reassuring presence of an adult to ensure their physical survival, as well as their emotional and affective development. Throughout life, social bonds occupy an essential place in the physical survival of the person as well as in their psychosocial development, playing a determining role in the satisfaction of physical and psychological needs (and more specifically, emotional and relational needs, see cognitive skill C1.3). An absence of social bonds can have physical and psychological repercussions [125, 126] and can even have a negative effect on life expectancy [127].

Social bonds are numerous and diverse in type; they can vary according to their nature and form depending on the context, distance and time, but also according to their structure, the relationship of places, the symmetry of the relationship and the balance of the relationship [109].

**Developing social bonds** involves participating in repeated and sustained interactions between at least two people. During these interactions, a person can act towards others, or be the recipient of actions carried out by others. These bonds are built through observation and experience of social relations, where each person exercises their own motivations and needs [128]. They rely on language, and verbal and non-verbal communication. Although communication and relationships are closely linked, they are not the same" [109]. While communication refers to the dynamic dimension of interaction, "the notion of relationship designates the form and nature of the bond that unites two or more people: thus we speak of family, professional, friend, neighbourhood, etc. relationships. It also implies a relative stability: all the relationships mentioned have a certain duration over time and are distinguished from ephemeral contacts where the bond does not continue after the encounter" [109].

The concept of social bonds highlights the process of lasting relationships between people, but does not allow us to characterise the nature of the relationship. In fact, social bonds can generate effects that are favourable to the development of the person (referring to the processes of **socialisation** and **social adaptation**) or unfavourable for individuals and society (in connection with **antisocial behaviours** and processes of exclusion, domination, radicalisation and **social maladaptation**) [46]. Bonds and behaviours are considered **prosocial** when they allow quality social interactions and relationships to be developed [129]. Thus, **prosocial behaviour** is voluntary behaviour that has a beneficial effect on others, whether on an individual, societal, human or broader scale of all living things [130]. These favourable behaviours and relational patterns can be developed and practiced at all ages of life.

**Developing prosocial bonds and behaviours** relies on the ability to initiate and develop quality relationships, to know the different prosocial behaviours, to implement prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family, and to be able to express appreciation (or gratitude).

## 1. Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships

Developing quality relationships involves, first and foremost, **knowing how to initiate interactions, and being able to build cordial and respectful exchanges**. For this, different skills must be mobilised, including: knowing how to introduce oneself, to engage in dialogue by listening and asking questions, to hold a conversation between two people and in a group, to show interest in others and knowing how to demonstrate one's interest [47]. Communication skills: 'communicating effectively and positively' (*see social skill S1.1*) and 'communicating empathetically' (*see social skill S1.2*) play a crucial role in developing quality relationships.

It is also important to build **long-term relationships, allowing each person's emotional and relational needs to be met**, particularly the needs for affection and love (*see cognitive skill C1.3*). By recognising these psychological needs as being common to all and by paying attention to the qualities and skills of others as well as oneself, it is possible to accept differences, to form relationships with people who are 'different', and to develop positive and lasting friendships with a diverse range of people [1, 131].

Developing quality relationships also involves knowing how **to interact appropriately in different social situations**. Adjusting and adapting one's relational behaviours based on the context entails observing the behaviours of others, considering social hierarchies and norms, and navigating within them, choosing appropriate communication methods to convey messages, putting one's own interests to the fore or aside, and managing to do all this within a variety of relationships [128]. Indeed, the human brain does not simply respond to a social stimulus in an invariable way; it categorises, interprets and evaluates incoming stimuli in relation to the individual's current states and objectives, and integrates prior knowledge and predispositions [128]. These different stages call for elaborate cognitive processes that develop into adolescence, such as gaining the perspective of others or the mechanisms of empathy (*see skill S1.2).* Therefore, each interaction requires a granular analysis of the situations and their context: attention to people and the environment, understanding of contextual clues, planning and reasoning on the 'pros and cons', etc [132].

## 2. Knowing the different prosocial behaviours

"**Prosocial behaviours** refer to attitudes and actions that (are) favourable to others and that provide them with assistance" [1]. They can vary depending on the nature of the actions carried out and the type of assistance required. In fact, there are a multitude of ways to act for the benefit of an individual or a group of individuals through small daily gestures or more exceptional actions. These different types of prosocial behaviour are found in both children and adults, in daily routines, and in disaster or health crisis situations [133].

**Prosocial behaviours occur in response to the needs of others** [134]. Therefore, they rely on understanding the internal states of others. They involve, through empathy and knowledge of needs, being able to perceive and understand the physical and psychological needs of the people to whom one wishes to provide assistance (s*ee cognitive skill C1.3 for psychological needs and social skill S1.2 for empathy*).

Responses to the various physical and psychological needs can be of different kinds [134]. We can distinguish between **prosocial behaviours of a material nature** (giving, sharing, etc.) **and prosocial behaviours of an emotional or psychological nature** (comfort, emotional support, social support, etc.).

It is also interesting to differentiate between **prosocial behaviours of an altruistic nature**, which involve a cost for the person executing them, **and prosocial behaviours of a cooperative and collaborative nature (mutual aid, sharing)**, which strive for a common goal and benefit both the recipient and the actor. These reciprocal interactions, which are beneficial to each party, tend to encourage a virtuous circle leading to greater prosociality [135, 136].

## 3. Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends, and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)

Research shows that empathetic and altruistic behaviours are used more greatly within one's own social group [137]. However, **coming to the aid of people who are more socially isolated can be facilitated by a sense of shared humanity**. The latter can refer to the idea of proximity and a sharing of traits common to all humans [138] and, in concrete terms, to the awareness that everyone shares physical and psychological needs, and that these require an adequate response in order to be satisfied and to ensure each person's survival and balance. Beyond the connection with humanity, connection with nature also plays a beneficial role in prosocial action, through a positive influence on pro-environmental behaviours [139]. In short, adopting a vision that takes into account the physical and psychological needs common to oneself and others, and that encompasses humanity and living things more broadly, encourages prosocial behaviours and thus better individual and collective wellbeing.

