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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DELL'AQUILA  
DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE UMANE

ed. by  
Alessandro Vaccarelli, Stefania Mariantoni

# Children after a natural disaster

Materials for educators and teachers

(Velino for Children – Amatrice Earthquake 2016)

with an introduction by Massimiliano Fiorucci



*I territori  
dell'educazione*

**FrancoAngeli**

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## ***I territori dell'educazione***

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La collana “I territori dell'educazione” elegge a centro d'attenzione la problematicità educativa che scaturisce dalle trasformazioni economiche, sociali, culturali degli ultimi decenni, e dalle loro ricadute sui luoghi e tempi dell'educazione. Essa ospita testi che indagano le dimensioni informali e meno strutturate dell'educazione, con particolare riguardo al “territorio” - inteso come rete di istituzioni, luoghi e relazioni educative - e a tutte quelle esperienze che la contemporaneità rende più e/o diversamente educative.

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*To the children of disasters.  
To the responsibilities of us adults.*



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# **Introduction**

## **Children after a natural disaster.**

### **A book to give to the world**

*Massimiliano Fiorucci*

The book that the reader is about to start to consult/read/use is the result of an extraordinary work of planning and implementing educational interventions that was carried out following the earthquake that struck Central Italy in August 2016, followed by other significant seismic activity in the months that followed. It is a work inspired by a theoretical matrix and the perspective of research that for some years, in Italy, had been taking shape in an idea of *pedagogy in emergencies* (Isidori, Vaccarelli, 2013), understood as pedagogical knowledge of a specialised nature very much oriented towards action, but also reflection, to an analysis of the relationships between emergencies and the social, political and community dimensions that form the background to all educational issues. Emergencies make it possible to identify, among many challenges, at least two major trajectories to be followed in the educational work:

- the path of *resilience*, and therefore of support to individuals, children, educators and other adults of reference, to the resumption of life projects, to overcoming and confronting situations of pain, stress and, often, of trauma that accompany the survivors of catastrophes;
- the path of *resistance*, understood as a challenge to the community, support for social groups, for communities, and their desire to maintain ties, exercise active citizenship and participate in the many decision-making processes which, in emergencies, are at risk being assumed by external authorities.

*Resilience* and *resistance* (Mantegazza, Contini, Vaccarelli, 2016) are therefore established as important conceptual anchorages to anchor the objectives and concrete actions of a long-term educational activity, to accompany individuals and groups not only in the immediate aftermath of an event, but also in the no less problematic phases that follow. The “Velino for Children” Project (Vaccarelli, 2017), which gave birth to this volume, to which the Department of Educational Sciences of the University of Roma Tre, which I have the honour of running, immediately and unflinchingly adhered to, also has the merit of providing extended timescales and is structured, for now at least, over two years of activity. Individual and collective traumas are elaborated slowly, reconstruction processes are never linear, conflict is always just around the corner: the hypercomplexity that the post-emergency period poses as well, both for individuals and for communities, pushes pedagogical planning to be constantly present, persistent, to continuously monitor needs and provide effective and responses projected towards the future. Emergencies place contexts and territories (Vaccarelli, *infra*) at great risk of educational impoverishment. The institutions have to be aware of this and, even when they themselves have been struck by the effects of a disaster, activate responses that take the greatest account of integration, networking and organisational strategies capable of bringing into play a wide variety of professional figures (Mariantoni, *infra*). Resilience and resistance are, therefore, characteristics which, from a systemic point of view, have to be applied to the institutional world as well as those of the voluntary sector and of all the formal and informal realities that are an integral part of the territory. If it is true that educational poverty is not only caused by economic conditions, but is fuelled by a series of social circumstances (Save the Children, 2015), it is also true that, in the long run, they result in underdevelopment, also of an economic nature. The quality of education therefore also becomes, in the long run, a driving force for the development of those communities and territories affected by natural disasters.

This book, also when it deals with issues that refer to very specific areas, such as trauma and mourning, emotions, or the many

questions of an educational and didactic nature it covers (narration, creativity, cooperative education, self-regulation strategies in studying, etc.), is centred on the perspective of a wellbeing that cannot only be individual, but which challenges the future of the communities and therefore also regards their development. Following a catastrophe, teachers and educators are often stunned, themselves victims of the event, and the decisions to be taken in an educational setting are not easy. How to behave with traumatised children or those under severe stress? How to approach, with them, the themes of death, mourning and destruction? What activities are most appropriate in circumstances marked by severe problems? How to support their resilience through schools and educational institutions? These are the questions that teachers and educators often ask themselves when a catastrophic event has suddenly and radically transformed the lives of individuals, groups and communities. These are also the questions to which this volume, written by academics and teachers, educators, psychologists and service coordinators, tries to give provide effective answers to.

Many important experiences in other areas, marked by situations of criticality and complexity (for example, Lampedusa or L'Aquila) flow into this work, which were then used – and therefore validated in terms of their worth and more general meaning – in the context of the earthquake of 2016 as well. For example, consider the proposals related to the use of books and readings from the point of view of resilience and the promotion of citizenship (Zizioli, 2017), or to outdoor education as a possibility which is particularly suited to post-emergency situations (Calandra, Aja Gonzalez, Vaccarelli, 2016).

Good practices, in other words. Starting from the local perspective, and therefore from the specifics of the “Velino for Children” project, this book seeks to define a broader and more general model “to give back to the world”, from a point of view that can properly be defined as *glocal*. Theoretical perspectives, operational guidelines, proposals for educational paths: a point of intersection between pedagogical research and educational intervention, but also a “gift” that is intended for all those educational operators who are currently facing (or will face in the

future), somewhere on the planet, a disaster, a natural catastrophe (but also political, social or environmental ones), and have to defend the children.

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## **Part I**

# **Promoting resilience after a natural disaster: an educational challenge for educational workers and institutions**





# **1. Local challenges, global responses: good practices after the central Apennine earthquake and the construction of an intervention model**

*Stefania Mariantoni, Alessandro Vaccarelli<sup>1</sup>*

## **1.1. The earthquake of Amatrice and the Valle del Velino and the Velino Project for Children: good practices to be given back to the world**

This book was born as a result of the interventions carried out after the earthquake that struck Amatrice and the area of the Valle del Velino on 24 August 2016. The earthquake killed hundreds of people, sowing mourning and spreading destruction among the communities of this area of the Italian Apennines.

From the outset, the Planning Office of the VI Mountain Community of Velino used its energies, although themselves struck by the effects of the earthquake, to provide an effective response for the population affected in terms of psychosocial and educational interventions. On 26 August 2016, as part of an initial survey carried out in Amatrice by a taskforce of the Mountain Community of Velino and the University of L'Aquila (emergency pedagogy group), the idea of a project with a pedagogical approach was born, which took the name of “Velino for Children”, funded initially by the Mountain Community and private donations and subsequently supported by Lazio Region. The project, intended for infants, adolescents and the adult world (teachers, educators, social workers and parents), has a two-year duration and has a scientific committee consisting of a number of pedagogues from the academic world.

1. Paragraph 1 is by Alessandro Vaccarelli. Paragraph 2 is by Stefania Mariantoni.

The macro-actions identified were intended to respond to the needs identified immediately among the population, in contiguity with the work of organisations present with the approval of the Civil Defence (e.g. Save the Children, Psicologi per i Popoli). The table below contains a description of the foreseen macro-actions, the needs identified and the principal interventions:

The planning actions of the “Velino for Children” project<sup>2</sup>

<b>The “Velino for Children” project</b>		
<p><b>Scientific manager:</b> Alessandro Vaccarelli (University of L'Aquila)  <b>Technical manager:</b> Stefania Mariantoni (Mountain Community of Velino)  <b>Scientific Committee:</b> Teresa GonzálezAja (Polytechnic University of Madrid), Fabio Bocci (University of Roma Tre), Lina Calandra (University of L'Aquila), Marco Catarci (University of Roma Tre), Massimiliano Fiorucci (University of Roma Tre), Rosella Frasca (University of L'Aquila), Maria Vittoria Isidori, (University of L'Aquila), Stefania Mariantoni (Mountain Community of Velino), Silvia Nanni (University of L'Aquila), Maria Rita Pitoni (Amatrice Comprehensive High School), Simonetta Ulivieri (University of Florence, Italian Society of Pedagogy), Alessandro Vaccarelli (University of L'Aquila), Elena Zizioli (University of Roma Tre)  <b>Organisation chart:</b> Scientific and pedagogical coordinator (University of L'Aquila): Alessandro Vaccarelli Technical Coordinator for implementation (Mountain Community of Velino): Stefania Mariantoni Head teacher (Amatrice Comprehensive High School): Maria Teresa Pitoni            2 educators            1 psychologist            1 social worker</p>		
Actions	Needs analysis	Description of the actions
	<p>Amatrice Comprehensive High School, located in a prefabricated structure, opens again on 13 September 2017, in the presence of the Education Minister Giannini.</p> <p>Many teachers express a need for support to cope with the situations of pupils and grief that have directly and indirectly struck the school. Staffing is affected by bureaucratic</p>	<p>Emergency training for teachers. Two training sessions on classroom welcome and the management of the educational relationship in situations of stress and trauma (University of L'Aquila and ASPIC L'Aquila).</p> <p>Welcome project in the school: educational and didactic laboratories aimed at working on verbal and non-verbal languages from the point of</p>

2. The scheme is taken up and adapted by Vaccarelli, A., *Le professioni educative negli scenari di catastrofe: l'esempio del progetto “Velino for Children” e la formazione degli insegnanti (Amatrice, 2016/2017) 2017*, in “Formazione e Insegnamento”, 15, 2, 2017.

<p>Interventions in the school September-November 2016</p>	<p>delays, so a number of posts remain unfilled for days and various teachers come and go on temporary assignment or for new appointments. Pupils of all age groups show great signs of distress related to trauma, and losses in the family or among schoolmates.</p>	<p>view of promoting resilience. The laboratories tried to activate the elaboration of the survivors and their experiences (through different forms of narration), and the revival, through play, of school routines.</p> <p>Subjects involved: Bibliobus (ARCI L'Aquila) – Cartolab (University of L'Aquila) – Ludobus (L'Aquila and Frosinone) – Teatro Alchemico (Rieti) – Teaching graduates and final-year students (University of L'Aquila) – Nati nelle note (L'Aquila) – Psychologists and counsellors (ASPIC L'Aquila) – Caritas di Rieti.</p>
<p>Centre for listening and psycho-pedagogical activity in the territory August 2016-2017</p>	<p>The project is aimed at children and adolescents not only through interventions aimed at children and young people, but also through support for parents and the teaching profession. In this, it was considered necessary to also work on the resilience of the adults of reference, as an important condition for the development of children's resilience.</p>	<p>Opening of the weekly Listening Centre at Amatrice Comprehensive High School (ASPIC L'Aquila for Velino for Children) for the whole school year and the summer break, for pupils, parents, teachers and school staff.</p> <p>Assistance for minors with previous social fragility, through a territorial service to support the social and health activities of the Mountain Community of Velino (educators, psychologists, social workers contracted within the framework of the Velino for Children project).</p>
	<p>Teachers and parents were the main recipients of specific empowerment and training actions.</p> <p>For teachers, training courses were offered on resilience and on learning/teaching processes in situations of stress and trauma. In addition, they were offered a pedagogical consultancy service.</p>	<p>Support for teachers in the form of pedagogical and teaching advice (University of L'Aquila). Training course "At the school of resilience: learning and teaching after a catastrophe". Periodic focus groups to evaluate and support the performance of school activities.</p>

<p>Training interventions on the adult world September-June 2017</p>	<p>Parents express great concern about their children's emotional experiences, the management of fears and the processing of grief. All this in the context of significant housing problems and ongoing aftershocks.</p>	<p>Psycho-educational groups (parents and teachers) for parenting support, the family-school alliance in supporting the resilience of children and young people. The aftershocks following those of August 2016 extended the intervention throughout the Valle del Velino. (ASPIC L'Aquila – Psicologi per i Popoli L'Aquila).</p>
<p>Research, monitoring, documentation</p>	<p>The setting-up and implementation of the project involved a simultaneous activity of research, which contemplated different methodologies and techniques: participatory research, research-action and qualitative-quantitative approaches.</p>	<p>Research on the impact of the emergency on professional teaching, through interviews and focus groups (Amatrice).</p> <p>Research on resilience strategies and the outcome of teacher training, through the collection of over 500 questionnaires from a sample of teachers in the provinces of Rieti, L'Aquila and Teramo, affected in different ways by the earthquakes.</p>

## 1.2. The regulatory framework and social policies

**Velino for Children** has been the heart of a shared and unitary response, defining itself as a multidisciplinary and multidimensional programme of interventions for families, children and schools, whose essence is based on the conviction that educational relationships represent a vital and spontaneous workshop of educational resources. They are, therefore, a solid support for the healthy outcome of this learning, with a positive fallout on general social relations deriving from the tools acquired. Children are inherently resilient and so preserving them means preserving the resilient capacities of a society.

The human reconstruction of the territory could not ignore the regulatory framework, represented in this specific case by a law that marked a revolution in the application of services in the

context of emergency in question. This is Law no. 328 of 2000, the framework legislation for the creation of an integrated system of interventions and social services<sup>3</sup> (Gori, 2004), and the successive Regional Law no. 11 of 2016 (Official Bulletin of Lazio Region, 2016, no. 64). This regulatory framework represented the guide to outline an optimal strategy capable of offering a resilient response that takes into account the multidimensionality of the overall system which the VI Mountain Community of Velino is confronting at this moment in time. These are essential normative references for the foundation of a *modus operandi* that cannot be separated from horizontal and vertical cooperation with the world of voluntary work and the institutions, and from the optimisation of resources aimed at preserving the social identity of our territory as well as dealing with the systemic complexity in which we are still immersed. An overview with a single objective: to preserve and conserve identity and place people at the heart of the decision-making processes. A unitary and integrated vision, intended to provide an adaptive and resilient response to the chain of social changes, caused by the magnitude of what happened. A unitary response arising from a harmonious cohesion – present from the earliest hours – and this unitary cohesion is the fertile seed of integration (D’Amato *et al.*, 1985) in which the values internalised by individuals are made available again to the institutions to reconstruct a social system based on collective solidarity.

3. Cf. Gori, C., *La riforma dei servizi sociali in Italia. L’attuazione della legge 328 e le sfide future*, Carocci, Rome, 2004.

## **2. Resilient Institutions. Key recommendations for a resilient reconstruction of the territory**

*Stefania Mariani*

### **2.1. Theoretical framework**

In this chapter we will seek to tackle a number of significant issues – from an operational point of view – in terms of the overall system and social identity in the first phase following a natural disaster. Emphasis will be placed on working in a network as a resource for the implementation of social and educational policies that will be able to include individuals and communities in decision-making processes that will be useful to promote the highest degree of resilience and integration. We will try therefore to elaborate some essential recommendations that can contribute to a resilient reconstruction of the territory.

Before moving on to the operational aspect, it is necessary to begin with a reflection on the importance of social identity in a community and on the work of sharing and networking among the stakeholders in the territory. From the literature it emerges that there is no uniformity in comprehensively defining the social identity of a community. The anchorage points, to delineate the epistemological insights of social identity, are linked to the image of self. Personal identity, already in itself accessible through cognitive approaches not oriented towards crystallised but dynamic definitions, assumes a vital connotation in the setting of an emergency. Social identity is expressed in belonging to a group or, rather, to multidimensional group systems (Tajfel, 1982) that arise in the first instance in relational feedbacks; in this direction, we have to take into consideration a complex approach to understand

the profound needs of a community and put people at the centre of the decision-making processes. This in-depth analysis is essential in a context struck by catastrophic events, where personal identity, self-image and social identity are subject to significant fracturing with results and modifications of high transformational importance from a human point of view.

The representation of the social barycentre of services (until shortly before clear, linear and almost deterministic), the representation of ourselves and us – interacting in the social group, modifying it and, at the same time, being modified by it – radically changes shape, entering into *crisis mode*. The organisation of the systems for categorising social information directly related to social identity in terms of membership (Turner *et al.*, 1987) are subject to an increase in cognitive inaccessibility: they enter into crisis.

The multidisciplinary response to this dimension allows the establishment of resilient variables that prove decisive in the reconstruction of an adaptive social arrangement of services for people. These cannot ignore the consideration that a complex system has to be differentiated, categorised and assimilated, taking into account the unpredictability of the system itself. This means that it is necessary to adopt an approach to the system taking into account its complexity, which we could define as “[...] proper to a system that can be modelled and is capable of showing behaviours that are not all predeterminable even if potentially able to be anticipated by a careful observer of this system” (Le Moigne, 1985, p. 92).

A resilient institution acts, moves and enters that complex order, finds its laws and capitalises on it. For example, in the case of the earthquake that struck Central Italy on 24 August 2016, the first immediate response of the system saw an increase in the high degree of social cooperation of the resources of the territory through the synergistic action of the District Social Services together with the territorial agencies responsible for the containment of the crisis: the local health board, the associations and voluntary sector, the schools, the academic institutes dedicated to the spread of knowledge such as the University of L’Aquila, which in 2009 had faced its own earthquake emergency.

Institutions act, they assume the resilience that is inherent in the services, to maintain a homeostasis when faced by the



multidimensionality of the solicitations (Bonanno, 2004). They act without forgetting those who already needed help before the earthquake and to strengthen the support for those families who had previously benefited from interventions at home, increasing the social and health offer in the area concerned and transferring to various types of structure all those people who could not be assisted in any other way. The strategic vision of facing the emergency has to take into account the fact that the family system is the context in which the foundations are laid for the construction of a healthy and adaptive social identity, and therefore the primary action from the early hours should be converging towards an operational model of multidisciplinary and multidimensional interventions for families and children. Intra-family relations are, in fact, a spontaneous and vital laboratory where relationships are tested, and a good support for the healthy outcome of these lessons will have a positive effect on the social generalisation of the educational tools acquired.

Coping with and caring for the identity fracture, defending of the identity of the place and its resources, supporting the family system as a privileged sphere of growth, constantly working with the world of the school to allow the dust of destruction to be transformed into the dust of human reconstruction. The challenge is facing the hypercomplexity that emerges as a result of disastrous events and implementing, as institutions and organisations that work in the social, effective methodologies, which place into the network the widest range of professionalism (service coordinators, psychologists, social workers, educators, teachers, pedagogues, doctors, etc.).

## **2.2. Key recommendations for resilient territorial reconstruction**

The following recommendations are based on the conviction gained through the experience that in an emergency (but also ordinary) context, the system defines itself in its complexity when the interconnection between controllable variables, those that are independent and emerging subsystems, give rise to a degree of entropy capable of leading the system to chaos. Therefore, in

general, the complexity of the systems is expressed more in questions of output and input, for which resolutions using automated logical deduction appear ineffective (Lolli, Pappagallo, 2008). Moreover, aware of the fact that the complexity demands an “inter-multi-disciplinary” methodological approach (Tinti, 1998), the following are provided as essential but powerful recommendations, so that the system can be recognised in its resistance to maladaptive stimuli deriving from the environment and in its ability to open the interface to new adaptive orders (Gandolfi, 1999), thus initiating a resilient construction and reconstruction process. But this is not all. The recommendations set out below and shown in the table also have the objective of guaranteeing a homeostasis for the whole system, thus reducing the risk that it might go beyond the limit that separates the divergent from the convergent<sup>4</sup>. Here below are six essential recommendations for managing complex systems and increasing levels of social resilience arising from experience in the field and the profound reflections of a resilient institution.

Guidelines for institutional approaches to the complexities of the system in emergency

<b>1</b>	Adoption of an evaluative reading of the complex systems that respects the conformation of divergent variables and multidimensionality, the interconnection of the same based on the evidence for identifying the convergent and reticular nature of problems.
<b>2</b>	Adoption of programmatic and operational tools with a high degree of convergence aimed at restoring the homeostasis of the complex system, taking into account the social norms of solidarity internalised by the territorial stakeholders.

4. The above concept outlines how a complex system moves on the brink of chaos the dynamic of which is well expressed by Tinti *et al.*: “[...] divergent processes can render the system ungovernable and even make it fall into chaos. This is obviously not a desired outcome, because a chaotic system is not an effective problem solver in any way. The ideal situation is to increase the complexity of the system, thus increasing its ability to deal with complex problems, to the point of bringing it to the limit of chaos, but not beyond. If the system crosses the threshold beyond which chaos reigns, an intervention is necessary that brings it back to the edge of chaos” (Tinti, Aquarone, Micca, Cresta, 2010, p. 15).

3	Adoption of programmatic, operational and regulatory tools capable of increasing a high level of integration and cooperation between the territorial stakeholders, and support for and recovery of the social identity of the territory to the reconstruction of the person and of a resilient environment.
4	Adoption of a programme of multidisciplinary and multidimensional interventions with a strong integrative character for families and children. Educational resources find their vital place within intra-family relationships. Dedicating space to support them will have positive repercussions on social relationships in general. Furthermore, supporting children means supporting the resilience of their society of reference.
5	Adoption of a programme of multidisciplinary and multidimensional interventions with a strong character of integration in collaboration with the academic and research worlds to increase levels of resilience for families, schools and children, since it is clear that relations between families and the world of school represent pedagogical and educational workshops for the generation of adaptive variables in the management of social relations.
6	Adoption of evidence-based multidimensional multidisciplinary tools founded on a structural reconstruction that takes into account the profound sphere of the person, the construction of a resilient environment able to promote wellbeing and health and one which places the territorial stakeholders at the centre of the decision-making processes.

## 2.3. Conclusions

In emergencies social tissues and individual conditions undergo rapid and continuous transformations and require ongoing evaluation. Certainly maintaining an overall vision with a strong integrative character, implementing actions capable of maintaining high levels of resilience and considering the system as an interconnection of variables that are sometimes uncontrollable, undoubtedly increases the sense of the institutional mission. This cannot overlook the person and individuals in the decision-making processes, especially when, in an emergency context, the sense of identity disintegration and the role of territorial stakeholders can be pushed into the background and sometimes questioned.

It is clear that the explication of any model of reconstruction/transformation represents only a useful and effective, but at the same time partial trace of the overall and not wholly truthfully represented reality. In this, the socioeconomic and educational regenerative models, to be effective, have to consider, in a dynamic, evolutionary-augmentative way, the profound needs of the territory and the connection of the totality of the instruments and resources.

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### **3. Promoting resilience after a catastrophe: a pedagogical approach**

*Alessandro Vaccarelli*

#### **3.1. Theoretical framework**

Every natural disaster (an earthquake, a tsunami, a flood, etc.) contains in itself, among the many emergencies, the “childhood” emergency.

The vulnerability of children is a fact, especially when they are affected by an event of human loss or they experience profound experiences of pain and fear. They are also the symbol of life and the desire to live and, often, when they are both victims and survivors, they have a lot to teach us.

The ability of a child to react positively depends on internal factors, but also on how much the adult world is able to accompany them in the stressful or traumatic experience and the extent to which this experience is managed and elaborated by the adults themselves.

An adequately resilient individual is often surrounded by a family and social network that is in turn adequately resilient, which offers support and help. In collective traumas, this might not always happen: the child who has experienced an earthquake, a natural catastrophe, who has experienced grief (in the family or at school), often has to deal with adults of reference who are living the same inner difficulties on an *adult scale*, which poses the problem of how effective the support that the adult can provide to the child might be. In this case, the world of education beyond the family comes into play, whether in school or elsewhere, which has the task of supporting children in their resilient processes.

What is resilience?

*Resilience* comes from the Latin verb *resilire*, which means “jump, leap, bounce”. In the physical sciences it means the ability of a material to absorb energy when it is subjected to elastic deformation (bamboo cane, for example, is endowed with great resilience); its opposite is fragility, which instead refers to materials with an elastic charge very close to breaking point. Likewise, resilience and vulnerability refer to individuals in the face of critical events, due to severe stress and/or actual trauma. It is very important, from a pedagogical as well as psychological point of view, to understand the factors that compose and explain people’s resilient behaviour.

A scholar of great international importance, who among other things placed the issue of resilience among educational and pedagogical problems (see Malaguti, Cyrulnik, 2007), is the neuropsychiatrist Cyrulnik who considers resilience as a process of elaborating trauma, through which the repair produces change and frustration can be transformed into opportunities for the individual.

## **3.2. The dimensions of resilience**

The development of resilience, much studied in the field of the psychological sciences, can affect the “educable” nature of the human subject and should be promoted consciously within educational contexts.

In defining the frameworks for pedagogical intervention it is necessary to identify the factors responsible for the capacity for resilience. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we can identify at least six fundamental dimensions of resilient behaviour:

### *1. Coping and appraisal*

To cope, resist, react, fight against. We are talking about cognitive and behavioural efforts to deal with specific demands, internal or external, which are evaluated as excessive compared to the resources of an individual, as well as the ability to assess situations that occurs

thanks to the emotions (Lazarus, 1991). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping is *centred on the problem* when operational and cognitive strategies are implemented to reduce the risk of possible damage generated by the critical situation; instead it is *centred on the emotions* when it aims to contain negative emotions. All this is possible thanks to an evaluation of the situation, therefore, to appraisal skills: the event is interpreted and evaluated on the basis of our personal wellbeing in planning the action. Faced with a critical situation, individuals react differently: anger, feelings of anguish, guilt and anxiety (Lazarus, Folkman, 2014), and this is also explained by different capacities of individual appraisal and coping. The different paths on which people can orient these strategies concern *control* (planning objectives, regulation of activities, management of emotions), *behavioural and social withdrawal* (avoidance, dependence), the *search for social support* (informative, affective, cooperative), and *refusal* (denial, distraction, minimisation).

The control of impulses, the planning of actions and decision-making are skills linked to peculiar cognitive abilities that emerge in adolescence. Only around 11 years old are children able to perform basic *cognitive operations* in order to fully implement *coping and appraisal* strategies. The greater vulnerability of children is also explained starting from this and must be taken into account within any educational action.

## 2. *The feeling of a safe base*

Often what makes the difference between a child who lives a trauma supported and accepted in the family and one who does not have good parental support and the feeling of security related to belonging to a group (in this case the primary family group), which gives the individual autonomy, independence and, as we shall see, self-esteem. Limited care and containment experiences are a significant risk factor for the development of traumatic anxieties and inner insecurities that render the individual more vulnerable. So for Bowlby (1989): from the trusted person, the figure of primary attachment, generally the mother, comes that safe base from which the child can “start out” for any experience of knowledge or exploration of the world.

The safe base is of course not just about the family. In the event of a lack of family support, the feeling of belonging to a different group can generate an internal *safe base* in the same way. Thus school, educational groups, associations, mutual-aid groups, etc. can assume, from time to time, the function of welcome, containment and psychological protection.

### 3. *Self-esteem*

Self-esteem also derives from the safe base in a way. The prefix “self” certainly does not indicate self-referential and self-generation of a trait that concerns the individual but which depends to a large extent on relationships with others. It refers to the image that a subject builds of themselves and their abilities, to the extent to which they feel adequate in relation to a situation and important to others, to how much and to what extent they recognise their own merits and skills. One of the pioneering studies on resilience, conducted by Emma Werner (1992) on 698 newborns on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, observed longitudinally over a period of 40 years, highlighted the relationship between self-esteem and social support. A number of the subjects studied by Werner had been exposed to various risk factors, such as a difficult birth, precarious economic conditions, membership of families with problems of alcoholism, mental illness, violence and abuse. All the same, the results showed that, at the age of 18, while 2/3 of the children exposed to risk factors presented with various kinds of difficulties, the remainder had grown up in an acceptable manner, establishing stable relationships, carrying out work activities and displaying constructive attitudes. A common trait of resilient children, according to Werner, is having had the opportunity to be able to count on at least one person who, during their lifetime, was able to accept them unconditionally, regardless of their temperament, physical appearance or intellectual abilities. In short, the presence of an accepting and confident adult of reference would generate high self-esteem and elevated behavioural functionality in the development of resilience.



#### 4. *The locus of control*

The locus of control is the mental attitude with which we face situations that have causes external to us: to what extent do we resign ourselves to them? Or to what extent do we look in our internal locus for energies or potentialities to face or at least analyse the situation with a view to finding solutions? The locus of control therefore has to do with the subjective perception through which someone feels able to influence events, to have control of the situation, to hold the reins in their hand. It therefore refers to confidence in the individual possibilities of managing a situation that is influenced by chance or external causes. A distinction is generally made between people with an *internal* locus of control and those with an *external* locus of control (see Cantoni, 2014): if the former trust their own potential and feel that their existence is the result of their own choices and actions, the latter attribute the responsibility of conditioning their existence to external causes or chance. Naturally, resilience is distributed more widely within the first group of people, who are the most autonomous and most motivated in dealing with problematic situations by relying on their own resources. Before, during and after a catastrophic event, people behave differently and this not only has a psychological-internal cause, but, reasonably, is also influenced by historical-cultural factors and therefore by the educational transmission that orients the vision of things and the experiences of individual or collective trauma.

#### 5. *Humour and sense of the comic, but at the right time*

When someone is able to smile at their misfortunes, with humour or irony, liberating processes are facilitated that can allow a cognitive reworking of the emotion associated with the trauma (Isidori, Vaccarelli, 2013). Smile therapy and the intervention of clowns in crisis situations in which children are exposed to situations of vulnerability are very popular. We might consider the presence of smile and clown therapy in these contexts as very useful, but it has to be underlined that the smile cannot and must not undermine what we imagine as its opposite, crying, which is a fundamental element, culturally more and more marginalised, in the search for and

construction of personal wellbeing. After great catastrophes, a few hours and days after the event, numerous clowns often appear from different organisations to bring and give smiles to the children of the camps. The unequivocal message is: children have to immediately start smiling again. But there is a time to laugh and there is a time to cry. Often we return to smiling only when we have cried enough. We must not be afraid to welcome the crying of a child. Often we have to hope that they do so. And so, at certain moments, the clowns can wait.

### **3.3. Pedagogical principles for the promotion of resilience**

Parents, psychologists, teachers, educators, social workers and volunteers can be classified within the happy expression “tutors of resilience”, introduced by Cyrulnik (2002, cf. also Castelli, 2013). It is not easy to promote resilience in children, especially when their vulnerabilities are exposed to the trials and tribulations of life. Seeing a child suffer, standing beside them, accompanying them on an upward path again, requires great energy, and demands, from the adult as well, a certain “dose” of resilience: educators who burn out, parents who find out what depression is, emergency workers who manifest, like the victims of the emergency, the symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome. A burden, sometimes perceived as emotionally unsustainable. The educational relationship thus takes the path of emotional sharing, of putting oneself in the shoes of a subject, but also, naturally, of reflexive choices, of the techniques of the helping relationship and, of course, looking after one’s own professional resilience.

Elena Malaguti says that the process of resilience cannot be traced to a laboratory, a technique, a specific therapy: “It is possible, on the contrary, to use the tools of education (music, theatre, play, art, active education, didactic paths and integrated disciplines)”, as well as rehabilitation and re-education techniques (again: writing, theatre, music...) (Malaguti, 2005, p. 175).

From the perspectives under consideration, resilience can be promoted in the educational relationship, considering at least three major principles:

1. working on resilience implies a knowledge of its factors and their silent presence within educational activities. This is about giving meaning to the interventions and thematic and methodological choices starting from the components of resilience, which we know in the terms *appraisal*, *coping*, *self-esteem*, and a *safe base*. These should be promoted simultaneously or in a privileged manner each time in carrying out the activities (creative, narrative, cooperative, etc.);
2. resilience implies ethics, altruism, solidarity. The dimension of ethics, which should always be kept in mind, must always push us to remember the profundity of the concept of resilience and therefore to reject the logic – from manuals on how to be happy and successful in a few easy stages – of reductionism, simplification and the hedonistic quest for superiority: neither Superman nor Wonder Woman are symbols of resilience;
3. creativity and “lightness”, which render the weight of the situation bearable, represent the contexts within which knowledge, strategies, processes and resilient emotions are expressed to the best of their ability.

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## **Part II**

### **Guidelines and activities**



# **1. Resilient education: guidelines for educators and teachers in emergency situations**

*Alessandro Vaccarelli*

## **1.1. “Beauty will save the world”: guidelines for pedagogical coordinators, educators and teachers in emergency situations**

“Beauty will save the world”: this reflection stems from this utterance of Prince Myshkin in Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*, starting from the presupposition of beauty understood in both its aesthetic and ethical dimensions. In emergencies, of whatever sort (natural catastrophes, wars, situations of social emergency, etc.), finding and being able to glimpse beauty can seem a difficult task; what appears “beautiful” is the effort of people to produce beauty or to look for something that produces it. The link between resilience and the production of beauty has to do with the capacity of this action to render us human, conferring on us our identity as a species and making us better equipped to face situations of adversity. At an educational level, this perspective leads us to give a different meaning to the space itself of education that assumes an importance in the lives of its young inhabitants, especially in emergencies and post-emergency situations. Acting on space facilitates the construction of the idea of beauty that should be sought and studied. This refers to the creation of an educational setting that brings colour to a place where everything seems to be grey, that privileges and places at its heart narratives, relationships and human interaction. Any place can become the context for experiencing the beauty of education, welcoming the relationship as a gesture of care and



becoming a container for the beauty of stories, people, the alphabet and alphabets. A tent, a container, the square in a welcoming camp, the street, they can all be seen as places where the promotion and construction of beauty – shared with children – is capable of restoring dignity and opening eyes to the future.

Having stated this premise, which forms the background to every educational intervention, we will try to focus, in the form of guidelines, on some basic principles for organising educational activities in situations where disaster has struck.



Tent school (Città Reale Primary School)

## **1.2. Guidelines for resilient education and combating educational poverty**

UNICEF<sup>5</sup> reminds us that education in emergency situations is not only important as a fundamental right for minors, but also as a form of protection, psychological recovery and social integration, thanks to the emancipating potential education itself can offer. In this sense, access to quality education becomes essential insofar as it: represents a fundamental right for all minors, in all countries and in any circumstances (war, natural or environmental catastrophe, etc.); it is essential for the development of childhood in all settings; it favours regular schooling, which ought to be considered one of the main tools for restoring a sense of normality in the lives of

5. Educación en situaciones de emergencia y desastres: Guía de preparativos para el sector educació, <https://www.unicef.org/panama/spanish/herramiental.pdf>.

children and adolescents in destabilised communities; it allows educational emergencies as a result of disasters to be dealt with, such as issues related to safety (based on the risks to which the subjects are exposed), to health, to potential factors of social marginalisation (UNICEF). Save the Children (2017a, 2017b), an international organisation with a great commitment to supporting children in emergency settings, recommends a rapid and timely pedagogical and psychosocial response through the setting-up of protected areas and the implementation of educational activities capable of supporting the resilience of children and adolescents. Educational work in emergencies should also be seen as preventing the risk that **educational poverty** finds a place when processes of individual and social functioning are flung into serious crisis by catastrophic events (Save the Children, 2017). The concept of educational poverty is extremely important insofar as it also extends the idea of poverty to conditions that are not strictly economic. It is a question of the deprivation or limitation of the possibility of learning, experimenting, developing skills, talents and aspirations:

For a child, educational poverty means being excluded from acquiring the skills necessary to live in a world characterised by the knowledge economy, by speed, by innovation. At the same time, educational poverty also means limiting the opportunity to grow from an emotional point of view, of relationships with others, of the discovery of oneself and of the world (Save the Children, 2014, p. 4).

Based on the indications emerging internationally (also thanks to the work of large organisations such as UNICEF, Save the Children, UNESCO) and the experience gained with the “Velino for Children” project, we can draw up some guidelines which will be closely linked with the activities proposed in the following chapters.