**This consideration of the physical and psychological needs of others beyond one's close family and friends can be facilitated by strengthening the feeling of compassion.** It is possible to develop compassion for one's close family and friends, but also for people in more distant social circles, and even strangers and all living things [140]. Compassion is comprised of five distinct parts, namely recognition of the suffering of others, the understanding that human suffering is a universal feeling, a feeling of concern for the person who is suffering, the ability to tolerate uncomfortable feelings and the motivation to act to lessen the suffering of another person [141]. Training in compassion helps to increase the level of mutual support provided to people outside one's close family and friends, and to become part of a positive dynamic at the level of society [140]. Research has documented the beneficial effects of practices aimed at developing compassion in particular, as evidenced by Luberto's meta-analysis [142].

**In practical terms, it is possible to promote prosocial behaviours** by listening to the needs of others and encouraging the search for appropriate assistance. Volunteer and mutual aid actions can be supported from a young age in order to build the foundations of a prosocial 'routine' and support the development of a personal identity that includes prosociality and predisposes one to act in a prosocial manner [143, 144].

**The feeling and expression of appreciation (or gratitude) also promotes prosocial behaviours**. When we become aware that a person has favourable behaviours and intentions towards us, we can experience a feeling of appreciation (or gratitude). This increased awareness tends to increase prosocial behaviours both in the person expressing gratitude and in the person receiving the expression of this appreciation [26, 145]. Thus, by expressing their mutual appreciation, individuals are more inclined to adopt cooperative and altruistic behaviours. This positive influence is not limited to those directly involved in the interaction, as the protagonists also tend to be more altruistic towards other people who were not involved in that initial interaction. We then observe an increase in mutual aid behaviours, fostering a favourable and supportive social climate. Thus, expressing gratitude appears to be a behaviour that serves prosociality. Developing the ability to express appreciation to others increases a person's confidence, their sense of social connection and their wellbeing by allowing them to feel recognised, considered and socially useful, and this strengthens solidarity [26, 145]. There are different ways to encourage the expression of gratitude, through writing a letter for example, or through a shared medium such as a gratitude board on which everyone can express their appreciation towards others.

## Beneficial effects

*Social bonds and prosocial behaviours generate two main beneficial effects:*

- **The satisfaction of emotional and relational needs**: social bonds enable us to feel a sense of belonging, which promotes psychological balance and helps to give meaning to life [125]. Giving meaning to one's life also allows one to feel greater self-confidence and to show optimism on a daily basis [146].
- **Mental and physical wellbeing: prosocial behaviours (both emitted and received)** promote the satisfaction of needs, increase wellbeing and life satisfaction, and reduce stress [147-150]. They constitute a factor in maintaining good physical and mental health in adulthood and in increasing life expectancy [144, 151].

*Developing social bonds and implementing prosocial behaviours require two conditions:*

- **An understanding of the needs of the other (*see cognitive skill C1.3*), and emotional (*see emotional skill E2.2*) and behavioural (*C2.2*) regulation in order to provide an appropriate response:** when faced with another person, and especially in a situation of distress, it can be difficult to disentangle one's own emotions from the suffering of the person in front of one. However, it is important to be able to overcome this automatic reaction, called **emotional contagion**, in order to behave effectively in the interaction, whether to provide emotional or material support. Regulating one's emotions allows one to take better account of everyone's needs in a social situation, and to find a balance with one's own desires and goals, particularly in situations of cooperation or resource sharing [152].
- **Attention to the context:** to be effective, actions aimed at connecting with others, whether in the context of mutual aid, comfort, sharing, cooperation or simple conversation, require that the context be taken into account. Attention to and consideration of the context, i.e. of the people involved (their needs, emotions and representations) and of the actions taking place in the background or in parallel, are prerequisites for establishing an effective and quality interaction. In this respect, attention skills (*see cognitive skill C1.6*) and empathetic understanding skills (*see social skill S1.2*) are important. It is important to be able to shift one's attention from one element of the context to another in order to take the whole of a scenario into account and to act accordingly, especially in a new or unfamiliar environment [153]. Similarly, it is also necessary to understand the (emotional and cognitive) experience of the people present. Next, one needs to be able to select and focus on the relevant elements of a scenario, particularly in the case of providing assistance to others, and to keep one's attention on those elements that are important to seeing one's action through [154].

## Key takeaways (S1.3)

**Conceptual definition:** **Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours** means "knowing how to initiate relationships, conversing in a friendly way by listening and asking questions, showing interest, getting along with others and being able to form friendships (... as well as), being able to adopt **prosocial behaviours**, i.e. attitudes and actions that are favourable to others and that provide them with assistance (cooperation, behaviours of mutual aid, collaboration, social engagement, etc.). (This skill) involves the ability to accept others and recognise their qualities, regardless of their specific nature (different culture, disability, etc" [1].

**Operational definition:** **Three psychological knowledge items and practical skills** enable the **development of bonds and prosocial behaviours**:

**1. Knowing how to initiate relationships and develop quality relationships** implies knowing how to start up interactions and being able to build cordial and respectful conversations, managing to build long-term relationships that satisfy each person's emotional and relational needs, particularly the needs for affection and love (*see C1.3*), and interacting appropriately in different social situations.

**2. Knowing the different prosocial behaviours,** i.e. the attitudes and actions that are favourable to others and which provide them with assistance by responding to their physical and psychological needs (*see C1.3*): material prosocial behaviours (giving, sharing, etc.) and emotional or psychological prosocial behaviours (comfort, emotional support, social support, etc.); altruistic prosocial behaviours (involving a cost for the actor), and cooperative and collaborative prosocial behaviours (mutual aid, sharing) which strive for a common goal and benefit both the recipient and the actor.

**3. Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)** by fostering a sense of common humanity through becoming aware of the physical and psychological needs that one shares with others, by supporting a sense of compassion, by developing the feeling and expression of gratitude and by encouraging acts of mutual aid from a young age.

**Main effects:** **Social bonds and prosocial behaviours generate two main beneficial effects:**

**- The satisfaction of emotional and relational needs**: social bonds enable us to feel a sense of belonging, which promotes psychological balance and helps to give meaning to life. Giving meaning to one's life also allows one to feel greater self-confidence and to show optimism on a daily basis.

**- Mental and physical wellbeing: prosocial behaviours (both emitted and received)** promote the satisfaction of needs, increase wellbeing and life satisfaction, and reduce stress [132-135]. They constitute a factor in maintaining good physical and mental health in adulthood and in increasing life expectancy [129, 136].

## Key takeaways (S1.3) (continued)

**Main conditions: Developing social bonds and implementing prosocial behaviours requires:**

**- An understanding of the needs of the other (*see C13.2*), and emotional (*see E2.2*) and behavioural (*C2.2*) regulation to order to provide an appropriate response:** when faced with another person, and especially in a situation of distress, it can be difficult to disentangle one's own emotions from the suffering of the person in front of you. However, it is important to be able to overcome this automatic reaction, called emotional contagion, in order to behave effectively in the interaction, whether to provide emotional or material support. Regulating one's emotions allows one to take better account of everyone's needs in a social situation, and to find a balance with one's own desires and goals, particularly in situations of cooperation or resource sharing [137].

**- Attention to the context:** to be effective, actions aimed at connecting with others, whether in the context of mutual aid, comfort, sharing, cooperation or simple conversation, require that the context be taken into account.

Attention to and consideration of the context, i.e. of the people involved (their needs, emotions and representations) and of the actions taking place in the background or in parallel, are prerequisites for establishing an effective and quality interaction. In this respect, attentional (*see C1.6*) and empathetic understanding (*S1.2*) skills are important. It is important to be able to shift one's attention from one element of the context to another in order to take the whole of a scenario into account and to act accordingly, especially in a new or unfamiliar environment [138]. Similarly, it is also necessary to understand the (emotional and cognitive) experience of the people present. Next, one needs to be able to select and focus on the relevant elements of a scenario, particularly in the case of providing assistance to others, and to keep one's attention on those elements that are important to seeing one's action through [139].

# Examples of activities to develop the PSS

## S1.3 Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours

## 'Find someone who'

*(Extract from the 'Le Voyage des Toimoinous, grandir et vivre ensemble' [The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together] programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Psychosocial Skills Schoolbag)*

**Audience:** ☒ Children; □ Young people; □ Adults

**Activity type:** ☒ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

☒ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships

□ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours

□ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)

**Format:** □ Individual; ☒ Group

**Equipment:** Enough space to move around and a 'Find someone who' grid

### Find someone who

TOOLS

**Duration**

10 to 20 mins.

**Equipment**

- Enough space for the participants to move around.
- 'Find someone who' grid (adapted where appropriate).

**Reminder of the objectives**

- going to meet the other,
- daring to ask the other questions in order to obtain information about them,
- formalising the similarities and differences between the children in the group,
- overcoming the apprehension that exists in reality when making contact with another person (game format).

**Outline and instructions**

Give out the 'Find someone who' grid to each of the participants (to be adapted according to age and the group).

- Instructions: Fill in the grid as quickly as possible by writing the first name of one person from the group in each of the boxes. Warning: you need to go up to others to ask them questions because you cannot answer at random and you cannot write down a person's name without their consent.

Add the following instructions based on the time available:

- The game is over when someone has filled a whole line with different first names (bingo principle).
- The game is over when someone has filled all the squares of the grid with different first names.
- The game is over when everyone has filled their grid with different first names.

Awareness/Analysis

- Together with the participants compile a list of the communication methods they used during the exercise: approaching the other person, moving towards them, etc. Listening with your ears, your body, etc. Looking at each other, etc. Speaking to ask, to answer, etc.
- List the barriers to communication identified.

**Strengths**

- Enables self-reflection and getting to know yourself better
- Enables one to get to know others
- Enables one to take an interest in the characteristics of the other

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Likes to go camping | Can go cross-eyed | Has their birthday next month | Has an older brother or sister |
| Went to another country this year |  | | Loves mathematics |
| Has a games console | | | Does dancing |
| Went to the cinema during the last school holiday | Is left-handed | Has been sailing before | Has been to a concert before |

# The star of resemblances

*(Extract from the Prodas Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)*

**Audience:** □ Children ⊠ Young people ⊠ Adults

**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

⊠ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships

□ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours

□ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)

**Format:** □ Individual ⊠ Group

**Equipment:** Sheets of white paper and coloured felt-tip pens

## "Aims

To be aware of our own individual nature and that of others
To identify what we have in common
To promote social bonds

## Outline

Ask the participants to think about what is interesting or important to find out about someone you are meeting for the first time. Invite them to name various categories of information: name, age, sex, nationality, marital status, (...) work/studies, musical tastes, sports activities, general information about what the person likes/dislikes, etc.

Next, explain to the participants that they are going to have to find out what they have in common. Give out the pieces of paper and felt-tip pens (if possible, give a different coloured felt-tip to each person) and explain to them that the first step is to represent their identity in the form of a star: by writing one aspect of their personality on each tip of the star's points. Invite them to identify 8 to 10 major aspects of their identity and to draw their personal star.

Next, ask the participants to move around and compare their stars with others (allow approximately 15 minutes for this part of the activity). If they find a person whose identity has a similar aspect, a participant writes that person's name next to the point of their own star.