<b>1</b>	Promoting an inter-institutional (municipalities, health boards, schools) and multi/interdisciplinary network undertaking with other professionals: psychologists, doctors, social workers, etc.
<b>2</b>	Confronting catastrophe experiences, including mourning, with the children. For children it is essential not to censor emotions, even the most painful, in order to be able to better process the experience.
<b>3</b>	Placing narratives and emotions at the centre of educational action. Narrating oneself does not simply mean giving vent to the word: educators and teachers should be directing children towards a reflexive and self-reflexive function of narration, able to support the appraisal skills and self-esteem of the subjects.
<b>4</b>	Also supporting the resilience of the adults who are points of reference (teachers, educators, parents) through targeted training courses and the activation of psycho-pedagogical listening centres.
<b>5</b>	Facing with the classes/groups the theme of “earthquake” (or whatever other catastrophe), both from an educational perspective (what it is, prevention, how to defend against it), and in relation to the consequences on individual lives and communities.
<b>6</b>	Promoting an intelligent use of technologies and social networks, which might motivate children and maintain social relations also when the community is removed from the locations of the catastrophe.
<b>7</b>	Promoting educational activities that involve the use of the most varied languages (music, sport, theatre, dance, visual arts, etc.) and creativity. The attention paid to educational environments has to convey the sense of “beauty”: embellishing the spaces with artistic works, keeping them tidy, maintaining relationships, organising the spaces in a creative way, etc.
<b>8</b>	Encouraging moments of education and intercultural exchange, not only among the children but also and especially among adults. The consequences of disasters can increase phenomena of intolerance or competition between cultural groups.
<b>9</b>	Fostering cooperation, solidarity, group wellbeing, to support resilience not only individually but also from a community perspective.
<b>10</b>	Organising tutoring and support services for study, both because study represents the element of continuity between past and future, and because attention skills are negatively affected by trauma and stress.

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## **2. How to manage mourning with children and adolescents: what teachers and educators need to know**

*Carla Iorio*

It is inevitable to go through the night to greet the new day, face the winter to discover a fresh spring, say goodbye to youth to fully enter adulthood... Nobody can discover new oceans if they do not have the courage to leave the shore.

Working through mourning is a time-consuming process, and for this reason humanity has always sought suitable ceremonies and behaviour to face this difficult moment. As De Martino states (1959) it is necessary «to avoid dying with what dies, allowing it instead to die in us, transforming what remains of the loss, both at the individual and social level, into something that can be invested again in life» (Gullotta, 2001).

### **2.1. Theoretical framework**

Freud (1917), addressing the theme of mourning, speaks about the loss of an object of love (e.g. a favourite toy, a beloved person, the country of origin, etc.), or the affective state of an individual deriving from the loss of the opportunity to meet their most significant needs.

The expression “work of mourning” (ibid., 1915) defines the energetic process necessary to begin that psychic elaboration that will allow us to internalise the image of the deceased and reorganise our entire internal world without the physical presence of the loved one. A long and complex intrapsychic process “in waves”, which leads to a conscious resignation with regard to the loss suffered and

determines the transition to substitutive satisfactions and objects. A significant loss cannot be absorbed in a short period of time, the experience of sorrow needs to be reorganised through a series of gestures, acts and reactions that are the prelude to a transformation for those who remain and who question themselves regarding the sense of surviving, having lost in the person who has gone a part of themselves as well.

John Bowlby (1982) calls it “*emotional torment*”, and its outcome depends on the following factors:

- *time*, just as the process of attachment requires time, so too does that of detachment; the more powerful the link, the more painful the price of separation will be; time alone does not ease the pain;
- *external rituals and manifestations*, significant changes in life need rituals in order not to remain incomplete and unfinished; funerals, wakes, anniversary Masses or memorial services, expressions of condolence on the part of friends and acquaintances, these are all ritual forms that help in the elaboration of mourning to ease the loss;
- *psychological processes*, the overcoming of a loss is linked to a series of stages to be completed:
  - acceptance;
  - the expression of feelings of mourning and pain;
  - the gradual overcoming of reactions that prevent recovery;
  - the adaptation to the inevitable change of life;
  - involvement in new relationships, in jobs and projects that reappear in life.

Therefore the “time of the presence” of mourning is strictly individual and dependent on multiple factors such as degree of kinship, age, emotional involvement, any illness and its duration, the means and place of death, the opportunity to have expressed a form of farewell with the dying person or the sudden and unexpected nature of the event.

John Bowlby (1982) for a long time focused on the study of the construction and breaking of emotional bonds by identifying 4 *phases of mourning*:

1. a first phase of acute *despair*, characterised by a state of being stunned, protest, reactions of anger and pain, refusal to accept the

loss; this phase can last several days and can affect the person for the duration of the grieving process.

2. a phase of *intense desire* and *searching* for the deceased person that can last from a few months to years;
3. a phase of *disorganisation* and *despair*; the reality of the loss begins to be accepted, and the person grieving seems to be closed away in themselves, apathetic and indifferent. Insomnia, weight loss and the feeling that life has lost its meaning often occur. The memory of the person who has died is a constant present, along with a sense of disappointment when they realise that what remains are only memories and that nothing can change what has happened;
4. a phase of *reorganisation*, during which the acute aspects of pain begin to decrease and the afflicted person begins to sense a return to life; the deceased person is now remembered with a sense of joy, but also of sadness, and their image is experienced internally.

In the process of mourning, the pain oscillates between intrusion and torpor, until a repeated examination of reality and an exposure to memories and emotions leads to a “desensitisation” of the negative emotions, leading towards a recovery of the sense of control and mastery.

For children and adolescents, a sudden loss such as that which occurs in disasters, where everything is unexpected, can assume different characteristics; in fact, together with pain and despair alternate a desire to move forward and a euphoria for the new. “Mourning in children can be thought of as a land shaken by the earthquake, upset in its form but ready to welcome and sprout new seeds, to house new homes. The signs of destruction remain, but life does not take long to create a new equilibrium, even if the deflagration was violent and unexpected” (Pellai A., Tambotini B., 2011, p. 14).

Among the emotional reactions present in children following these events, we might see:

- a sense of despair; in a young child this tends to manifest itself in the form of symptoms and often arises from the idea that they would like to be comforted by the person who is no longer there;

- anger towards the person who has left and towards the adults who take care of them; anger is a healthy response to the trauma of loss;
- a sense of guilt and a feeling of being somehow responsible for what happened (e.g.: *“if I had done such-and-such...”*);
- the fear of suffering future losses, separation anxiety from the fear of suffering new losses (e.g.: *“if I move from here something might happen to them as well”*);
- loneliness, stronger when the child has no other figures of attachment from whom to receive comfort and when they finds themselves visiting places they had visited together with the person who is no longer there.

It is important that teachers and educators recognise what might be signs of discomfort, of a traumatic event still alive in their students:

- sleep disorders that can interfere with school performance;
- difficulty in concentrating;
- memory difficulties (grasping new concepts, recall skills);
- oscillation between moments of apathy and hyperactivity;
- isolation/closing;
- headache, stomach ache, loss of appetite;
- regression to previous stages of development (enuresis, returning to parents’ bed...).

To elaborate (from the Latin labor = effort) therefore means to work through (and not to pass over) the reality of personal meanings and painful feelings, through an active process of choice that includes emotional expression, narration, sharing and action.

## 2.2. Guidelines

Terror appears where the ability to understand ends. It is important for children and adolescents to make pain and suffering communicable, to promote the resumption of affective communication within the school environment, the first place from which reconstruction begins in contexts of emergency, to then be transported into their family contexts.



The school has the potential to begin a psycho-educational discourse with families on how to deal with a delicate issue such as mourning, starting from the construction of transversal communication bridges, with both pupils and parents, and to activate a support network around the minor so that they might fully embrace it.

For this reason it is possible to fill the *suitcase of resources* for the resilient teacher, drawing up guidelines to address the issue of mourning starting from the school:

1	Always tell the truth about what happened. With YOUNGER CHILDREN: do not dwell on it, but provide brief, clear and concise information on the incident, reassurance and communication regarding any changes (home, daily life) that will occur. With OLDER CHILDREN: it is possible to provide more detailed information.
2	Children often try to defend adults from their pain with silence. Do not force them to speak, but rather let them know that you are ready to listen to them when they are ready to talk about it. You can say what you imagine they are feeling, or how most children feel when bad things happen. These conversations are usually brief, but very useful for children.
3	Share emotions gently; if they want to, let them talk about their feelings whenever they feel the need to do so, make them feel that being upset, afraid, angry or sad is normal, it has also happened to us adults.
4	If the child expresses sadness and cries, get close to them and allow them to let off steam in an embrace or next to you until the emotionality flows away by itself.
5	If the child has crises of anger, express it in words to help them regulate it: e.g. <i>“Are you angry? Do you know that Mum is very angry as well because Maria’s gone? What would you say to letting off some steam together? Let’s crumple up some newspapers and throw them in the bin along with all our anger!”</i>
6	Do not use phrases like: “I know how you feel, it could be worse, don’t think about it, you will be stronger thanks to this”; these hinder the manifestation of painful experiences and devalue the emotions experienced.
7	Reassure children about their total non-involvement in the events in order to avoid any possible “survivor” guilt over the incident.
8	Explain that death is not a rejection or a punishment, but belongs to the cycle of life and is a natural passage of human existence.

## 2.3. Activities

### Emotional narration as a tool for rebirth

**Keywords:** trauma, individual, group.

#### Premise

A recommended activity in the first period of return to school immediately after the traumatic events. The dynamics of the group, conveyed through the practice of circle time, becomes a listening space to leave feelings and thoughts for those who have experienced various types of loss.

Telling each other, entering into a relationship, we discover that, besides the painful emotion, there can be comfort, tenderness, empathy or understanding; narration helps to integrate lived reality by attributing meaning and sense to the event that allows the subject to store it in time as an event that has passed.

The activity is designed for individuals aged 6 to 18, adapting the type of language and contents depending on the age group.

#### Aims

1. To encourage self-understanding and emotional catharsis.
2. To facilitate communication and knowledge of the universality of emotions linked to traumatic events.
3. To promote a sense of belonging and altruism.

#### Path

*Layout of the working area:*

– arranged in a circle with chairs.

*Time:* from 45 minutes to 1 hour per class group, depending on emerging needs.

*Procedure:* explain the activity that is going to be carried out together.

1. Each student writes their name on the sheets and attaches them to their clothes (this is useful to help with introducing new students in the classroom).
2. Identify small shared rules to facilitate circle time, which can also be written together in poster form, such as: raise your hand to speak; listen to your companions and wait for them to finish speaking; every thought or idea that you want to express is important.
3. Give the children two white sheets on which to write, thinking about the experiences they have lived so far, a situation in which they experienced emotions of sadness, fear or anger and a moment in which they felt joy. Each child will read together in a circle what they wrote and the communication will be directed by the conductor.

*Conductor:* teacher/educator, this is, a facilitator of communication who lets the students speak using active listening (Di Genova, *infra*) and where

necessary providing answers and information about the theme of death (see guidelines above).

*Reflections:* this simple activity allows those who have lived an experience of mourning to feel less alone; stimulating sharing, it might emerge that other classmates will have experienced the loss of a loved one or have seen someone close to them suffer in a specific moment of life.

*Indications for the conductor:* it is advisable to always give feedback on how the discussion unfolded, highlighting the positive aspects “*I’m glad you sat in a circle without too much confusion, because you were all able to participate and pay attention*”.

## **Building “Anti-Seismic” Relationships**

**Keywords:** ties, resilience, sense of community.

### **Premise**

This activity, suitable for individuals between 9 and 18, aims to create and strengthen the bonds in the class group and stimulate the creation of a “safe” place to be internalised, one that is flexible and present in every location and moment of the day when children feel insecure. Words help to give sense and meaning to experience, so as not just to feel it. They allow us to move from emotional confusion to a sense of control. Recommended immediately after the previously proposed *path*.

### **Aims**

1. To build positive relationships.
2. To promote the notion of the class group as a “safe” place.
3. To increase awareness of the sense of belonging to the network.

### **Path**

*Time:* 1 hour per class group.

*Procedure:* once the circle is formed, explain the activity that is going to be carried out together, with the same behaviour rules described in the previous activity.

1. To start, an “ice-breaking” exercise: use a soft rubber ball and ask everyone to choose a partner who has not yet been chosen, throw the ball to them and say: “I’m glad you’re there because...” The aim here is to focus relationships in the “here and now” by highlighting the positive aspect of being there, which is often underestimated. It is an exercise of appreciation to create a positive group atmosphere and create the basis for a stable and safe container.
2. The circle of safety: take paper and pen and draw a circle in the middle of a sheet of paper. Inside the circle write situations that are absolutely safe for children (e.g.: a place, the presence of other people, a classmate, an animal, an object...) and then colour the circle in pleasant and reassuring tones. Outside the circle draw or write situations that generate insecurity.

Put the ones that are less unsafe nearer the circle and the more worrying ones further away. So in the circle there will be safe situations and those that generate fear, worry and sadness will be outside. Observe the circle, which now contains all the images and feelings that everyone has recalled: this is their own circle of safety, to be taken everywhere, in which it is possible to dive when they feel a need to recover security and trust. Whoever wants, freely, can tell the class group about their own drawing. Be careful to promote a circular communication so that everyone speaks to the extent that they want.

### **Reparative games after a catastrophe**

**Keywords:** resistance, repair, resilience.

**Target:** children between 3 and 6 years old.

#### **Path**

Children's play has a liberating function. The child actively reproduces an unpleasant experience they have suffered, liberating themselves from the anguish associated with it. It also has a symbolic function. In fact, the child temporarily and partially abandons the reality to plunge into a world of fantasy in which every desire can find space and be achieved through the invention of a symbolic game, thanks to which the children themselves can dominate a situation that is painful for them. The active repetition of the traumatic event allows the child to emerge from the passivity that generates anxiety, preserving the link with the object of desire. Thus the game transforms anguish into pleasure.

Teachers and educators might face the following situations that children spontaneously represent:

1. *Games involving construction*, as a reparative experience, to transform the house destroyed by the catastrophe from an unsafe place to one that is once more safe, if reinforced and better built. We can therefore support the child when they are playing at "destroying" the house the way the earthquake did, and then building a stronger and more stable one close to it, and observing the difference together.
2. *Rescue games*, in a group children often act out a scene of destruction and debris and take the roles of fire-fighters or rescuers, who save people. Carefully observing, we notice that they tend to rewrite the finale with a different outcome, where all members of the community are saved. In this way the child regains possession of their power of action, moving from a state of passivity with respect to the traumatic event suffered, to a state of being active. It is important not to interrupt this reparatory moment, despite its powerful staging, for the fear that after they will be worse off. In these moments, through play, we witness an emotional and liberating catharsis of the moods and most distressing images of the event lived, which a young child would be unable to express verbally to an adult.

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## 3. Narratives and resilience

*Loredana Padovani*

### 3.1. Theoretical framework

Whether intervening immediately after a traumatic event or a certain period of time later, the possibility of using words through narration and self-narration is a privileged way for the processing of traumas and experiences. Educators who do not stimulate speech, stories and narratives related to situations and experiences, in some way encourage removal and denial, which are problematic and potential generators of further forms of difficulty. The most difficult situations that people find themselves living very often find in self-narration, in the form of diary, but in other literary genres as well, a space of recognition, for recomposing the fragments of existence, for re-attributing sense and meaning to what was experienced. A catastrophe powerfully redefines the spaces of identity: physical and symbolic spaces, the spaces of relationships with others, the spaces of intimacy of individuals (Vaccarelli, 2016).

Deprived of the “material” reference points (the house, objects, places...) and in the absence, often, of *significant others* taken by the earthquake (relatives, friends, fellow citizens), and directed towards places not associated with normal life (tent cities, hotels...), the identity of children and young people often turns to the word, which takes on a stronger centrality: speaking, writing, the verbal expression that accompanies other languages (music, theatre, etc.) play vicarious functions in relation to that part of the identity that seemed to no longer exist.

And when the word is “weak”, in the sense that the verbal skills of a subject are still immature, or is “tired”, in the sense that they cannot find the desire or the willingness to express it, drawing can be an excellent alternative. Drawing represents an extremely interesting terrain for the analysis of the experiences of children and their inner world, though this is an area for technical and specialised figures. Younger children especially can express their emotions, their affective states and their deepest feelings, much more than they can through verbal language (Federici, 2005; Vaccarelli, 2015a). Used in psycho-diagnostic techniques, this brings out aspects that would otherwise remain latent, certainly always susceptible to interpretation, and allows us also to verify how children reorganise and rework their personal experience, their relationship with the world and with significant others, through “projections” of the internalisation of such experiences on a sheet of paper. From a pedagogical point of view, drawing, in a sort of “narration” through the use of space, the way of depicting the characters, the use of colour, allows us to work on dimensions that do not necessarily go as far as the world of the profound or to issues of that come under the exclusive competence of psychologists. They also allow us to explore more “superficial” dimensions that tell us a lot about the personal reworking of the social experience, about the way of representing oneself among others and of grasping, in the “company” of specific emotions, the differences between a before and an after referring to a particularly significant event (see Vaccarelli, 2015a). If a child draws sad things, we can add beautiful things to the sheet with them, thus building a common and shared narrative that provides an outlet for and a perspective on childhood fears.

## 3.2. Activities

### ITACA, a narrative game for resilience<sup>6</sup>

**Keywords:** self-esteem, resilience, autobiographical narration.

#### Premise

The following game was used in the training of teachers in Amatrice after the 2016 earthquake, to bring out in them an awareness of the importance of self-narration in the construction of resilient processes. The poem *Ithaca* by Constantine P. Cavafy (1992) provides the name for this game (Vaccarelli, 2015), designed especially for the contexts of adult education (teachers, educators, social workers, volunteers, parents), but also adaptable to childhood and adolescence. The game makes use of narration seen as an opportunity and chance, for individuals and groups, to weave, starting from their own life experiences, mosaics of reflections, meanings and emotions that can be useful in working on motivation and self-esteem. *Ithaca* stimulates the participants to reread their role in relation to their own existence by assuming the role of heroes and heroines. Everyone becomes heroes and heroines, because everyone in the game of life experiences strength, courage and fear together, as well as initiative, and these give way to change and transformation. In *Itaca*, the hero becomes the figure-bridge through which to read not only the relationship between individuals who want to and can know each other better, but also the relationship between individuals and their lives. In this sense *Itaca* intends to focus on resilience, the importance of self-esteem, the feeling of ourselves and the safe base, and the analysis and evaluation of situations (appraisal): the hero and their act, as the stimuli of the game (feeling like a hero or a heroine), seek to promote a rereading of their lives or of a particular moment in which self-esteem emerges, the feeling of being actors and authors, powerful in the face of adversity and things-that-are-bigger-than-us, without however assuming attitudes of omnipotence or denial of pain or defeat.

#### Aims

1. To favour narration, memories and recollections, and sharing them with the group.
2. To promote self-esteem through reflexive and narrative strategies.