Then, bring the group back together and invite them to talk about their individuality. You can ask them:
*"- Was it difficult to work out the fundamental aspects of your personality?*
*- Do you have certain aspects of your personality in common with other people?*
*- Conversely, do you have any aspects that are unique?*
*- Were some of you surprised when comparing your stars?*
*- Did you have more, or fewer, things in common than you expected?"*

# The tray game

*(Extract from the Prodas Programme, Family Planning, www.prodas.fr)*

**Audience:** ☐ Children ☒ Young people ☒ Adults

**Activity type:** ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

☒ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships

☐ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours

☐ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)

**Format:** ☐ Individual ☒ Group

**"Step 1**: The group stands in a circle. The facilitator suggests that the group walk calmly around the room, making sure to occupy the space evenly and thus maintain the balance of the imaginary tray on which everyone imagines they are walking. Next, they will offer difference sentences which the participants can use to form small groups. The facilitator could, for example, introduce the session as follows: *"Today, I'm going to make a few suggestions that will let us meet and get to know each other better*."

**Step 2**: The participants regroup as the suggestions are made, in the way that they want. Between each group formation exercise, the facilitator takes the time to question each group so that they can present their group and say what factors allowed them to make a group. The first question is to the minority group(s) in terms of numbers. Some of the groups that the participants will make will be based solely on observing others and themselves, and others will require them to communicate in order to be able to group together (for example for groups by place of birth). All of the grouping suggestions must allow the participants to join a group. For example, in terms of the colour of an item of clothing, all shades of the same colour can be accepted in the same group. After each regrouping and the presentation time for each group, everyone starts walking around again while waiting for the next suggestion.

**Examples of reasons for forming a group**: "*Now, you can group yourselves by: - The colour of your t-shirt, jumper, etc. - The colour of your hair, or its length, etc. - People who like to sing, or dance, etc. - The style or colour of your shoes - What you like to eat for breakfast - Your first names - Whether you have brothers, sisters, or whether you are an only child - Your current favourite game - Your place of birth - A dream you have and would like to fulfil - A place where you feel good - How you feel right now."*

**Finally**, we can suggest that the group form a circle by eye colour, creating a gradient from lightest to darkest. The suggestions should be adapted according to the age of the participants and can be enriched using your own ideas.
Once over, the children will be allowed to express their experiences related to the activity:
*"– Was the activity enjoyable? – Why? – What did it create within the group?*
*- How did you feel when you had to reach out to others to find points in common?*
*- Was it sometimes difficult to find a group to join? - If so, how did you manage in those instances? - Or was it, on the contrary, very easy?"*

## Speed dating

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

**Audience:** ☒ Children ☐ Young people ☐ Adults
**Activity type:** ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
☒ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships
☐ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours
☐ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)
**Format:** ☐ Individual ☒ Group
**Equipment:** Enough space for the participants to move around

# Session 1

## Meeting one another to help one another

### Activity 2: Speed dates

SOCIAL SKILLS → Developing social bonds

#### Instructions

The aim of this activity is to promote an environment that is favourable to trust by encouraging interaction and mutual understanding among pupils.

#### Equipment

None

The facilitator suggests that the pupils move around the space at random. After a while, the facilitator clearly announces 'Stop!' At this precise moment, all the pupils stop and have a conversation with the person opposite them, in order to find something they have in common. The pupils have one minute to manage this.
The facilitator encourages the pupils to work out the most specific points they have in common.

Repeat this sequence ten times.

#### Debriefing

- How did you go about finding out what you had in common with your classmates?
- What new things have you learned about your classmates?

## Cultivating recognition and solidarity

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

**Audience:** ☒ Children ☐ Young people ☐ Adults
**Activity type:** ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
☐ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships
☒ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours
☐ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)
**Format:** ☐ Individual ☒ Group
**Equipment:**
- Tree leaves
- Tree drawing
- Pencils
- Sticky tape

# Session 5

## Cultivating appreciation and solidarity

### Activity 2: The solidarity successes tree

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| COGNITIVE SKILL | → | Capacity for positive self-assessment |
| SOCIAL SKILL | → | Developing prosocial attitudes and behaviours |

### Instructions

In this activity, each pupil draws on a sheet of paper a solidarity success story of which they are proud. This is a success story centred on solidarity, mutual assistance and collaboration.
An example could be: 'I managed to help a classmate with an exercise.'
The pupils then split up into small groups to share their drawings and explain their solidarity success. Finally, all the drawings are gathered together and hung on a group tree in the classroom to strengthen pupil solidarity.

### Equipment

- Tree leaves
- Tree drawing
- Pencils
- Sticky tape

### Debriefing

- How did you feel when you shared your solidarity successes?
- How did you feel when you were encouraged by your classmates?
- What are your group's strengths?
- How could you show more solidarity with your classmates in the coming days?

## The hidden world of emotions: my hand of gratitude

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou. 2024)*

**Audience:** ☒ Children ☐ Young people ☐ Adults

**Activity type:** ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

☐ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships

☐ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours

☒ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)

**Format:** ☐ Individual ☒ Group

**Equipment:** Drawing of the hand of gratitude

# My hand of gratitude

Write or draw, on each finger of your hand, one thing for which you want to say thank you, or someone you want to say thank you to.




"Once the hand is complete, the children can share these moments of gratitude they have experienced in pairs. The facilitator proposes a time for group discussion following this activity using a few open-ended questions such as: what did you discover from this experience? What does this make you want to do differently?"

# The hidden world of emotions

*(Extract from Annabelle Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou, 2024)*

**Audience:** ⊠ Children □ Young people □ Adults
**Activity type:** ⊠ Formal □ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
□ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships
⊠ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours
□ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)
**Format:** □ Individual ⊠ Group
**Equipment:** Drawing of the keys to kindness

"(…) The facilitator invites the children to take the time to identify at least one situation in which they were able to contribute something to others during their lives. This could be altruistic gestures such as a drawing, a gift, a donation to a charity, or a gesture towards a person in difficulty. It could be situations in which people have been able to feel gratitude towards them and thank them for a gesture, something they have said or their presence.

Once the situation has been identified, the children can exchange ideas in pairs, and then the facilitator can ask them how they felt and how they feel when they think about it again today. Next, ask the children to complete the activity sheet by writing on each key an act of kindness that will open the door to gratitude; the children can then swop ideas in pairs."



# The friends of success

*(Extract from Reynaud L, 2021 [80])*

**Audience:** ☒ Children; ☐ Young people; ☐ Adults
**Activity type:** ☐ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
☐ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships
☐ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours
☒ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)
**Format:** ☐ Individual; ☒ Group
**Equipment:** Enough space to make a circle

During this regrouping time after the workshops, it is important that your children become aware that we not only learn individually but also with and thanks to others, particularly by drawing inspiration from their behaviours, strategies, and so on. The ritual described below allows children to identify the people who helped them succeed in the workshop activities: a classmate, the teacher, the teaching assistant, a parent present, etc. It also helps satisfy the children's need for connection and social proximity. The child understands that together, we go further, that we can ask for help, that we have allies we can rely on, friends who can inspire us and give us energy and that we can also help others. Here, we are laying down the foundations of cooperation. We value cooperation and inspiration, not competition and comparison.

## Outline

Once the children are seated in a circle, ask them to think about the people who have helped them.

"To work well and be happy, we need friends, people we can trust, who can help us, encourage us, etc. Who do you think these people are? Who are the friends of today's success?"

Children who wish to do so can name this or these person(s) and thank them, or thank them by standing in front of them and holding their hands, looking into their eyes and placing their hand on their heart, giving them a sticker, or an imaginary or jointly designed badge, etc.

For older children, once the person has been identified, we can help them to formulate what helped them, and what feelings and emotions it inspired in them.

## Extension

### • The flower of friends

Each pupil can create their own flower of friends and write [or have someone write] their first name in the centre and the names of the people who helped them in each petal. These are the people who help the flower to grow and flourish. The flowers are then 'planted' in a notebook, on a board or on a wall, in the classroom or in the hallway. They form a magnificent field of flowers of trust.



*The flower of the friends of your success (or of your trust) by Kevin, pre-school pupil (flower completed in several stages).*

# The gratitude box

*(Extract from Reynaud L, 2021 [80])*

**Audience:** ☒ Children; ☐ Young people; ☐ Adults

**Activity type:** ☐ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal

**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)

**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**

☐ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships

☐ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours

☒ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)

**Format:** ☐ Individual; ☒ Group

**Equipment:** A decorated shoebox - Stickers - Paper - Smileys

## A I The gratitude box

Ages 4-6 years, 10-15 minutes to get the ritual started, then 5 minutes, a decorated shoebox, stickers, pieces of paper and smileys to fill this pretty box.

Present a box that has been personalised with drawings, pictograms, photos, and a map of the strengths of gratitude or illustrations evoking gratitude. Ask the children if they can guess what the drawings depict. Draw their attention to the written word they may already have encountered [thank you], to a familiar pictogram [hands together], to a smiling smiley and to the shape of a heart on the strength of gratitude map [see the 'About Strengths' tool] , which is stuck to the box. To help them and to get them on the right track, open the box and take out the piece of paper that was previously slipped inside. Then, calmly and whispering, to fully capture their attention, read them the secret message: "I thank the pupils for having tidied up the classroom properly after this morning's workshops."

Wait for possible reactions and question the children to unravel the mystery of this box, if it has not already been done.

**"Who wrote this message? How do you think I feel? What is the name of this strength which consists of liking to say thank you and appreciating the things around us and paying attention to them [gratitude]? And you, how do you feel when you receive this message, this gratitude: joy, pride, happiness? Gratitude is also a pleasant emotion that makes us feel good. Gratitude is a beautiful gift: it feels good to the one who expresses it (me) and to the one or those who receive it (you).**

**I suggest you do the same as me and express everything you have gratitude for, that is, all the things you love and for which you want to say thank you. A heartfelt thank you that feels good to say and receive, a thank you that will allow you to develop your strength of gratitude. A thank you to someone you want to thank, to yourself (you can say thank you to yourself, that is important in fact) or to something (thank you to the sun, to the sea, etc.).**

**How? For example, you could slide a heart into the box each time you want to say thank you, a drawing, a word that I can help you write, smileys, etc. You can put your name on it or not, it is up to you.**

Regularly invite the pupils to open the box, look at how many hearts and smileys there are, react and pick a piece of paper and show it to share it with the whole class. If its author is not anonymous, they can be asked to say something. If the message of gratitude is addressed to a classmate, they can be asked how they feel upon receiving it and whether this message makes them happy.

**Examples:**

- "Thank you for the ball game we played together."
- "Thank you to the teacher for comforting me."
- "Thank you Sophie *(the teaching assistant)* for always listening to me."
- "Thank you David for his efforts to pay attention *(from the teacher)*."
- "Thank you nature for being so beautiful."
- "Thank you to myself for my hard work."

## Variations and extensions

### · The wall of gratitude.

As an alternative to a box or as an extension to this activity, a wall of gratitude can be set up in the classroom or corridor. This is a section of wall on which all the children, the teacher, the parents, and the teaching assistant are invited to come and stick a Post-it note with a sentence they have dictated to an adult, a photo, a sun, a flower or a drawing expressing their gratitude.

**Examples:** "Thank you for helping me tie my shoelaces, thank you to my dad for comforting me, thank you to the teacher for making us laugh, thank you to Julie for helping me, etc."

Regularly invite the pupils to look at it and plan a time for sharing.

This wall of gratitude can be organised on the scale of the entire school, in the hall, for example. It is a unifying ritual that generates many pleasant emotions.

**· The gratitude logbook ages 4-6 years, 5-15 minutes]**

Regularly collect the feelings of gratitude shared each day and record them in a class logbook, which could be the class portfolio or a dedicated notebook called the 'gratitude logbook'. You can stick photos in it, write comments and make this logbook available to parents during drop-off and pick-up times.

You can suggest that pupils make their own gratitude logbook with their families and invite volunteers to feed back to the class.
Below is an example of instructions that can be shared with parents:

"Each evening for a week, during dinner or just before going to bed, think back over the day with your child. Think of two or three pleasant things or moments that went well, at school, at home or elsewhere."