#### Path

The game stimulates memory, recollection and individual emotions starting from 32 cards containing illustrations and phrases that have the indication of an action which is generic and not very clearly defined, which the hero/heroine performs or a situation in which they find themselves (Table 1). The micro-stories that emerge from the single cards extracted by the participants are then shared and “mixed” to create a shared story, which is credible and

6. The game is adapted from: A. Vaccarelli, 2015b.



in which settings, elements, characters and facts are actually drawn from their shared stories.

### *The meeting*

Each member of the group is invited to draw a card from a deck of 30. The conductor suggests not reading the contents of the card immediately, but to wait till everyone has their own. They also suggest to the participants that they should not share the contents of the card with the others. It should be specified to the group that the cards refer to the life of each member, which should be re-read as the life of a hero or heroine: the hero does not always perform heroic deeds, sometimes they can experience the feelings of all human beings, they can enjoy the heat of the sun or the company of friends. Sometimes, even if they are afraid and capable of crying, the hero reveals themselves for what they are: a brave person. At other times, they are nowhere near knowing how to be that.

After starting the reading, participants are invited to close their eyes and think about one or more particularly significant moments of their life evoked by the phrase on the card. The extracted cards are mixed up again and notebooks are distributed in which everyone can freely represent through words and drawings what the card evokes in terms of memories, emotions and settings. The choice of means of expression is absolutely free, just the textual choices have to be free. It should be made clear that the contents will soon be shared. All this with 5 minutes of time.

At the end, the conductor takes the cards, mixes them up and extracts the first one. The person who recognises themselves in the card is then invited to tell, in 10 minutes, of the experiences, memories and emotions evoked by the images or words contained therein. The person called on to speak shows what they have written or represented. The others are invited to ask questions in order to obtain details (about the places, times and other characters involved) and to reconstruct the evoked “microhistory”. A sandglass will mark the time; without ever interrupting abruptly the person speaking can be given an additional minute to end their story. The same procedure is repeated for all the participants.

At the end of the round, the conductor invites the members of the group to build a story that is the result of the meeting of all the stories told, which has the following characteristics:

1. a realistic story, in which settings, elements, characters and facts are actually drawn from the shared stories;
2. the hero is not to be identified in any of the “heroes” or “heroines” present: they are a *another*, a new figure, to be defined, who assumes and summarises the characteristics of everyone and adds new ones. It can be a woman or a man, a girl or a boy, a child, an elderly person, of any or no religion, any ethnic group, social background, psycho-physical condition, sexual orientation;
3. it foresees a central event in front of which to articulate the narration;
4. it underlines, at least once, the role of chance (the fortunate or unfortunate meeting, the unforeseen coincidence) and the role of the hero or of the other protagonists facing this;
5. the ending can be open or closed in various ways.

Over a period of 90 minutes, the participants are asked to cooperate in writing the story, which can be organised in a synthetic way by narrative sequences. The conductor will signal the passage of time every 30 minutes. At the end, the conductor will ask all the participants: “How did you feel during the game?” Once the round is over, the group is stimulated to reflect on the whole activity, through, if necessary, a series of stimulus questions, which follow substantially the track used by the observers. The same observer and the conductor will try to report what has emerged and will clarify, also to verify if the objectives of the game have been achieved, the aims, the sense of the game and its theoretical-methodological structure. At the end, the poem “Ithaca” by C. Cavafy is read and then given to all the members of the group (Table 2).

Tab. 1 - The hero's cards

The hero/ heroine WINS	The hero/ heroine RETURNS	The hero/ heroine CONFRONTS	The hero/ heroine LOSES
The hero/ heroine LEAVES	The hero/ heroine IS A FRIEND TO	The hero/ heroine CRIES	The hero/ heroine FIGHTS
The hero/ heroine HELPS	The hero/ heroine LAUGHS	The hero/ heroine SINGS	The hero/ heroine FLEES
The hero/ heroine REMEMBERS	The hero/ heroine PLAYS	The hero/ heroine UNDERSTANDS	The hero/ heroine TRANSFORMS, CHANGES
The hero/ heroine DREAMS	The hero/ heroine MAKES A MISTAKE	The hero/ heroine REPENTS	The hero/ heroine IS SCARED
The hero/ heroine IS LUCKY	The hero/ heroine FORGETS	The hero/ heroine IS BRAVE	The hero/ heroine IS UNLUCKY
The hero/ heroine DANCES	The hero/ heroine HAS STRENGTH	The hero/ heroine IS TRAVELLING	The hero/ heroine IS TRAVELLING
The hero/ heroine IS TRAVELLING	The hero/ heroine IS TRAVELLING	The hero/ heroine FIGHTS	The hero/ heroine REMEMBERS

## **Ithaka**

As you set out for Ithaka  
hope the voyage is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery.  
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,  
angry Poseidon – don't be afraid of them:  
you'll never find things like that on your way  
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,  
as long as a rare excitement  
stirs your spirit and your body.  
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,  
wild Poseidon – you won't encounter them  
unless you bring them along inside your soul,  
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope the voyage is a long one.  
May there be many a summer morning when,  
with what pleasure, what joy,  
you come into harbors seen for the first time;  
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations  
to buy fine things,  
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
sensual perfume of every kind –  
as many sensual perfumes as you can;  
and may you visit many Egyptian cities  
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.  
Arriving there is what you are destined for.  
But do not hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it lasts for years,  
so you are old by the time you reach the island,  
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.  
Without her you would not have set out.  
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.  
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

(C.P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Edited by George Savidis. Revised Edition. Princeton University Press, 1992)

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## **4. Contact with one's own emotions and those of others: playing *Emotica***

*Nicoletta Di Genova*

### **4.1 Theoretical premise**

The whole life of human beings is crossed by emotions, every moment of our existence is accompanied by an emotional state that allows us to live the moment fully and decode reality: emotions can generally be considered constitutive and fundamental elements of growth and human development.

In 1872, Darwin laid the foundations for psycho-evolutionist theories, defining emotions as functional reactions, adaptive responses of the organism, developed at an evolutionary level to improve the interaction between individuals and their environment, increasing the chances of survival (Darwin, 2012).

The debate on the classification of emotions is still ongoing, but we can refer to a pioneer of the modern science of the emotions, Paul Ekman, who using the studies conducted by Darwin, ratified the universality of the expression of emotions, carrying out research based on the study of facial expressions that have proven universal, innate and in continuity with the emotional facial expressions of animals. On the basis of this research, Ekman was able to classify the six primary emotions: joy, fear, sadness, anger, disgust, surprise, and elaborate the classification of secondary emotions that originate from the combination of primary emotions and develop with the growth of the individual and social interaction (Ekman, 2007).

The most recent studies on emotional intelligence can be attributed to Daniel Goleman who has had the merit of making the

discussion on the subject available to a wider public through his highly popular books. Goleman speaks of emotional intelligence by referring to fundamental components: self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation, empathy and relational skills (Goleman, 2015), and it is precisely on the basis of these indications that the activities proposed in this work have been elaborated.

The theoretical cues mentioned reveal the need to educate in the alphabet of emotions in ordinary and daily situations and educational contexts, not only to encourage the growth of individuals who are aware of their needs and capable of an evolution aimed at wellbeing and self-realisation, but also to develop adequate skills to respond to stress or potentially traumatic situations. In these contexts, generated by extraordinary situations, the “work on the emotional sphere” appears even more useful and urgent insofar as emotionality assumes a central position in daily life, bringing to the fore the need to express one’s experience and elaborate it. The scholastic emergency context finds itself having to make room for the emotional baggage of all the players present: pupils, teachers, parents and operators, and to have to configure itself as a space suitable for depositing and rediscovering resources and a sense of “safe base”.

Generally, in the immediate emergency, two “emotional first-aid” techniques are used, carried out by trained and qualified personnel: defusing and debriefing. As regards defusing, we speak of a technique defined as “hot” insofar as it is to be activated in the first 72 hours after the event; this consists of an encounter that aims to re-elaborate in a group setting the experiences and impact of the catastrophic event in order to defuse the potentially traumatic impact, through the sharing of experiences and the externalisation of the feelings of all the participants (leaving however people the freedom to remain silent). According to Isidori, it might also be useful to train the teaching profession in this sort of technique, in particular if we think of teachers taking responsibility for prevention and safety (Isidori, Vaccarelli, 2013).

Only in a subsequent phase, 24-96 hours after the event, is debriefing employed, an intervention that is helpful in preventing the onset of specific syndromes related to the trauma; this action

can only be managed by highly qualified personnel who are able to intervene from the point of view of offering psychological support (Vaccarelli, 2016).

The use and effectiveness of these techniques provide the measure of how functional it is to open up to dialogue and the free expression of self in the educational sphere as well, which will have to become an appropriate container for the reception of all its inhabitants, steering clear of denial or avoidance behaviours that are apparently protective but which, on the contrary, can lead to closure and isolation.

All emotions are, essentially, impulses to act; in other words, action plans which evolution gave us to manage the emergencies of life in real time (Ekman in Goleman 2015).

This observation necessarily leads to a reflection on how listening, awareness and the acceptance of emotions is the substratum necessary for the development of a healthy resilient personality.

## **4.2. Guidelines**

Emotive competence is based on a high degree of knowledge of the lexicon linked to the sphere of feelings, which is configured as a prerequisite for gaining literacy in the emotions: for someone to be able to express in a congruous manner what they feel is of fundamental importance in knowing the meaning of the “emotive” words.

Discovering “what emotions are for” becomes a fundamental step in gaining access to the process of acceptance and listening to the same, which is important for getting in touch with a person’s needs and decoding life events in a way that is conscious and functional towards healthy wellbeing “ here and now”. Sometimes we find it difficult to accept the possibility that emotions which are generally considered negative can be useful, or to understand their purpose. Passing this message on to children, through emotive literacy, can help us accept them and allow them to be useful.

The authentic expression of emotions requires a free, welcoming, empathetic, respectful, non-judgmental and constructive context, all

elements which form the basis of a healthy relationship with oneself, with others and with the environment. It is possible to create an appropriate place bearing in mind the following points:

<b>1</b>	<p><b>Organise the space for sharing:</b> the setting has to be beautiful and planned together. It is important that everyone has “personalised” the room and that the final result is shared and organic. It is good for everyone to have a comfortable place where they feel at ease.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Adopt empathetic communication:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Active listening:</i> actively listening to the other, coming into contact and empathetic understanding with the experiences they are describing, paying full attention to their phenomenological world; it is also important to capture what our interlocutor transmits to us beyond words, paying attention to gestures, posture, gaze, etc.</li> <li>- <i>Positive reformulation:</i> To offer back to the other what has come to us from their message by asking for confirmation (“Are you are telling me that...”) in order to verify it has been properly understood and demonstrate our attention. Reformulate the content highlighting the positive aspects of its externalisation.</li> <li>- <i>Share personal experiences expressing them in the first person through the “I message”,</i> following these steps: 1. Description of the behaviour (When you do...) – 2. Description of the mood (I feel...) – 3. Description of the concrete consequences (Because...).</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Refrain from:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluating positively or negatively the person in front of us, in order to create a relationship of total freedom and avoid damage to the child’s idea of themselves.</li> <li>- Interpreting the child’s thoughts: they may feel misunderstood or mortified.</li> <li>- Minimising their problems and limiting ourselves to the so-called “pat on the shoulder”: the child might negatively interpret the reassurance from the adult of reference, concluding that they have not been understood.</li> <li>- Providing advice moving the child away from the solution that they had found independently: this reduces the child’s self-esteem because the adult communicates that they do not trust them.</li> <li>- Investigating through closed questions, those inspired by simple curiosity or one that are not relevant to the communication, subjecting the child to a full-blown interrogation, which will lead to a defensive closure.</li> </ul>



## 4.3. Activities

### Emotica, in the circle with emotions

**Keywords:** emotions, narration, empathy, cooperation, group.

#### Premise

Emotica is an activity designed for children, also applicable in adult settings, to facilitate the meeting with others and inclusive attitudes, through the tool of narration, calling emotions into play to facilitate the development of empathetic communication and active listening skills. The activity was conceived in collaboration with the pedagogical research laboratory of the University of L'Aquila and has been tested in numerous school settings with the aim of working to improve relationships in the classroom through emotional education. "Emotica" comes from "Itaca", a game created by Vaccarelli (2015) which is then interpreted in an emotional key. When proposing activities in post-emergencies, it is important to pay attention to the timing, and it is advisable to avoid the acute phase of the emergency and choose the re-establishment phase (Iorio, *infra*). The function of Emotica is to allow children to recognise emotions and express them, channelling them in the right direction, to ensure that the emotional part is supportive to resilience and not an obstacle.

#### Aims

1. To promote knowledge and awareness of the emotions experienced individually.
2. To encourage relationships within the class group working on empathy, on sharing experiences and cooperation.
3. To work on the acquisition of skills in empathetic communication.

#### Activity

This activity takes place in circle time; the children and conductors, after arranging themselves in a circle, introduce themselves and do so by passing a ball of wool; the members of the group are invited by the conductor to introduce themselves very briefly (My name is – What I am expecting). The conductor introduces themselves and, holding the end of the wool, throws the ball to a person of their choice. This continues with all the participants, until, in addition to the introductions, what is obtained is a web of wool that will not only represent the interconnections and meeting of the group but also evoke the idea of the plot of the story that will be told during the activity. Like all games, Emotica has rules, which are written on the board before starting to play. These rules will have to do with refraining from judging and mocking the other players and listening; the children are invited to try to respect these rules outside of the game as well and to try to apply them in other contexts. This leads to the acquisition of fundamental rules

in communication and therefore in group work and in the construction of authentic relationships, rules that should be implemented in any relational context.

Then the children are asked to tell the group about their idea of a hero, what features a hero has and if they think they know any; in this phase of the activity, thinking of their parents, siblings or other members of the family, the participants begin to approach the possibility that each of us might be a hero. Identifying with the hero/heroine figure makes children aware of their own resources, enhancing their self-esteem and resilience.

The game continues to work on self-esteem and resilience using the cardinal tool of Emotica which is represented by the cards (Table 1); the members of the group are asked to extract a card from the deck containing an emotion or a state of mind felt by a hero or heroine. The cards refer to emotions that everyone experiences and are a stimulus to find in their memories events, facts and circumstances in which the child has experienced their own inner strength.

They are then asked to get in touch with themselves and think of an episode in which they themselves were heroes and felt the emotion shown on the card, at which point paper and pens are distributed and they are asked to represent that episode freely, in drawing or writing; each child will have 15 minutes to represent the episode. It should be clarified that the contents will soon be shared. By writing their own story, each participant in the group gets in touch with their emotions and, by transferring them to the sheet, gains awareness of them.

Then the children are asked to share their story with the other members of the group. The narrative is connoted, at this moment of the game, as an instrument of self-knowledge: by telling their own story, the child comes into contact with their own emotionality. In this phase, the methodology that is used to lever all the activity comes into play, that is, positive reformulation. The purpose of the interaction is to bring out the resources and grasp how the emotion that the hero or heroine felt in a given context was useful to live and properly manage the situation lived, exploring positive and negative emotions to make the most of their adaptive function (negative emotions can also be resources). Narration also plays a fundamental role in fostering processes of interaction, knowledge, dialogue and listening: in listening to all the stories, participants recognise and feel in themselves the emotions of the others. In this phase "Emotica" is also characterised as a valid tool for the prevention and analysis of difficulties.

At the end of the round, when everyone has told their story, the group is asked to form a single large story in which everyone's stories come together; within a period of 60 minutes, the participants are asked to cooperate in the writing of the story, which can be organised in a synthetic way using narrative sequences, to come up with a title and to insert all the sheets with drawings or stories, in a single folder that will contain the story of the whole class. In this phase a series of interactions have been started that work on problem-solving and mediation. The children will have

to combine their creative skills and find common and shared solutions to achieve their goal.

In post-contact, the children tell the story that has come out of it and, again in circle time, they are asked to share the emotion that they are feeling at that moment.

Finally, the children are asked to keep a diary in order to promote an awareness of the process that took place during the activity; in addition, the diary is configured as a research tool, in order to collect qualitative and quantitative data with respect to the emotions experienced and the degree of involvement.

Tab. 1 - The Emotica cards

THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  DISGUSTED	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  ANGRY	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  SCARED	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  JOYFUL
THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  SAD	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  ASHAMED	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  SURPRISED	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  EMBARRASSED
THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  JEALOUS	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  HOPEFUL	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  ANXIOUS	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  WORRIED
	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  SERENE	THE HERO OR THE HEROINE  IS...  CHEERFUL	

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## 5. “Silent” educators for group readings in emergencies

Elena Zizioli, Giulia Franchi<sup>7</sup>

### 5.1. Theoretical premise

In this section we propose to strengthen the resilience of children by creating a community of readers through the use of wordless picturebooks, i.e. books without words which, thanks to the success of the *Silent book. From the world to Lampedusa and back* project, launched by the Italian section of IBBY (*International Board on Books for Young People*) in collaboration with the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, are best known in Italy as silent books, insofar as the narrative unfolds using only images.

The reasons are to be found both in the nature of these books and in the successful use that has been made of them and which have shown how these works managed to revolutionise the educational hierarchies, question stereotypes, stimulate mutual listening, and enhance the expressive space offered by the voice of readers who become actors and interpreters of the story (Terrusi, 2017, p. 129; Zizioli, Franchi, 2017).

From these brief notes it is not difficult to understand why silent books were considered suitable for emergency contexts. These texts – which can be considered to all effects as silent educators precisely because of their lack of words, reactivating the protagonism of the reader, encouraging the comparison and sharing of reflections, impressions and different interpretations, freeing the imagination –

7. Elena Zizioli wrote the first two paragraphs, Giulia Franchi the third.

are better able to cope with the struggle of everyday life and stressful conditions generated by emergency situations. A new positive outlook on life and, at the same time, the desire to get back into the game can be stimulated starting from a workshop activity with these books which, by arousing a range of feelings and emotions (wonder, enchantment, curiosity, laughter), predispose empathy in children and encourage cooperative learning paths. The silence is therefore only apparent and the universal language of images enhances the subversive component of literature as well as its educational vocation.

Those who have studied this type of narration, which is attracting growing scientific interest at national and international level, have analysed its topics, methods of reading and use, trying to define its critical lexicon and, at the same time, structure. In this brief preamble we can refer specifically to the “Calvinian” category of visibility, because in these texts we find the imaginative process described by Italo Calvino that starts from the visual image and arrives at verbal expression, the opposite of what usually happens when reading a book: starting from the word to prefigure the scene. This feature makes silent books special because the imagination, compared to other literary forms, places itself decisively as a “repertoire of the potential, of the hypothetical, of what has not been and maybe will not be but might have been” (Calvino, p. 85). And this is why the development of an activity through a book without words not only provides an aesthetic pleasure, given the respect for the canon of beauty, but frees up formative potential helping to foreshadow the future.

In another setting to highlight the educational potential of silent books, especially in complex contexts characterised by emergency phenomena (such as, for example, the continuous flow of migrants), an attempt was made to devise a model (Zizioli, in collaboration with Franchi, 2017, pp. 45-46), which for this publication has been recalibrated with the enhancement and the clarification of certain potentialities compared to others, as follows.

Narratives that only use images allow for:

- the *adoption of a universal and democratic language*, precisely because the images, even if someone has to know how to read and interpret them, are an extraordinary medium;

- the *activation of the protagonism of the reader* favouring, therefore, paths of active citizenship, because in the search for interpretation the little reader learns to expose and educate themselves regarding the responsibility of their choices;
- *reception as a treatment*. With these texts it is, in fact, possible to employ longer times to listen to all the interpretations, play with pauses and silences, and if there are many and different modalities of reading, it is certain that they all discourage any claims of colonisation favouring emancipatory processes;
- *attention to diversity* by training the eye to capture details as well, the not immediately visible, the unexpected, the unusual, promoting a community of readers through the sharing of dreams and desires;
- an *opening up to beauty*. We must not underestimate the importance that this feature assumes in emergencies where giving children beautiful images, allowing them to experience an elsewhere can undoubtedly help them to overcome a daily life that is often reduced to the minimum levels of survival, characterised by deprivation and shortages.

## 5.2. Guidelines

Among the guidelines it is impossible not to consider some warnings in terms of use. In fact, often in the use of these texts, false myths are cultivated, generating if not exactly stereotypes, at least superficial considerations that risk becoming banality. Here are the two most common:

- reading a book without words is easier;
- there is no precise plot of the narrated story which is totally entrusted to those who will read/interpret the text.

Images, instead, even if apparently more immediate, require a proper grammar which the educator/mediator has to transfer.

The absence of words does not support a lack of plot. In reality, the illustrator/author follows a story and to construct the narration carefully chooses the images and their composition just as they

would with words. It is then the beauty of these achievements and the overlapping of the different levels of reading that ensure that the imagination is free and, therefore, the richness of the interpretations.

Here are some categories on which it is possible to work: small/large, near/far, cyclicity, relationships, metamorphosis/identity, surprise, memory, disorientation, gaiety.

Among the practical-operational indications for the organisation of the workshops it is important to observe this scheme which has already been tried out in other contexts marked by emergencies (Zizioli, in collaboration with Franchi, 2017, pp. 155-162), and which for this publication has been revised and recalibrated:

- choice of the materials to be used, knowing what is available (also for the organisation of the space) and knowing how to organise even with limited resources;
- presentation and introduction of the work for the knowledge of the participants and the activities that will take place;
- accompaniment in the various phases so that children and young people, although free to express themselves, are guided step by step and do not lose their sense of direction. In this phase it is important to stimulate the search for a personal elaboration also to favour autobiographical paths which in the crisis context help to provide a safe base and strengthen the identity process;
- restitution of the activities carried out. This is a moment of great pedagogical importance because it favours meeting, comparison, listening to all the voices, but above all the recognition of the work carried out. It brings with it, therefore, not only the possibility of new and lively reflections, but also gratitude for having felt themselves to be the protagonists.

To make the best use of silent books here below are some proposals for those who will carry out the reading activity and, therefore, act as mediators. In emergency situations, even more than in others, it is important that these figures are really active and are able to respect and implement the following rules:



1	Be passionate about good literature.
2	Be attentive to the latest publications. The range of silent books is constantly evolving, especially internationally, therefore it is important to be constantly updated.
3	Be empathetic.
4	Consider reading as a transformative educational act.
5	Build reading paths <i>not for, but with</i> children.
6	Listen to allow new voices to express themselves and, therefore, also stimulate autobiographical paths starting from the reading of the images.
7	Know how to work in a group.
8	Know how to construct and share reading projects with the subjects working in a given territory to achieve educational continuity between school and outside.
9	Not to be discouraged; be determined and resistant to difficulties that may arise.
10	Be convinced that it is possible to build a better world. Not to renounce the utopian tendency.

### 5.3. Activities

#### *Premise*

Workshop activities starting from books without words in emergency contexts can be thought of following three main lines:

- work on wonder;
- work on the reversal of points of view;
- work on cooperation.

For each of these lines, a course of readings and workshops is presented, aimed at the broad range of 4/11 years and which can be modulated according to the composition and age of the group. For each activity there is a selection of books without words to read with children.

The proposals were partly conceived specifically for this publication, partly revised in an original way starting from the experience of the art workshop of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome and from previous activities that have proved effective in “frontier” contexts such as on the island of Lampedusa or with audiences with special needs.

All three paths are designed for post-catastrophe contexts characterised by the great fragility of individual psychic experiences and relationships within the community, dictated by social fragmentation and the destruction of places, ways and times of life. Shared reading and workshop activities seek to reinforce an awareness of abilities and possibilities in children, helping in the construction or recomposing of relationships and sense of community, offering imaginary others that can allow children to look beyond the emergency.

### **Redrawing the world**

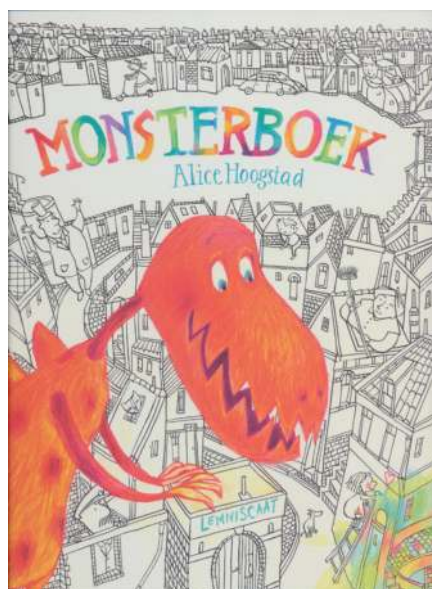
**Keywords:** beauty, imagination, transformation.

#### **Aims**

1. To experience the transformative power of imagination and beauty.
2. To promote the protagonism of children and strengthen awareness of their worth.
3. To encourage the promotion of active citizenship starting from wonder.

#### **Silent books to use**

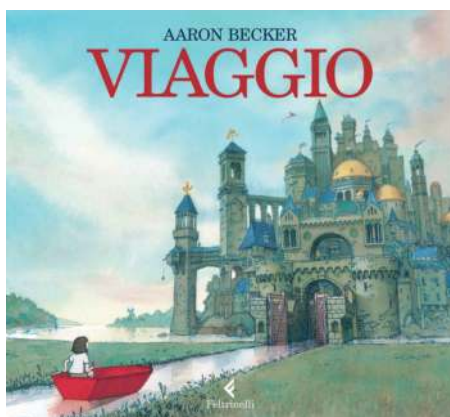
Alice Hoogstad, *The Book of Monsters*, Lemniscaat, 2014 (original title *Monsterboek*, Lemniscaat, Rotterdam, 2014)



A large book that looks like a *colouring book*: a city in black and white seen from above, a little protagonist determined to transform it by giving it colour and an amusing band of monsters ready to help her ignoring the hostility of the adults. An invitation to cooperation, active and critical citizenship, perseverance and overcoming prejudices.

Aaron Becker, *Viaggio*, Feltrinelli, 2014 (original title *Journey*, Candlewick Press, Somerville, 2013)

In a grey and boring afternoon at home, a red pencil found by chance opens an unexpected door to a fantastic universe. The young protagonist will find herself travelling with courage among castles, pursuits and flying carpets aware of being able to change reality thanks to a new friendship.



Bruna Barros, *Insieme con papà (Together with Dad)*, Green Lion, 2017\*

A father and a child seem to live in parallel dimensions, one intent on his work, the other caught up in his videogames. It will be the discovery of a yardstick capable of transforming into anything to make them rediscover each other and navigate on unexplored seas.

\* We recommend the use of this text only if there are no children who have suffered the loss of family members.

### Materials

- 1 or more folding wooden yardsticks
- A3-size white cards
- Photocopied images of the yardstick on yellow 140gr paper (easy to draw or available online)
- Punch
- Paper clip
- Scissors and glue sticks
- Pencils/wax crayons/felt-tip pens

## Activities



Workshop at the Children's Library Lampedusa @ Laboratorio d'arte, Palazzo delle Esposizioni

Reading books without words takes place by reconstructing the narrative thread together, encouraging identification with the protagonists of the story and emphasising the common points between the different books: the power of imagination and creativity, the courage of children, friendship, the possibility of changing things thanks to beauty.

"Together with Dad" offers the opportunity to let each participant play with the yardstick transforming it into a house, a snake, a star and so on. The children are then given a photocopy of the yardstick to cut out and construct by punching a hole in each "piece" at the two ends and joining them together with the paperclips. The invitation is then to move the yardstick on the white sheet being inspired by the shapes that are created: having found the one that strikes them the yardstick can be glued on to the sheet and the image completed with coloured crayons. This allows the imagination to overcome the limits of reality.

## Head down

**Keywords:** differences, resilience, meeting.

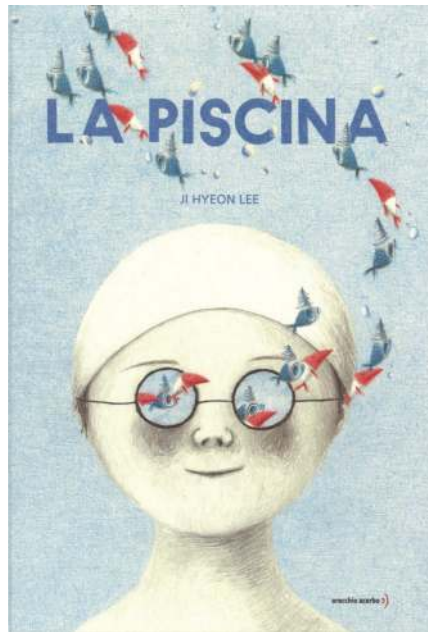
### Aims

1. To deconstruct stereotypes and enhance the encounter with differences as a wealth.
2. To invite a change of perspective and point of view to read reality and act on it.

### Activities

*Books without words:*

Ji Hyeon Lee, *The pool*, Orecchio Acerbo, 2015 (original title *Suyeongjang*, Iyagikot, Seoul, 2013)



A crowd of noisy swimmers invades a swimming pool. A child chooses to escape the confusion on the surface and dive into the silent, colourful and all-encompassing depths. To enrich the discovery of the fantastic underwater universe is the meeting, conducted in gestures, with a new friend.

Istvan Banyai, *Dall'altra parte*, Il Castoro, 2006 (original title *The other side*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco 2005)



A complex and very rich book which, page after page, forces the eye to reposition itself and look at the other side: inside and outside the tiger cage, in front of or behind the curtain, upside down or the right way up. A continuous changing of perspective that allows us to understand that not everything is as it seems.

Marie Poirier, *Vu d'en haut*, Les Grandes Personnes, 2016



A small hardcover book with bright colours that tells of the summer games of a couple of children, but does so by observing them from above. Their hats are circles, the road is a labyrinth, a biscuit looks like a flower. Only at the end do the little protagonists raise their gaze towards us, discovering the sky.

Antoine Guilloppé, *Loup noir*, Casterman, 2004



A ferocious wolf chasing a child in a dense forest beneath the snow is the protagonist of this book entirely in black and white. It looks like the staging, in a cinematic style, of the most classic of fairy-tale fears. But the ending overturns expectations, dismantling every stereotype and invites us to the meeting.

### Materials

- White card 15 x 70cm
- Red wool
- Thin black and red felt-tip pens
- Coloured crayons
- Scissors and glue sticks



Silent readings in Italian Sign Language @ Laboratorio d'arte, Palazzo delle Esposizioni

After reading the proposed books together, guiding children through the sudden changes of point of view and leaving space to their words and silences, it is possible to offer them a few little exercises of looking: try to observe the space that welcomes the group from a position never experienced before, climb up high, from the ground, swap places with their companions and then stand on their heads to “overturn things”.

Each child is then given the long piece of cardboard folded in three with a red wool thread attached to one end, to be glued in, dividing the entire sheet in half horizontally.

Inspired by the silent books read and the illustrated book *Those above and those below* (Kalandraka, 2009), the first page asks readers to represent with felt pens an imaginary world above with its “inhabitants”. Turning the sheet over, they are asked to represent the world below on the second page, similar or perhaps very different from the previous one. Finally, the last page is dedicated to the encounter between the two unknown worlds, which, depending on the graphic solution chosen by the children, can lead to a mixture, a continuation of the division or to a (desirable) totally new situation.

### **Mouth to mouth**

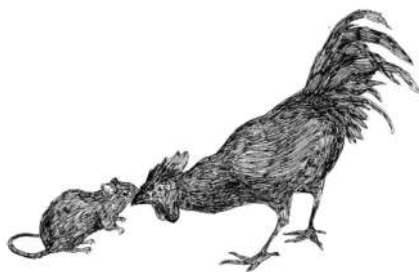
**Keywords:** participation, collaboration, mediation.

#### **Aims**

1. To enhance the transformative power of peer cooperation.
2. To invite to active participation and the search for original solutions.

#### **Books without words**

Chiara Camoni, *PsssstPsssst*, Les cerises, 2016



Chiara Camoni, *Psssst Psssst*, Les cerises 2016 © courtesy of the publisher

An endless artist's book with heavy cardboard pages bound in a spiral. On each page is described the mysterious dialogue between two animals portrayed with almost scientific rigour: a cat and a fish, a lizard and a frog, a rabbit and a hen. A word-of-mouth game that conceals secrets and possibilities.



Renato Moriconi, *Telefono senza fili*, Gallucci, 2014



Page after page, a parade of characters whisper a secret word and, in the alternation of portraits in profile and from the front, it seems to follow the passage from ear to ear. A game of fairytale references, a very successful counterpoint with a big final surprise.

### **Activity**

Both suggested texts clearly recall the classic Chinese whispers game. It is possible to propose a first silent reading, simply leafing through the pages and inviting careful observation and a second in which the reader tries to imagine what each animal and character says to the next, comparing their ideas with those of their companions. In a circle, then, they can experience in first person the Chinese whispers game starting from a word (for the younger ones) or a phrase to find out how it is transformed from mouth to mouth. Again in a circle they can in the end create a collective story in which each participant adds their personal contribution, enriching the shared narrative with deviations and twists. With older children, the story can also be created in writing using the technique of the surrealist “exquisite corpse”, i.e. writing a phrase, folding the sheet and passing it to the next person. Built together the story provides unexpected results.

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Terrusi, M., *Meraviglie mute. Silent book e letteratura per l'infanzia*, Carocci, Florence, 2017.

Zizioli, E., con la collaborazione di G. Franchi, *I tesori della lettura sull'isola dell'accoglienza*, Sinnos, Rome, 2017.

### **Suggestions for further study**

<https://www.palazzoesposizioni.it/pagine/servizi-educativi>

<http://www.ibby.org/>

[http://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Silent\\_Books\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Silent_Books_ENG.pdf)

[http://www.candlewick.com/book\\_files/0763665959.btg.2.pdf](http://www.candlewick.com/book_files/0763665959.btg.2.pdf)

## 6. Narrating with technology. Tools to promote resilience in adolescents

*Fabio Centi, Arianna Fiorenza*<sup>8</sup>

### 6.1. Theoretical framework

The varied and complex individual and collective situation that is experienced after a catastrophe has led many of the most recent studies and research to focus attention on the actions and procedures that need to be implemented to elaborate what has happened and regain possession of one's own life. It is now clear how the traumatic event remains in the personal history of individuals and the social history of the community. The material reconstruction has to take place as quickly as possible and be accompanied by a social and cultural reconstruction, and therefore by policies to support collective and community life. Young people in particular need meeting places outside the classrooms, although these are central to the recovery of everyday life. They have to be given the chance to escape, to go out, when they wish, from the "show" of the emergency. It is fundamental that children have their own space, somewhere away from the world of adults, from the tragedy, the stress and problems related to the catastrophe; a place in the sense of territoriality, where they can express "the subjectivity of the individual and in which, at the same time, the culture of a community is manifested and nurtured" (Calandra 2016, p. xxx). The space for young people, conceived, organised and materially realised with them, must be imagined from a multilevel perspective, in a strictly physical and

8. Paragraphs 1 and 3 are by Fabio Centi. Paragraph 2 is by Arianna Fiorenza.

metaphysical sense. We know, as happened in L'Aquila in 2009 and Amatrice in 2016, that in the early stages after the catastrophic event, it is difficult to find accessible and functional structures that can be made available to young people for their post-school activities. If we want to act in this sense, and although there are and will continue to be organisational, logistical and material difficulties for some time in terms of creating spaces suitable for young people, we should bear in mind that technology can be a powerful aid in working with teenagers. The creation of a technological environment, possible today for a modest economic sum, and in any case variable in relation to the size and potential of the technological hub that is to be created, allows us to think of a space with which children can engage and entertain themselves. Working with the tools offered by new technologies, online and physically present, if well directed and guided, can represent an important source of individual resilience and social resistance. Technological means, and in particular some of its variations, in fact, allow, on the one hand, a rereading, under a different light, of the events that occurred, and, on the other, to intervene on them through the narration and rewriting of their own story and those of others. Within the vein of autobiographical narratives, and in the subsequent phases of the catastrophe, the usefulness of technologies is twofold: the medium in itself provides a method to deal with it in a different, alternative way, and it is then an inexhaustible source of methods and tools for re-elaborating events. It is inevitable, in the aftermath of a traumatic experience due to events of any sort, to try to make sense and find a why in what happened. When nothing seems to have a rational and logical explanation, we wonder about our present and our future, we come to terms with our own pain and that of others, with our own emotions and those of others (Vaccarelli, 2016). The sharing space for peers offered by the technological environment, used with the appropriate times and modalities, can enable young people to stop for a moment and become observers of their own story as well as protagonists. Writing mediated by the use of technology, with the strict rules associated with it, in particular allows the channelling of the great desire to talk and tell about themselves that many people feel in emergency

and post-emergency situations. In post-emergency situations, there may be a great desire to express opinions and assume positions, to write, to name and to name again, to blame and to exculpate, to witness the goodness of some and the gifts of others, to tell of their own experiences, in the tiniest detail, to retrace the history of those cursed moments and those that preceded them, to try to make sense, when not everything has sense. In fact, technology becomes a promoter of creative and renewing moments, as well as the bearer of truth, of a healthy protagonism and democracy, all the more so today when with the mere possession of a laptop and some software we have the possibility to write, play, invent and draw objects and situations. It then provides the opportunity to put into place the technological skills that many young people possess; they are intuitive in the virtual and learn quickly in general, especially if the artistic-creative component is associated with the technical-practical. First-hand witnesses to the events that have happened, young people agree on issues and contexts to describe and make known, and, in the absence of economic and social capital at their disposal, they invest in themselves, their minds and their words. Children are the ones who have most to tell; who are charged with emotions, who live and have experienced in the first person the misfortunes of their family, home and town; who perceive better than others the failings of certain policies and propaganda. In reality, they often want and have every right, if not the duty, to commit themselves and have their say. They possess a sensitivity that leads them, in situations of emergency and post-emergency, to be shy, seemingly inattentive and uninterested in what is happening.