The aim is to encourage parents to help their child reflect on the role they may have played and the emotions produced. Again, this journal can be illustrated, supplemented with photos and can even become a family gratitude logbook.



This activity is probably the most powerful of all the positive psychology techniques. There are different variations of this exercise. They have been the subject of research by various scientists, and the findings have always been noteworthy. For example, it has been proven that this activity increases happiness in the long-term.[3]

# The sun of kindness

*(Extract from Reynaud L, 2021 [80])*

**Audience:** ☒ Children; ☐ Young people; ☐ Adults
**Activity type:** ☐ Formal ☒ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
☐ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships
☒ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours
☐ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)
**Format:** ☐ Individual; ☒ Group
**Equipment:** Yellow paper or yellow felt-tips

## C I The sun of kindness

Ages 4-6 years, variable duration, spread over time, yellow paper or a yellow felt-tip pen to make a large sun with lots of rays.

Firstly, this ritual consists of identifying the acts of kindness performed in the class, the playground or the canteen during the day. It can be big or small, but the act must benefit someone: doing a favour for the child sitting next to you, helping a classmate with an activity, smiling, holding the door open, etc. there are many possibilities!



*Example for age 4-6 years: baking shortbread and offering it to friends, the teacher or the teaching assistant, etc.*



*Example for age 3-5 years: identifying acts of kindness and colouring them in, here playing together during the break.*

## Outline

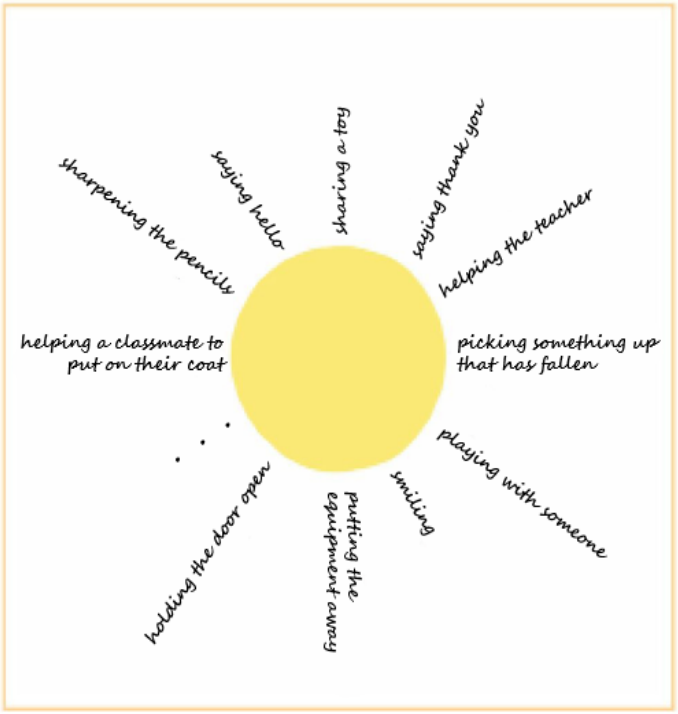
Organise a brainstorming session to answer the question:

**"How can we be kind to one another?"**

Everyone is invited to share ideas about acts of kindness they have performed or would perform for one another: helping a classmate put on their coat, tie their shoelaces, tidy up their things, holding the door open, sharing their snack, lending a toy, explaining how to do an exercise, etc. Once several examples have been given, you can write these shared acts of kindness on the rays of a big sun. They are also invitations to take action. To accompany the words, the pupils can gradually draw these acts of kindness, or stick on photos, images, etc.
Then, regularly invite the pupils, each time they or one of their classmates has performed an act of kindness, to put a sticker, add a smiley, write their name, etc. on the correct ray. They can be encouraged to express what they felt when performing or receiving an act of kindness.

Gradually, the sun of kindness will grow more beautiful and shine brightly.

It will be important to observe how it has changed in order to talk about it, enjoy it, express one's feelings and take comfort from it. It will also be important to meet there regularly to sing, dance, express feelings, etc., and take comfort.




*An example of the sun of kindness.*

## Alternative

Pupils can choose one act of kindness to do each day or over a set period of time. An interesting way to develop one of your strengths: use it differently every day."

# Friendship circles

*(Extract from the Pilou and Filou Programme - Approach to supporting the development of psychosocial skills in children from 18 months to 5 years old. Centre de psycho-éducation du Québec & Ensemble pour la Petite Enfance. 2023 Edition)*

**Audience:** ☒ Children; ☐ Young people; ☐ Adults
**Activity type:** ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
☒ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships
☐ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours
☐ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)
**Format:** ☐ Individual; ☒ Group
**Equipment:** Four or five hoops or chalks; Games

"▪ Aim: To ask to play with a friend

▪ Approximate duration: 5 to 10 minutes

▪ Equipment needed: Four or five hoops, or pieces of chalk for drawing large circles. Games to be put inside the circles.

▪ Suitable times: During morning or afternoon activities

▪ Outline: The professional places the hoops on the ground or draws large circles, taking care to leave a space between each circle, and puts the games inside the circles. Each child goes and stands in a circle. If a child wants to go to another circle to play with another child, the professional supports the key requests made by the children and praises them if these requests are made.

For non-verbal children: The child is encouraged to replace the request with gestures.
The key request is: "Do you want to play with me?" or "Can I play with you?" and each child's choice to play or not is respected."

# The star game

*(Extract from the Pilou and Filou Programme - Approach to supporting the development of psychosocial skills in children from 18 months to 5 years old. Centre de psycho-éducation du Québec & Ensemble pour la Petite Enfance. 2023 Edition)*

**Audience :** ☒ Children; ☐ Young people; ☐ Adults
**Activity type:** ☒ Formal ☐ Ritual/informal
**Main objective:** Developing social bonds and prosocial behaviours (S1.3)
**Knowledge and practical skills developed:**
☒ Knowing how to initiate and develop quality relationships
☐ Knowing the different prosocial behaviours
☐ Implementing prosocial behaviours beyond one's close family and friends and knowing how to express appreciation (or gratitude)
**Format:** ☐ Individual; ☒ Group

"Aims: To make contact. To learn to be careful of others when I am moving around.