The following activities are to be carried out using technological tools; the order of presentation is based on a chronological criterion with respect to the different phases of the emergency. The first, the text with music, lends itself better to the initial, acute phase, insofar as the way it is structured it allows for the rationalising and dissolution of the initial stress due to the catastrophe.

## 6.2. Activities

### The text set to music

#### Premise

The creative process in the creation of a text to be set to music can be directed and imposed in various ways, thus allowing different skills to come into play: musical, artistic, stylistic and IT. In the emergency phase, adolescents tend, irrespective of the input of the conductor, to express and tell of their experiences in relation to the catastrophe. For the realisation of the musical base, if they have skills and solid foundations in musical study, it might be possible to be more adventurous in the choice of genre. Otherwise there are many online sources offering for free, or for a reasonable fee, the tools to download and then use in recording the musical text (SoundCloud, YouTube, Myspace, Facebook, etc.). Today, thanks also to its success among the very young, hip hop music in particular is well suited to being used as a guide in the creation of the musical text. The ideal conductor of this activity must have pedagogical skills to lead and manage the working group, engagement skills to attract children, and a technical-musical base to establish the phases and sessions of the work.

#### Aims

1. To express their emotions and telling their stories through musical language.
2. To reinforce the idea of community and cooperation among peers.
3. To reinforce the resilient sense of their experience through the story of their own experience.
4. To reduce anxieties and stress caused by the traumatic event.

#### Materials

- Computer/laptop and internet connection.
- Technical instrumentation (internal or external keyboard, soundcard, microphone for voice recording, monitors for audio diffusion, headphones for listening to the base during recording).
- Software for the production/recording and mixing of the piece (Ableton Live, Logic Pro, Fruityloops, Pro Tools, Cubase).
- Sheets/markers/pens/board for initial brainstorming and writing the text.

#### Path

The conductor arranges, in a small area, a very minimalist set. Once the necessary electronic equipment has been installed, they will take care to welcome and explain to the participants the objectives of the activity. At this point they will compose or try to find the musical base to be used in the final recording and at the same time start writing the text. They can start from a collective brainstorming session promoted by the conductor, or directly

from themes conceived and developed by the participants in the workshop. The conductor must be able to keep control of the relational and emotional climate that is established within the group, know how to dampen tensions, guide discussions and always be ready to welcome the emotions and sensations that teenagers suddenly produce in this type of activity. Once the text has been written, it will have to be adapted to the metrics of the chosen musical base and then recorded on top of this using the aforementioned software.

Web radio is already at a higher level of re-elaboration, and this requires greater organisation, both in terms of issues to be addressed and resources and structures to be used.

### **Web radio**

By web radio we mean a radio station that uploads podcasts on to the internet; this allows, with internet availability, the widest possible dissemination of information. The educational and pedagogical perspectives offered by web radio are varied and versatile, and, in recent years, thanks to its great accessibility, its use has increased considerably. In emergency and post-emergency situations, web radio can bring the story of the catastrophe and its consequences to a higher level, through the eyes and words of the young people involved. It was Danilo Dolci, a fervent activist in the Italian non-violence movement, who was the first to use radio, at the time a monopoly of RAI, the state broadcaster, to publicise the living conditions of people in Belice, following the earthquake of 1968. Viewed by the authorities as a pirate radio station, it was closed down after only 27 hours, but these were enough to break the silence and denounce the situation. Today web radio has also been introduced in schools as a technological aid for learning and motivation to study. The possibility offered by the instrument to be able to repeat recordings in the event of mistakes, makes the environment more relaxed and collaborative. The presence of an adult is essential in the early stages of the activity, as it helps the peer group to set up and activate the equipment; they check that licenses and online permissions are in order and keep an eye on the relational and emotional tenor that is established. It is important that the conductor remain an external observer of the work done by the children, to guarantee them the maximum freedom of expression. The need for young people to express themselves freely is underlined in the description of radiommaginaria, the only web radio in Europe to be run entirely by teenagers: “In our radio, no adult content is involved, we do and say what we want” (<https://www.spreaker.com/user/ariaimmaginaria>). The topics dealt with by the teenagers of radiommaginaria range from their choice of clothing, to the struggle between parents and children, to concerns about their own future. This is the true aim of the activity.

## **Aims**

1. To develop strategies for planning and organising the work.
2. To develop creative, critical and reflexive skills.
3. To reinforce the idea of community and cooperation among peers.
4. To promote the commitment and empowerment of children.

## **Materials**

- Computer/laptop/tablet/smartphone and internet connection.
- Open source software Audacity, to record and edit podcasts; applications to record from smartphones and tablets; open source software Speaker.com to record and upload audio online.
- Account on the free Podomatic.com platform to upload broadcasts to websites and pages.
- Free royalties mp3 to upload and transmit audio tracks in podcasts.

## **Path**

Once the working environment has been set up, a team of children will be formed, which will assign working groups the task of collecting materials for further study and to prepare the text and the contents of their podcasts. Generally, creating a web radio station in a post-emergency means focusing attention on delicate and sometimes complex issues for teenagers, so a task that might be required of the conductor is to mediate and mitigate the impetuosity that young people sometimes bring to the table, without modifying the content. The podcasts once recorded, through the use of the PC with the abovementioned software, will be uploaded online through special platforms and will be available to anyone who wants to listen.

Online journalism offers the possibility of deconstructing and reconstructing the situation being lived, even a certain time later; thus it allows an account of the life and history of the town, restoring, also through the words and testimony of its citizens, to its former splendour. Like web radio, so too online journalism, as well its purely scholastic and didactic use, can be used as a powerful means for disseminating information and, in cases of emergency and post-emergency, as an instrument of resilience and resistance.

## **The online newspaper**

This technological tool really goes in the direction of young people, and lends itself well to hosting their narrative voices and various skills. In fact, although the creation of journalism has as its main objective that of making children experience a very specific type of communication, very often in a project of this kind they find the opportunity to get involved in different fields, such as drawing, satire, poetry, photography, etc. Then returning to the search for meaning and sense in catastrophic situations, the online paper, through the collection of interviews, direct testimonies, collections,



documents and so on can effectively motivate young people to research and discover the history of the town and community to which they belong, which the disastrous events have changed. The real communicative meaning that writing assumes allows children to become healthy carriers of the history of their tortured town and bear witness to the catastrophe as people directly affected and with a point of view that is decidedly different to that offered by the mass media. Setting off and starting over, sometimes, is something we must and can do, and so much the better if to do so we return to describe and admire the landscape, nature, traditions and customs of a place of life.

### **Objectives of the activity**

- To enhance the sense of community, collaboration and cooperation.
- To develop individual resilience and community resistance.
- To promote social education.
- To develop solidarity and sensitivity to social needs.

### **Materials to be used**

- Computer/laptop/tablet/smartphone and internet connection.
- Microsoft Office Publisher software for layout, blogs, websites or online platforms for loading and viewing the newspaper (Youblisher, Storify).
- Boards, stationery, magazines, newspapers, books and articles.
- Technical equipment (camera, microphone, earphones, recorders, camera, etc.).

### **Description of the activity**

The first step in the creation of an online paper is establishing an editorial staff. In the editorial meetings, which will take place according to the frequency of publication (weekly, monthly, bi-monthly), the students will choose which of the different types/genres of text they wish to experiment with: investigations, structured interviews, summaries of activities, programmatic documents, reflections on what happened, imaginary stories, literary reviews. Once the topics have been decided and the tasks divided up, everyone will start their work (journalists, photographers, designers and cartoonists). The contents will then be paginated and the magazine will be published on the internet. With children and conductors, then, privileged communication channels with peers from other parts of Italy and around the world can be established, exchanging experiences, innovative ideas and good practices; raising awareness on issues of prevention and risk awareness with as many people as possible, to prevent the disastrous consequences of natural disasters being repeated elsewhere.

### 6.3. Conclusions

The use that can be made in emergency and post-emergency situations of technological tools for pedagogical-educational purposes, permits support and enhancement of the activities of re-reading and rewriting of the catastrophic experience on the part of young people. Giving them the opportunity to feel, beyond being mere observers, that they are active participants in the processes of social and cultural reconstruction of the place hit by the calamity, is tantamount to rebalancing that power relationship between private citizens and making effective use of those democratising instances offered by technology. A direct testimony of the strength of technology is the work of the Velino for Children research group in the post-emergency period of the earthquake in Central Italy (August 2016), when, during the welcome to school for secondary school children of Amatrice, the musical text “Fiore di menta” was performed; the activity, which started with a brainstorming session in the classroom centred on the theme of the school, brought out the feelings and emotions following the catastrophe experienced by the students, who chose as the refrain for the song a popular saying often used by a school companion who was killed in the earthquake.

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## 7. Cooperative games, why?

*Chiara Ciccozzi, Loredana Padovani*<sup>9</sup>

### 7.1. Theoretical framework

There are many definitions of “game” from various sources, from sociology, history, psychology. What unites the various theories about the game (or play) is the idea that it prepares children for adult life and provides a framework within which they can acquire certain social skills; a common opinion, moreover, is that play is the mirror of the social and cultural context in which we live. Generally, it can be considered an expression of the attitude towards life, the mirror of society: if competitive games are favoured, it means that the concept of competition and competitive spirit prevails above all else; on the contrary, favouring cooperative games means promoting solidarity and the feeling of a safe base, which represent important dimensions of individual resilience (Vaccarelli, 2016). The specificity of cooperative games is the pleasure of playing; in these types of games, everyone can have fun and, above all, everyone can participate as the game is based on acceptance and not on exclusion and judgment, on mutual knowledge, on fellowship. It is precisely these essential aspects that determine in a preponderant way the factors of development of resilience; in fact, relationships, group ties, collaboration, solidarity and altruism are the elements that contribute to the strengthening of resilience insofar as recovery, change, in

9. The first paragraph is by Chiara Ciccozzi, the second by Loredana Padovani.

some way rebirth after a traumatic event, requires, as Malaguti says, the ability “to be in relationship with the other, to recognise and recognise themselves, to discover and discover themselves, to dream, to imagine, to create together” (Malaguti, 2005, p. 18).

Emergency situations generate psychosocial conditions that require group-centred educational approaches and the promotion of sociality. Children are often very agitated, in conflict with each other, and tend to behaviours that can be harmful to their social development but also to their learning.

Promoting games based on cooperation, mutual help and respect means offering children the opportunity to tell stories and tell about themselves, to increase their potential, thus allowing them to reach a higher degree of self-esteem and autonomy; it also means allowing them to control and manage their emotions by sharing them and becoming aware of them. The overcoming of difficulties or the solution of a problem within a cooperative motor game refer back to the concept of “safe base” which is among the personal factors most involved in the functioning of resilience; this, precisely because it is connected to a feeling of belonging to a group, promotes a sense of security in the subject involved.

## **7.2. Five good reasons to propose cooperative games**

Play in all its forms is a fundamental aspect of the lives of each of us, involving socialisation, the formation of culture, symbolic thinking, logic, rules and learning new behaviours. Play is, as Huizinga says in *Homo ludens* (2002), the foundation of every culture, and since animals play as well, play exists even before culture.

We will look at five good reasons to favour cooperative games (Vaccarelli, 2016):

1	<i>Promoting social skills and developing the feeling of the SAFE BASE:</i> cooperative play, in its aim of reaching a common goal, allows the strengthening of group ties and trying new ways of relating both with peers and with adults.
2	<i>Revitalising the role of MOTIVATION by increasing/reinforcing self-esteem:</i> another important ingredient in cooperative play is the challenge, intended as a challenge with oneself, to overcome physical or psychological limits, to measure oneself with one's own abilities but with the help of the group. Players feel an integral and useful part of the game, and this favours involvement, motivation and therefore a reinforcing of self-esteem.
3	<i>Promoting SIGNIFICANT LEARNING:</i> in cooperative play the student is involved in an active and profound way, engaged in the process of resolving the game itself, not through simple reproductions or repetitions of pre-packaged schemes.
4	<i>Testing PROBLEM SOLVING skills (appraisal):</i> in cooperative play, the group becomes a place for communication, exchange and meaningful relationships between a group of people acting for a common purpose, to achieve the solution of a problem by employing and developing capacities for the evaluation and assessment of situations, that is, capacities for appraisal: the problem to be addressed is interpreted and evaluated in view of the planning of the action and evaluated according to the wellbeing of the group.
5	<i>Refining EMOTIVE RESOURCES:</i> the collaborative climate spreads a sense of wellbeing, within which everyone is invited to explore their own characteristics to share them with others.

In this direction, activities and games such as those proposed below allow us to support the resilience of the subjects and the reconstruction of social ties.

## 7.3. Activities

### The museum in flames

**Keywords:** resilience, stress.

#### Premise

The burning museum is a cooperative game conceived by the *Grupo de Innovacion Educativa "Areté"*. It can be offered to first- and second-year students of secondary school in order to promote an education regarding resilience that comes about through the knowledge and acceptance of risk. The concept of risk is dealt with through a sensitisation to behaviours in solidarity and not as a selfish and solitary search for the escape route. The burning museum, therefore, is a game aimed at activating problem-solving skills in children that can stimulate the use of group planning and coping strategies, taking into account the physical-corporeal characteristics and abilities of each subject. It is important to underline that the problem-solving is not a mere reproduction of behaviours already learned, but the activation of new processes, behaviours and ideas. The students will not only learn the importance of cooperation and sharing to find an evacuation method that involves all the participants, but they will also discover resources and energy within the group, such as the value of solidarity, which allows them to face risk as a social and community issue (Ciccozzi, 2016).

#### Aims

1. To develop appraisal and coping strategies: pupils face a problem-solving activity that they have to resolve within a set time thanks to the cooperation and participation of everyone.
2. To promote communication and negotiation skills: pupils must deal with each other in order to choose the best strategy.

#### Path

In order to carry out this activity, the teacher can take the students to a spacious area such as the school gym or a public park. Having chosen and reached the place to play the game, the teacher divides the class group into sub-groups of 5-6 children and explains to them they have to imagine being in a museum in which a fire breaks out suddenly and makes all the emergency exits unusable. The only way to save themselves is to go out through a window that will only be accessible for a little longer. It will also be explained to the children that it will not be possible to escape individually, so everyone has to be able to get out and those outside will have to work to save the others. The timing for the development of the game includes 5 minutes for planning the best strategy and 15 minutes of implementation of the strategy in order to get out of the museum. The window, which represents the only way out, will be created by placing a rope

at a height of 1.5m (the height of the rope may vary depending on the age, coordination and physical strength of the group). At the end of the game it is a good idea to reunite the class group to carry out a defusing activity, i.e. a short interview in which each sub-group reports to the rest of the class on the strategy used to exit the burning museum, as well as the emotions experienced both in cooperation with their companions and in managing an emergency situation in a short time.

## **The ants and the city**

**Keywords:** resistance, sense of community.

### **Premise**

After a catastrophe, of whatever sort, people experience a feeling of loss: of a friend or of a family member, but also of their home, school and those places that have become points of reference over the years. For this reason it becomes necessary, even ideally, to start rebuilding that social and cultural substratum that has suddenly vanished. Through this game children have to work to rebuild their city.

### **Aims**

1. To develop communication skills: to build the city, children will discuss what to do, what roles to cover as citizens and what materials to use.
2. To promote a feeling of security-belonging linked to the safe base. The class group becomes a safe base in this game. For this reason, in the proposed game, the students describe their fears to the class group looking in the same for sharing, comfort, protection and help.
3. To encourage creativity.

### **Path**

In the game “la Città (the City)” (Ferretti, 2016) we propose to the class group a number of passages from the book “Le formiche sono più forti del terremoto” (“The ants are stronger than the earthquake”) (Scataglini, 2009) (Box 1) which is the story of Mika the ant who, after having suffered the terrible “Thing” (the earthquake), finds the strength, together with her family and the inhabitants of Formicopoli, to give new life to their city. The passage selected can be used as a stimulus to play the game. After the reading, the teacher, using circle time and brainstorming, asks their students what is the “Thing” that scares them most. After all the students have expressed their thoughts, they are asked to create a large city that is able to protect them from the “Things” they are afraid of. To create this city, it is necessary to distribute various materials such as white and coloured sheets of various sizes, pencils, paints, magazines, newspapers, glue and DAS. After the material is distributed, the pupils can start the construction of their city following precise rules and times. The rules of the game are:



- all the fears of the students must find be defended against in their city;
- everyone must have a role as citizens;
- the city must have a name.

The game can last one or two hours depending on the number of participants.

At the end of the pre-established time the students report to the teacher what they have achieved by explaining what role they play as citizens and the type of defences developed in the construction of the city.