▪ Approximate duration: 10 minutes

▪ Equipment needed: None

▪ Suitable times: End of day or transition

▪ Outline: The children are lying on their backs in a circle with their heads in the centre and their feet pointing outwards. The professional begins the activity by saying: "I am walking in the sky to pluck a star. This star will be (child's name)."

The child gets up, takes the professional by the hand, walks around the circle and says in turn "I am walking..." and chooses another child. The children must walk around, taking care not to step on the star. The child plucks the star delicately by brushing against their shoulder.

▪ Feedback: The professional values the gentle touch used by the children plucking the stars."

Use your imagination..."

# CONCLUSION

"Enabling all children to develop their psychosocial skills from the earliest age, throughout their growth and in all environments" is the ambitious objective of the 2022-2037 national multi-sectoral strategy, formalised by the inter-ministerial instruction published on 19 August 2022. Deploying PSS interventions across the entire country over the next fifteen years should enable "the generation of 2037 to be the first to grow up in a continuous environment of PSS development" [7].

This strategy is based on more than forty years of international intervention research, as many years of French practices and multiple trials of PSS programmes in France. Nevertheless, the scaling up of PSS interventions to the entire population of children and young people poses a real challenge. Indeed, to achieve this goal, all adults in positions of educational responsibility are implicated, starting with professionals in the fields of education, social services and health.

Consequently, implementing the strategy in practice relies on professionals, and more generally on adults in positions of education. This requires that teams of trainers, and trainers of trainers, be created across the entire country, relying on a transfer of up-to-date knowledge, a shared culture on PSS, and initial and ongoing training plans. These various mechanisms are being formalised in the various sectors and have been included in ministerial roadmaps.

The role of Santé publique France, as defined in the instruction, is to support the implementation of the multi-sectoral strategy, particularly in terms of knowledge transfer (transferring knowledge, skills or expertise) on PSS and of evidence-based interventions to develop them. To this end, Santé publique France is producing reference works and expert reports on PSS, of which this operational framework is one example, with input from a thematic support committee composed of PSS experts and trainers. The authority is setting up mechanisms for the transmission of this knowledge and its appropriation, taking into account the different levels of intervention (e.g. decision-maker/supervisor/professional, trainer/facilitator, etc.), and the target audiences.

This framework, volume I of which is published here, aims to transmit up-to-date, scientific and experiential knowledge, on the process at work for each PSS
with an operational objective. Each PSS is explained in depth on a theoretical level and is accompanied by examples of activities to promote its development among different age groups. **This framework is primarily intended for PSS experts and trainers**. Although this work is based on research, and humanities researchers contributed to its writing and/or review, it is not intended as an exhaustive synthesis of all the knowledge and schools of thought of psychology. Rather, it aims to make the main knowledge needed by PSS professionals, trainers and experts available to them. As in any discipline, and even more so in psychology, knowledge is constantly evolving; knowledge about these objects of study (the self, emotions, needs, communications, etc.) is still subject to change, even debate. This evolving knowledge also depends on the sub-discipline (social, clinical, developmental psychology, etc.), the field of research, the theoretical model of the researchers, etc. This operational framework, written by public health sector participants and humanities researchers, all specialists in PSS, is aimed at making current psychological concepts related to the overall psychological functioning of the individual accessible, and thus at **promoting understanding of the psychological mechanisms that underlie each PSS**. At present, health promotion and prevention professionals and education and social sector professionals who implement PSS actions and practices still have insufficient knowledge of these concepts.

This work is not manual that can be used directly to construct a PSS programme from the activities provided as examples. It covers the general principles for deploying the framework, but does not address issues of implementation, which are dependent on the audience and setting. Evidently, when designing a PSS intervention, these factors must be analysed and taken into account; session sequencing, the coherence and suitability of the proposed activities, etc., must be considered in relation to the objectives, the target audience and the context.

Although this framework was designed to support the multi-sectoral strategy for the development of PSS in children and young people and the plan to combat bullying at school, it provides a general perspective on PSS and may also prove useful in the context of other strategies and plans that include PSS development, regardless of the target populations.

It follows on from the report and theoretical framework published in 2022 by Santé publique France which provided a review of scientific and theoretical knowledge on PSS [1, 8]. These initial documents provided a common reference framework to support the deployment of evidence-based PSS interventions, notably by proposing an updated PSS classification and a grid of factors that are common to effective interventions.

In this operational framework, the PSS classification has been made more pragmatic through the definition of two phases for the development of PSS: a first phase of understanding and acceptance, to which this first volume is devoted, dealing with the emotional and social cognitive skills which precede the more complex PSS of the second phase of regulation and fulfilment, which will be the subject of the following volume. This approach offers a progressive vision for the acquisition and strengthening of PSS, and is more operational than the previous 'static' classification. Whether at the cognitive, emotional or social level, a first step of understanding and accepting psychological functioning is necessary before attempting to have better control over this functioning through processes of regulation or fulfilment. The PSS covered in this first volume form part of the following three general skills, with which eleven specific PSS are associated: The cognitive PSS 'Strengthening self-awareness', the emotional PSS 'Strengthening emotional awareness' and the social PSS 'Developing constructive relationships'. It should be emphasised to future trainers, for whom emotional and/or social PSS often seem easier to grasp (because they are better known), that the general cognitive PSS 'Strengthening self-awareness' (with its associated specific PSS) is the first step for the acquisition of the emotional and social skills in this first phase.