### **The ants are stronger than the earthquake**

(Taken from: Scataglini, C., *Le formiche sono più forti del terremoto. Una favola sulle emozioni, l'amicizia, la cooperazione, la rinascita*, Erickson, Trento, 2009)



### **The Thing**

This fable began with the Thing and it is from here that I will begin to tell it. It was the Thing that completely destroyed my city, Formicopoli. Since that terrible night, for a long time we ants did not pronounce the scientific term that means strong movement of the earth, the collapse of houses and deep cracks in the ground. No, we are no longer able to say that word aloud and we have simply replaced it with “the Thing”. My name is Mika Formica

and I am six years old. I am practically a child and for this reason I want to reassure all the little readers of this story: despite a sad and frightening beginning, everything will end happily, thanks to the strength and unity of us ants. Right, I'll start telling the story...

When the Thing arrived it was a night like any other. I had put the toys away in my bedroom and gone to sleep in my ant bed. Then, suddenly, the Thing. I can't remember the details, except the violent jolting of the earth and the loud noise of the house breaking apart. Then escaping with the other ants of Formicopoli, out into the open, away from the rubble of our houses. As I had done so many other times for much less harmful things, fear took my breath away and made my legs tremble. (...).

All of us, little ants, were dismayed to see our parents crying. None of us, in fact, had ever seen an adult cry, if not in certain TV series that have very little of the real. Reality had surpassed fiction and so we could cry and be frightened freely, whether we were young or old.

#### *When a city is reborn*

We ants were finally back in charge of Formicopoli. In addition we had the conviction that we could rebuild our city, if we acted together and divided the tasks. "Everyone does something and has their own role", is what Bruco Panzuto had taught me talking about Colorizia. And so it was for us as well. First, we all used pieces of bark to dig and lift the debris of our destroyed homes. We are really very strong and we can carry heavy things great distances. If we can't do it by ourselves, we group together in two or three and carry huge objects by grabbing them with our jaws. In a few hours all the debris of our anthill had been taken away. We could start to rebuild. (...)

We were divided into teams of five and I leave you to imagine who my workmates were. What a joy to collaborate with my dearest friends! Chicco found the most suitable materials and delivered them to us. Lilla and Zita made furniture for the kitchen, such as tables and chairs. Maya and I, on the other hand, dealt with the beds and bookcases for the bedrooms. Hundreds of other child ant teams were at work, each with its own task, but all with a common goal: to create furniture for all the homes of Formicopoli. While everyone was working, our city slowly regained its face and returned to being what it was before. In fact, I'm sure it was even more beautiful than before, because it was the fruit of everyone collaborating. Then came the moment when the work produced the final result. Here is my house, how wonderful! And the houses of my friends. And the school. And the shops. And the main square where we were able to revive our market of seeds of wheat. We had rebuilt Formicopoli.

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## **8. SETA<sup>10</sup>: Strategies for elaborating trauma through the arts: a focus on three specific devices**

*Umberto Mauro Salvatore Caraccia, Federica Scappa*

### **8.1. Theoretical framework**

The empirical application of SETA has its roots in the pedagogical experience “Field of Art” applied in a suburban context and specifically in the Family Area of the Municipality of Rieti, the results of which are published in the text *Campo d’Arte Educazione alla Vita – esperimenti di pedagogia in periferia* (Caraccia, Scappa, Vernacotola, 2014), which was recognised by Lazio Region as a Good Practice in the Cultural Field. More remotely, at an embryonic level, SETA takes its cue from a number of tools derived from the experience of the post-earthquake emergency in L’Aquila in support the populations affected by that dramatic event. Moreover, it is based on analytical evidence that delineates the complex mechanism of artistic creativity and its capacity to obtain relationships of dialogue between the contingent and the profound sphere of the individual.

SETA can be analysed according to three basic assumptions. The first is represented by narration as a means of exploration and organisation of the experience, understood in its verbal, para-verbal and non-verbal sense of an intrapsychic and socially adaptable character. This assumption is based on the evidence of the analytical literature according to which narrative, deriving from the relationship of dialogue between the contingent and the profound

10. In Italian: *Strategie di Elaborazione del Trauma attraverso le Arti*.

sphere, is understood as the foundation of the psychic activity of the individual and the collective. Analytical evidence makes it clear that the psyche is not only grounded in the structure of the brain, but consists of its own narrative activity (Hillman, 1983). Narration allows the organisation of lived experience (Bruner, 1992), the characterisation of the world in which the subject lives, as well as differentiating and integrating the functions of the world tending to the subjective, i.e. the intrapsychic and profound ones with those tending to the objective regulated by laws of logical-deterministic derivation. The empirical strategies of trauma elaboration, outlined in the SETA intervention, therefore place the accent on that specific narration that is able to activate a function that transcends (Garufi, 1991) the contingent and the profound sphere of the individual, though containing both, and bears in mind how trauma is both a wound and an embrasure to access the deeply personal level of the individual.

The second basic assumption of the SETA intervention is the *second sense* capable of being attentive to the imagining-narrative act, to grasp it and gather it, to perceive it, to feel it and to sense it psychologically (Hillman, 1991): grasping and gathering the non-literal inherent in concretism, to disengage ourselves from the somatising shadow of the pathology of trauma, to bring the wounded Eidos to awareness. This attention-condition also allows us to immerse ourselves in a future in which psychophysical awareness is outlined by the here and now, as well as developing modes of divergent thinking and integrating resilient styles capable of grasping and gathering the traumatic experience undergone, not just as a pathology, but also as an opportunity for a profound knowledge of the total parts of the self.

The third assumption is represented by the relationship of dialogue between the intrapsychic world and the principle of reality, which is established in the creative act. This relationship of dialogue is expressed by imaginative representations endowed with meaning and therefore able to give corpus to the world because a world that does not assume the corpus of the image is devoid of experience (Jung, 1954).

The three basic theoretical assumptions described above orient a work aimed at tracing and activating an adaptive image map both from the intrapsychic point of view and from that of the principle of contingent reality, in which the image is not only intended as “graphic or visual image”, but as a set of perceptions, thoughts, ideas, emotions, behaviours, relationships, interactions and identities directly organised by a central motif according to different combinations and variations. Moreover, these imaginary networks or maps connect and interact with existing collective structures of meaning at all levels present in language and culture; the deposit of those shared experiences and beliefs that are part of the collective formations of semantic presentations” (Papadopulos, 2008).

## 8.2. Focus on three tools applied to the SETA intervention

The tools chosen for the application of SETA are performing arts, favouring the circus and the theatre, as occasions for the suspension of the ordinary to open a temporal space of intrapsychic and psychophysical contact, and then integrate it with the ordinary, and can be summarised in five applications:

1	<b>To contain and isolate the traumatic experience.</b> Use of a particular rhythm and shared breathing, with the aim of creating a single living body, in which actions and reactions stimulated by the physical and sound environment intertwine, in a single improvisation generated by the internal suggestions of the participants rendered external through the theatrical creative act. This is a particular work on the group that allows the development of cooperation in emergency and post-emergency contexts to contain and isolate the traumatic experience and strengthen ties and relationships. Furthermore, the particular breathing adopted and the concentration on it allows the lowering of the level of emotional tension. The tool concludes in the shared psychophysical narration: a sequence of organic actions or a group image, endowed with meaning and form, and a profound reflection on the composition that has been created.
2	<b>Development of energy awareness.</b> The energy of a body on stage is not only a physiological force, but it is the way in which this is modelled and for what purpose, according to modalities that are not from everyday life (Barba, 2005). Using as an example this reflection-statement deriving from theatrical anthropology, we can attribute to

	<p>the significant “scene” the deep intrapsychic contents where ordinary laws are not valid and to the “everyday” the principle of reality with its adaptive laws of functioning. Therefore we will have two contexts of purpose where energy is modelled: the deep intrapsychic world of the subject and the principle of reality.</p> <p>In this sense, this particular device seeks to make aware the internal energetic motion and the ordinary one and provide the presuppositions for a relationship of dialogue between them. Specifically, again with the help of deep breathing, individual participants are invited to memorise and focus on the surrounding space and its borders, and then be blindfolded. Being deprived of sight helps to activate the internal image of the memorised space which, on the one hand, belongs to the reality principle, since the subjects must be careful not to bump into physical obstacles, and, on the other, belongs to the internal world of the subject where the action is oriented by images. The tool, through a particular slow and circular conscious walk through the space, has the operative task of exploring internal and external energetic changes in terms of psychic representation and physiological variations. Immediately it is noticed that the relationship of dialogue, which has a strong connective character, and the regulation of the physical energy deriving from its physiological awareness, allow the subjects to move harmoniously through the space. The tool concludes in the narration of the intuited imaginary state and the profound reflection of the experience.</p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Multidimensionality of the psychophysical balance.</b> For equilibrium we could use a definition borrowed from physiology that sees it as “made up of multiple sensory exteroceptive motor terminations (visual, auditory, tactile) and proprioceptive (muscular, tendon, articular and vestibular). The proper functioning of these systems allows man to keep the projection of his centre of gravity inside the polygon of support [...]” (Barba, 2011, p. 84). The central framework of SETA interest in this tool is represented by a series of actions that aim to keep the centre of gravity clear in a situation of precarious equilibrium, to find the centre in an unstable situation. Specifically, the subject is positioned at a safe height on a folding ladder and with the help of a tightrope walker’s bar or alternatively on a chair or a bench with the arms extended vertically, assumes plastic positions deriving from the discipline itself, or other plastic forms at will, in order to allow the individual to experience a sequence in movement of micro balances and imbalances until they reach an adaptive barycentre of balance. The metaphor of this concrete operation appears to be clear in contexts of emergency and trauma where the individual initially loses their points of reference and the need arises to implement <b>image maps</b> to assume the new adaptive barycentre. This tool too, like the previous examples, employs a particular means of breathing with an attention to the inner dynamics and has the task of making the subject explore the different centres of gravity capable of maintaining a psychophysical balance in precarious contexts. The tool ends with the narration and deep reflection on the experience and a follow-up on the benefits in terms of attention and psychophysical awareness.</p>



Preliminary exercise for the MPB tool (Multidimensionality of psychophysical balance): Guided exploration of barycentric variety



MPB tool (Multidimensionality of psychophysical balance): with the aim of keeping the centre of gravity clear in a situation of precarious equilibrium by finding the centre of gravity in an unstable situation

### 8.3. Conclusions

The choice to describe in this brief operational document a focus on three specific tools that make up the SETA intervention arises from the decision to provide a speedy instrument to support the processing of the trauma that can be used easily. The operator who introduces the tools certainly plays a fundamental role: the modality must be as non-directive as possible, but they can express themselves as facilitators of a creative process that has, above all, the task of promoting a relationship of dialogue between the internal components and the reality principle, taking into account that the creative process is extrinsic and has its heart in beauty and caring for ourselves.

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## 9. When creativity becomes resilience

*Rosanna Pichelli*

### 9.1. Theoretical framework

Art as a practice and an educational project refers to the concept of art which according to Arnheim, psychologist and aesthetic scholar, has to be saved from abstract conceptualisms in favour of a perceptive experience that, from a purely visual channel, widens to include the tactile and kinesthetic. The use of the whole body therefore stimulates creativity as an ability to interact with oneself and with one's own emotions also in relation to the group. The workshop as a mental space then becomes a sort of aesthetic gym aimed at a training of sight, hearing and touch, to the benefit of the experience the processes of which are similar to those experienced by the artist: retracing their visual and perceptual experience means therefore creating a familiarity between the child and the artist (Dallari, 1998).

Art as pre-text underlines the relationship between pedagogy and aesthetics, for which the work is not the central object of the educational experience, but becomes a pre-text, precisely, in function of the dynamic and operative dimension of "doing". The action then becomes a stimulus to reflect on oneself and the possibilities of expression as an emotional, relational, aesthetic and creative resource.

The object represented and re-elaborated according to their own experience, having many ways of being and of appearing, can be studied and analysed, passing from one representation to another, in

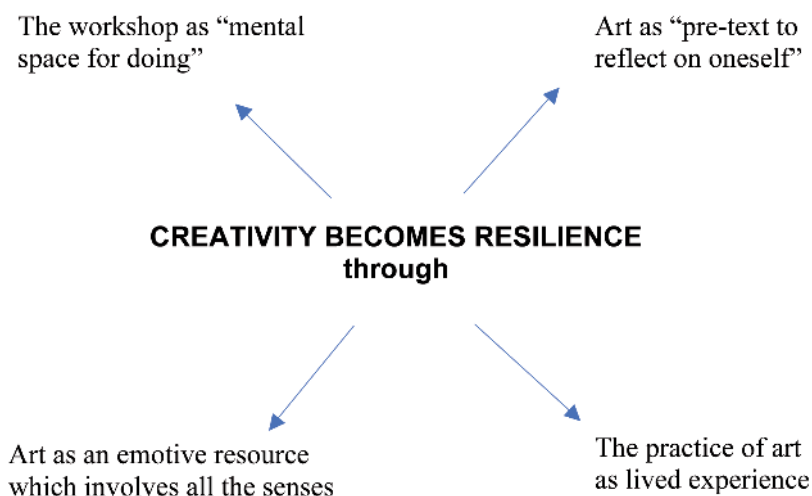
new and original contexts. “Pretending” becomes for the child a way of reinterpreting reality and transforming it as a function of one’s sensory and emotional wellbeing (Gombrich, 1971).

For Vygotsky, art education, expanding the child’s experience, through all the perceptive channels, stimulates the overcoming of stereotypes that are poor and reduced forms of the representation of reality. After all, creativity is no more than the ability to see the world through many different eyes and points of view, precisely to discover that reality offers us multiple dimensions of reading and representation (Vygotsky, 1972).

Art and the neurosciences make it clear how much art, especially contemporary art, stimulates certain areas of the brain, not only the visual, but also the motor and kinesthetic areas. All this helps to activate mirror neurons and therefore empathetic ability (Lumere, Zeki, 2011).

Creativity becomes **resilience** when everyone discovers and elaborates their own creative dimension in observing, in choosing materials and tools, in elaborating their own research path using emotional, affective, social and relational resources. Therefore, beauty is no longer aimed at the vision of the “classic beautiful”, as a stereotyped and stigmatised product, but it becomes above all the rediscovery of oneself, the ability to reflect on one’s own creative, personal and group resources. From this perspective the aesthetic and creative dimension becomes wellbeing, the desire to live and reinterpret the problem by changing point of view each time.

All this leads us to appreciate the value of a **trauma** that becomes a resource to the extent that the gaze shifts on to a place, a space, a territory to highlight a hidden, concealed aspect that only the eye of the heart can bring to light. The gaze therefore becomes action and elaboration of a loss, as it fills the empty spaces by redefining perspectives and spaces, it imagines shapes, colours and volumes within which to build communication and relationships.



The guidelines for the laboratory proposals can be made explicit through the choice of strategies and lines of intervention:

<b>1</b>	Moments of sharing in which everyone narrates and tells of their experience through circle time (e.g.: what I tell about myself to others, what I would like to communicate...).
<b>2</b>	Phrases and significant words freely and anonymously written to share with others (e.g.: what I feel, what I’m feeling at this moment, what emotions and what desires, etc.).
<b>3</b>	Graphic representation and free drawing about individual needs and desires, sharing and comparison in the group (e.g.: what I represent of myself to share with others...).
<b>4</b>	Use of images, photos, reproduction of works of art to choose individually in relation to themselves and their own experience (e.g.: what image I choose that represents me at this moment and why...).
<b>5</b>	Use of a collective drawing to be created together starting from a line (e.g.: I draw a sign that speaks of me and I invite the others to do the same, trying to build an image that speaks of me and the group...).

## 9.2. Activities

### Water

**Keywords:** resilience, trauma, resistance.

The activity is imagined in a nursery school and primary school, favouring both the space within the school and the territory outside. The path can also be used with children and adolescents and proposed at any point of the post-emergency period.

#### Aims

1. To move the child to discovering various forms of art, from representative and descriptive art, to abstract to ecological or land art as a form of respect and dialogue with nature. Dialogue with nature is interior dialogue and dialogue with the other.
2. To reflect on the visual elements of the works and different meanings.
3. To experiment directly various forms of representation and interpretation of art through perceptive-visual paths, from manipulation to the viewing of images and works of art, to then rediscover within themselves emotional and expressive needs and resources.
4. To involve the mimicking-gestural action to enter into the symbolic aspects of the work, from the body to the feelings and emotions.
5. To find in emotions a way to resist and build methods of communication and relationship.

#### Path

The workshop includes fruitful moments related to viewing the various works and their reading and productive moments, in which the child, through graphic, motor and perceptive paths, re-elaborates emotions and sensations according to their own experiences and feelings.

- *Discussion and sharing on the meaning of water:* e.g.: amniotic fluid... water for plants... water for the earth... we are made of water... the earth is made of water and earth... water creation... water mother... water beauty... water travel... water transformation... water purification...
- *The shapes of water:* water in different containers takes *shape*... *water is a magnifying glass*.
- *Observe different ways of representing water in the works of artists:* “The Storm” by Turner, “The sand and water” by Edmond Cross, “The Wild Water” by Paul Klee, “The fish in the water”, “The Spiral” by Robert Smithson (land art).
- *Projection of the Spiral Jetty image and reflection on the meaning of the installation:* to safeguard the lake, the artist invents a spiral made of rocks, earth, salt crystals. The spiral is a symbol of life, it is filmed and photographed and placed in the exhibition halls.
- *Propose the image over again using materials, earth and water.*
- *Play with water and gravel to draw and represent different shapes.*

## A creative look at our territory

**Keywords:** resilience, sense of community, belonging.

The activity is conceived for primary school classes, both within the setting of the school, but especially in the surrounding area. The path can also be used with teenagers during the post-emergency period, i.e. only after the acute phase.

### Aims

1. To reflect on the concepts of nature and earth, space and place.
2. To rediscover the landscape as a way in which society tells of and presents itself through a certain type of perception and representation.
3. To share with their companions emotions and memories of their experience to elaborate a loss and grief after the earthquake.

### Path

The path includes a productive moment of individual reflection, and a sharing within the class of emotions, memories and desires.