**The importance of the intervention framework** is highlighted and is the subject of the first chapter. This is in line with the principles of the EBM (evidence-based medicine) paradigm applicable to health promotion practices: this entails integrating scientific evidence and experiential knowledge from professionals and the relevant public into the design and implementation of an intervention. This implies that an intervention and practices are co-constructed. In this chapter, the quality criteria for a PSS intervention are described from an operational perspective and a grid thereof has been drawn up on the basis of the factors common to effective PSS interventions. These criteria relate to the quality of the PSS intervention, the quality of its implementation and to an educational environment that is favourable to the development of PSS. This shows not only the importance of training, but also the investment required from professionals in educational positions in increasing their knowledge of PSS, strengthening their own PSS and developing professional behaviours that support PSS. When these quality criteria are put in place, the benefits on a personal and professional level of this investment can become apparent. This could serve as a strong driver for the commitment of these professionals. They will not only support learning and the school climate, but the professional will also benefit from improved wellbeing at work, better interpersonal relationships and more favourable conditions for their professional development.

**The primary aim of this work** is to enable PSS experts and trainers to have a body of recent and operational scientific and experiential knowledge that can be used for PSS training and developing PSS materials. With the publication of Volume II, all the general and specific PSS of the 2022 classification have been covered.

A version of this framework is anticipated for professionals in educational positions who are not specialists in PSS, with the planned development of summary sheets for each PSS. Educational support materials and resources should be made available gradually.

Following the example of the ‘empathy kit’ [10, 11], co-developed by the Dgesco and Santé publique France for primary school teachers, it will be possible to develop intervention guides based on this framework with content adapted to the various audiences and intervention environments in the different sectors involved in implementing the strategy.

Thus, this operational framework represents a conceptual and operational basis for developing new PSS activities and interventions that are coherent with the underlying psychological mechanisms. It should allow for PSS practices to be optimised and PSS activities to be updated nationwide.

Given the impact of PSS development on overall health and educational success, today, implementing the multi-sector PSS strategy represents an issue and a challenge for all education, social work and health sector professionals. The success of this nationwide roll-out will depend on the mobilisation of everyone involved and their ability to provide quality PSS interventions for all children and young people in our country.

# ANNEX 1. SUMMARY TABLE OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICAL SKILLS TO BE ACQUIRED TO DEVELOP EACH OF THE SPECIFIC PSS

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

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

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

# ANNEX 2. LIST OF THE MAIN TOOLS AND PROGRAMMES MENTIONED

## 1. Directly accessible PSS tools and programmes

| Tool/programme name | Access link |
|---|---|
| **Promotion Santé Pays de Loire PSS Schoolbag** (and the Healthy to School Programme) | https://cartablecps.org/page-0-0-0.html |
| **Scholavie** tools | https://scholavie.fr/ |
| **PSS development manual** (children and professionals) | Lamboy B, Shankland R, Williamson M-O. (2021). Les compétences psychosociales - Manuel de développement. Louvain-la-Neuve: De Boeck Supérieur |
| **Strengthening PSS in primary schools** (Promotion Santé ARA) | https://www.promotion-sante-ara.org/thematiques/competences-psychosociales/ |
| Rituals to develop social and emotional skills. | Reynaud L. Rituels pour développer les compétences sociales et émotionnelles. Paris: Éditions Retz; 2021 |
| **The hidden world of emotions**<br>An emotional skills development programme for children | Annabelle Godeau-Pernet, Rebecca Shankland & Ilios Kotsou (2024) Accompagner le développement des compétences émotionnelles chez l'enfant, Dunod |
| **CARE Programme** | Rébecca Shankland, Jean-Paul Durand, Marine Paucsik, Ilios Kotsou, Christophe André *et al.* (2024) Mettre en œuvre un programme de psychologie positive-Programme CARE (Cohérence, Attention, Relation, Engagement), Dunod |

## 2. PSS tools and programmes available on request

| Tool/programme name | Contact |
|---|---|
| **Prodas** | www.prodas.fr<br>https://www.planning-familial.org/fr/le-planning-familial-du-vaucluse-84/formation/prodas-programme-de-developpement-affectif-et-social |
| '**Le Voyage des Toimoinous**, grandir et vivre ensemble' *[The journey of the Youmeus, growing up and living together]* programme, a consortium of operators and the Nouvelle-Aquitaine RHA, inspired by the Promotion Santé Pays de la Loire PSS Schoolbag | https://irepsna.org/<br>https://irepsna.org/actions/le-voyage-des-toimoinous/ |
| **Pilou and Filou Programme** - Approach to supporting the development of psychosocial skills in children from 18 months to 5 years old | Ensemble pour la petite enfance |
| **TEAL Programme**, Tous épanouis à l'école<br>[Everyone Thriving at School] | Rebecca Shankland, University of Lyon |
| **Stress Management Programme** - CBSM<br>(*Cognitive Behavioural Stress Management*) | Aurélie Gauchet, University of Savoie-Mont-Blanc |

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S'inscrivant en appui de la stratégie nationale de déploiement des CPS auprès des enfants et des jeunes et des adultes en position d'éducation, ce travail repose sur une synthèse des connaissances scientifiques articulée aux connaissances expérientielles accumulées par les experts français. Il **s'adresse en priorité aux professionnels expérimentés** — formateurs, experts ou responsables de programmes CPS — en leur présentant les principaux savoirs et savoir-faire essentiels pour enrichir et consolider leurs pratiques CPS.

Son objectif principal est d'expliciter les **mécanismes psychologiques** qui sous-tendent chaque CPS. Pour cela, il associe à chaque CPS les savoirs théoriques et les savoir-faire pratiques qui lui sont propres. Il est organisé selon une progression pédagogique en lien avec les deux tomes.

Le **Tome I** aborde les CPS dites « de base », qui visent à renforcer la **compréhension et l'acceptation** des processus cognitifs, émotionnels et relationnels. Le développement de ces premières CPS cognitive, émotionnelle et sociale est un préalable au développement des CPS ultérieures.

Le **Tome II** présente les CPS qui permettent d'améliorer la **régulation émotionnelle et comportementale, ainsi que les capacités d'accomplissement de soi.**

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