*Discussion in circle time and narration of one's own experience: My home, my city, my country, as places of existence:*

- My house, as I remember it: a graphic representation of one's own house and spatial collocation with respect to the plan of the city, outside and inside the walls, beyond the suburbs, other inhabited centres.
- The house as a place of emotions: I draw an object inside my house that represents me.
- What I remember of the city centre or the town: graphic representation of a building, church, monument, square, alley, street, old gates.
- Associations between places and emotions.
- Construction of a map of the territory in small groups, using individual output; each person places their work of graphic representation within the city and territory map, distinguishing the centre and the suburbs.

*Re-elaboration and planning hypothesis:*

- Redefining the territory for a new landscape, hypotheses regarding "what I would remove and what would I add" (work in small groups).
- Starting from a building, a church, a space to hypothesise an internal and external recovery intervention.
- What to save of yesterday's places: the historic meeting places.
- Rethinking new streets and new routes: a look at the old transit routes to the markets.
- Designing new spaces for shows, concerts and meeting.
- Designing new spaces for the market: the old market.
- Designing new spaces for sporting and recreational activities.

## I am a line

**Keywords:** resilience, sense of community, belonging, trauma.

### Premise

The activity is imagined for both primary and secondary schools in the setting of school. The path can be proposed both in the period immediately following the emergency and in the later post-emergency phase.

### Aims

1. To practise listening and empathy skills towards others.
2. To bring themselves into play through gestures and graphic signs to strengthen emotional awareness and communication skills.
3. To use the resources of the group to share and build together a graphic representation that is the expression and representation of everyone.
4. To freely choose the materials and tools for the graphic activity.

### Path

The proposed activities are inspired by the reflections of the artist P. Klee on abstract and representative art. According to Klee, art, as a form of thought, helps us to think, to construct concepts, to change points of view, to travel different paths. Thought finds expression through the moving line which, in the space of the sheet of paper, the canvas, of any medium, expresses a concept, an emotion, a processing of one's own experience: hence the title of the path "I am a line". The activities therefore stimulate "making art" through the creation of a graphic sign that is built step by step with that of the companions within the small group. This encourages a reflection not only on an individual's capacity to get involved, but, above all, on their ability to collaborate, share and place themselves in the dimension of waiting for and listening to the other.

- Division of the class into subgroups (max 6-7 children).
- Clarifying the goal of the work which is that of using signs building to create a graphic production that represents the whole group. The children have to be made aware of how important it is to remain silent and focus on listening to themselves and others, without intervening and making judgments. The conductor also invites them to start work without overlapping, awaiting their turn and each person's "right time".
- Place a very large sheet of paper on the floor on which to work as a group.
- Give everyone a pencil or black charcoal to draw lines.
- Create a positive climate of sharing through pauses, silence, clearly explaining the input to everyone (e.g.: everyone imagines being a line and tracing on the sheet a mark that represents them at that moment, which represents one of their emotions).
- Everyone leaves their own sign by choosing a certain type of line: sinuous, soft, snappy, continuous, broken, trying to associate the gesture of the hand and arm with the type of line to be produced on the sheet.

- Each child, having drawn their own signs, passes on the pencil, charcoal, pastels...
- Each child can also introduce their own sign by following the trace produced by the companion before them in a graphic construction that has a continuity. In this case every gesture becomes an incentive to think and reflect on themselves and others.
- Each sub-group also decides autonomously with regard to the images to be built together, to use different colours and materials to complete the work, trying to identify shapes, objects, characters.
- At the end of the work, in a very simple way, the conductor can introduce the figure of Paul Klee to the children and invite them to analyse some of his works.



"I draw a sign that speaks of me and wait for the others to do the same"



"I choose to colour a part inside the drawn lines and identify an image: animal, eagle, heart etc..."



P. Klee, *Irony at work*, 1939



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## 10. Self-regulated learning and inclusive teaching

*Maria Vittoria Isidori*

### 10.1. Theoretical framework

The school, in which students demonstrate any difficulties in cognitive and affective-relational functions, is a privileged interlocutor to identify complex situations more clearly and intervene (Caldin, Righini, 2017; Isidori, Vaccarelli, 2012, 2013). It has to respond through educational and teaching interventions to the specific needs-rights of learning and inclusion of students, guaranteeing them ‘health-socio-learning conditions’ (UNESCO, 2017). Spinazzola *et al.* (2003) with their investigations found that the overwhelming majority of children in severe conditions of deprivation and criticality show significant disorders in the following areas: the regulation of affection; attention and concentration; negative self-image, impulse control and aggression, victimisation. Disorders that are expressed in particular in the classroom. On the other hand, a child may be adequate in certain areas (at school) and show severe fragility in others (Luthar *et al.*, 2000). Recovery capacities have been linked to multiple protective factors: individual, family and environmental variables. Among the variables that might favour recovery, we highlight: emotionally supportive and competent relationships with important adults; development of cognitive skills and metacognitive self-regulation; self-esteem and sense of personal efficacy; motivation to act effectively in their own environment (Waller, 2001). So the school should be able to face all situations including those not officially classified in the ICD-10 or in the DSM-

IV-R and diagnosed (Ciraci, Chiappetta Cajola, 2013). In any case, the inclusive teacher has to:

- possess psycho-pedagogical knowledge on special educational needs, SEN (including disabilities, specific developmental disorders and socio-economic, linguistic and cultural disadvantage)<sup>11</sup>;
- possess theoretical-operative knowledge on the interaction between body and mind, psychomotricity, behaviour and learning in human beings;
- be able to carry out tasks of organisation, conception, promotion, binding and connection of the entire school and extra-scholastic community (Sibilio, Aiello 2015).

The use of educational actions that encourage self-regulation, self-instruction and cognitive enhancement in special educational needs (SEN), in the various conditions of emotional-relational crisis/suffering – of an individual nature (mourning, violence, poverty) and collective (natural catastrophes or the consequences of human action, such as wars) – are particularly effective (Kaldenberg *et al.*, 2015). This effectiveness is manifested in various fields, such as memory performance, reading and comprehension of the text, mathematics, writing (Cottini and Morganti, 2015). Striano (2003) highlights how the metacognitive methodology focused on self-regulation, which favours resilient attitudes among other things, seems to be particularly responsive to the needs of subjects with scholastic difficulties resulting from conditions of deprivation and severe stress (Cook *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, the identification of a theoretical and experimental framework must be accompanied by the exercise of careful teaching aimed at promoting self-regulated learning (Bramucci, 2016).

Self-regulation is the process related to the examination of one's own ideas and their modifiability; it is activated through the explication of consignments that need to be internalised; it is determined by reflective functions and self-evaluation (Cornoldi, 1995). It is not a mental capacity, it is not a skill linked to a specific

11. SEN as an acronym was introduced in Italy by the Ministerial Decree of 27 December 2012.

scholastic activity, but rather it consists in self-directed processes through which learners transform their mental abilities into skills related to activities practised in a specific context (Zimmermann and Schunk, 2001). Students who employ self-regulation have been shown to approach school activities with diligence, security and resourcefulness. Unlike their ‘passive’ classmates, proactive self-regulated students go in search of information and take steps to master it. Self-regulated learners show: they have an awareness of the strategic relationships that exist between regulatory processes or responses and learning outcomes; make use of these strategies to achieve the objectives set (La Marca, 2012). Self-regulated learning, therefore, must be distinguished in: self-regulation processes (perceptions of self-efficacy); the adoption of strategies to optimise these processes (the configuration of intermediate objectives or of the intrinsic task).

The three dimensions of self-regulated learning are:

1. the metacognitive processes with which self-regulated learners plan the learning path, the objectives, organise the steps, adopt solution strategies, elaborate mental images, monitor and evaluate themselves, setting reference standards on the basis of which to activate a comparison;
2. the recognition, by the student, of a self-oriented feedback loop;
3. teaching attitudes, on the part of the teacher, which favour the use of a particular strategy or response in the learner (Laurillard, 2012).

The motivational element is fundamental. Self-motivation consists in full-blown proactive initiatives to find and profit from learning activities.

1. It is a good idea to contextualise self-regulation in the broader discussion of the main cognitive processes that mediate teaching/learning interaction. Zimmermann and Schunk (2001) carried out meta-analyses on self-regulated learning, which lead to results based on scientific evidence. Among the main functions on which to act proposing didactic exercises (Naglieri & Das, 2005), we find:
2. *planning*, useful for selecting and developing the plans and strategies necessary to complete the tasks for which a solution is

required. This includes processing, evaluation and execution of a plan, through self-monitoring (problem-solving);

3. *attention*: at the beginning an orientation response to a stimulus, it then becomes constant (sustained attention) and then focused (selective attention). Prolonged attention is required in most of the supervisory activities;
4. *simultaneity*, presides over the organisation of visual-spatial dimensions in coherent groups and units. It plays an important role in the grammatical components of language, in understanding the relationships between words, prepositions and inflections;
5. *succession*, involved in the use of stimuli organised in a specific serial order. It intervenes in the serial organisation of sounds and the order of movements, in the phonemic sequences of the first reading activity.

These processes are strongly correlated with scholastic advantage (Taddei *et al.*, 2006). Cognitive processes can be enhanced with exercises of memory, attention, concentration, visual-spatial-temporal relations, logic and with the encouragement of motivational dimensions involved in learning (Trincherò, 2002).

## **10.2. How to promote attitudes and teaching devices for self-regulation**

In teaching it is necessary to promote self-regulated learning (Laurillard, 2012) from the earliest design and construction of the teaching device. One of the most functional “gyms” for training in self-regulation is the well-known metacognitive problem-solving. With this, students will be able to monitor and evaluate the degrees of usefulness, necessity and appropriateness of the various resolution processes, and to classify personal representations of procedures. Problem-solving also facilitates the activation of the transfer of learning (Fig. 1).

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Metacognitive steps/phases of task control</b>
<b>Comprehension</b>	Reflect (before starting): Is what you are going to face really a problem? What do you know about how to resolve it? Have you encountered similar problems?
<b>Foreseeing</b>	Foresee (before starting): Who can help you? How much time do you have? Which/how many tools do you need? What is the environment in which you will perform the task?
<b>Planning</b>	Organise yourself (before starting): Do you want to/can you work alone or in a group? Find materials and tools. Choose data representation methods. Set work times.
<b>Monitoring</b>	Check (during): What should be eliminated or saved? Does the task seem easy or difficult? If you cannot keep going, what will you do? Is what you have found the solution?
<b>Evaluation</b>	Evaluate (after): Did your predictions and your planning help you? Did you work well? Could you have done it another way? Can this resolution procedure help you with other tasks? Was there any unsurpassable problem?

Fig. 1 - *Problem-solving*, Modified by Pavone (2015)

Other types of self-regulation exercises are those that focus on the meta-attention (Fig. 2).

- What does it mean to be attentive?
- What does an attentive child do?
- And what does a non-attentive child do?
- What are the tasks which require more attention, in your opinion?
- How long do you manage to be very attentive at school?
- What do teachers do when they realise that a child is not being attentive?
- And what could teachers do to make children be more attentive?
- Is it hard for you to be attentive?
- Do you always do it?

Fig. 2 - Self-regulatory exercises of meta-attention (modified by [www.aidai.org](http://www.aidai.org))

If we want to indicate the “essential” guidelines in favouring meta-attention, through specific activities, these are:

- to develop knowledge related to attention;
- to teach problem-solving and self-training strategies;
- to propose monitoring exercises through attributions on successes and failures.

Again as regards self-regulation (also useful for homework), preparatory activities for reading/understanding the text:

- carefully analyse the figures;
- scan the titles of the paragraphs and highlighted words to “guess” the topic of the piece;
- recover the knowledge related to the topic of the piece;
- make hypotheses about the content of the text;
- stop reading from time to time to ask how the comprehension is proceeding and outline the pieces read (Chiappetta Cajola, Traversetti, 2017; Pintrich, 2000a).

To facilitate learning within the class group, it is useful if the teacher is able to distinguish teaching attitudes that favour or, on the contrary, hinder self-regulation (Fig. 3).

	<b>Teacher's attitudes that PROMOTE self-regulation</b>
<b>1</b>	Use simple and short instructions in consigning the task.
<b>2</b>	Indicate the key concepts of the lesson.
<b>3</b>	Avoid very long tasks, even if they are simple.
<b>4</b>	Avoid written productions in the absence of an external guide or without specific teaching of composition strategies.
<b>5</b>	Use images, coloured keywords on the board, simple diagrams.
<b>6</b>	Include as many examples and practical demonstrations as possible during explanations.

	<b>Teacher's attitudes that OBSTRUCT self-regulation</b>
<b>1</b>	Checks performed with low frequency.
<b>2</b>	Checks in which the mastery criteria are not clear (e.g., type of results expected).
<b>3</b>	Checks in which the marks obtained are not informative about what was wrong.
<b>4</b>	Checks on objectives that are not clear (Zimmermann and Schunk,

The interaction between the students of the class, who perform mutual control functions, becomes strategic in the process of internalisation self-regulating mechanisms. In order to develop, for example, metacognitive reading skills with any text (historical, geographical, scientific, narrative), the teacher can divide the class into pairs of students and provide them with questions to ask before, during and after reading done in pairs (Fig. 4).



*Before*

1. What is our goal in reading this text? (orientation)
2. What do we already know about this topic? (activation of previous knowledge)
3. What do we think we will learn from this topic? (prediction)
4. Does this text seem interesting to us? (prediction)

*During*

1. Does what we are reading make sense? (control of semantic understanding)
2. Should we review our predictions or suspend judgment to a later time?
3. (control of forecasts and hypotheses)
4. How are the important points related to each other? (control of the text structure)
5. What can we do to understand better? Should we continue reading, go back to re-read or stop and employ a strategy? (control of the overall text comprehension)
6. How will this reading continue? How will it end? (prediction)

*After*

1. What were the most important points? (hierarchical evaluation)
2. Which parts confirmed these points? (evaluation of textual consistency)
3. What new information have we learned? (summary evaluation)
4. Are there any other strategies we should use? (formative evaluation)
5. What is our opinion? (critical evaluation)

Fig. 4 - *Self-regulatory strategies for cooperative reading*. Modified by Bryant et al., 2000

In conclusion, teachers promote the ability to self-regulate their own learning process in students, if they invite them:

- to focus attention on what they are doing;
- to wonder if they are understanding;
- to adapt the way to do the job to the time available;
- to assess the degree to which the proposed objectives are being achieved;
- to modify learning strategies that are gradually used according to the difficulties encountered (La Marca, 2015).

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# 11. Improving attention and managing a class

*Ornella Contestabile*

## 11.1. Theoretical framework

Speaking of *attention* and *class management* is already in itself an arduous task which those working in schools face on a daily basis. It is even more so if the educational action has to be carried out/delivered in a context where *difficulty* has become *normal*. Here then the educational priority is not addressed only to certain particular cases, but affects the entire school community (including teachers).

In a community hit by an earthquake the stress trauma is the difficult condition to be coped with because what remains beyond the rubble is pain and a feeling of inner emptiness: in a few seconds, certainties, references and affections vanish. What all earthquakes have in common is fear, difficulty, destruction, the loss of points of reference: unfortunately these feelings stay with people even after many years. There is a need for a return to a daily life, a physical rediscovery to re-establish a sense of community and belonging.

Here then is the need for a didactic-educational intervention, focused on the activation of resilient behaviours and the re-establishment of social dynamics.

The school, especially in the post-emergency phase, represents for its users the place of being together, of meeting and sharing pleasant and non-pleasant experiences, of the group that finds the strength to move forward within it, to acquire a role by recognising itself in the community. Going to school means reactivating a “reassuring” routine; it is a reappropriation of the flow of time and a “growing

together” which is more than ever useful in a chaotic and disruptive moment (Contestabile, 2017; Vaccarelli, 2016).

Returning to normality or to a semblance of scholastic normality implies an awareness that, with the profound modifications to the environmental conditions, the modalities of intervention must necessarily be modified, adapted to the new requirements, because the new available spaces can be perceived as extraneous/different, distant from the reality of reference, and constrictive.

What is noticeable is that inside a classroom all the pupils speak loudly, they are not very tolerant of their classmates, they move from their desks to go and annoy others. All this leads to a significant lack of physical and mental wellbeing with repercussions on social development, motivation, learning and school performance. A paradoxical situation is created where the “attention disorder and hyperactivity” affects the whole class. In addition to this, it is necessary to take into account that pre-existing situations of difficulty further affect both the learning and the performance of those students who are not able to adequately benefit from their own internal and/or external resources, because they are already in deficit (Figure 1).

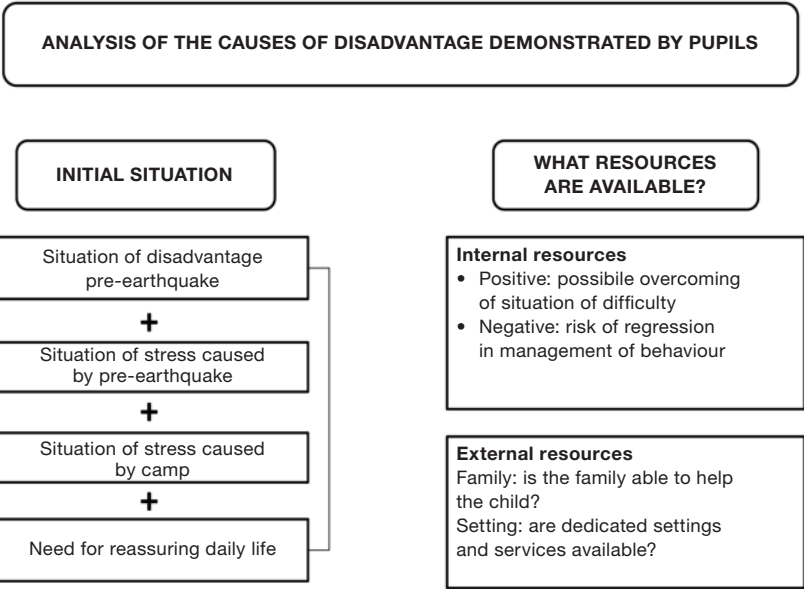


Fig. 1 - Overview of problems and resources to be activated

## 11.2. Difficulties of attention and behaviour

According to Fedeli and Vio (2017), exaggerated and excessive behaviours are normally present in children and adolescents, since they are part of the normal experimentation in relation to others: sometimes however these can manifest themselves with an intensity and frequency that compromise the adaptation of the person to the environment in different contexts, and for this reason require the intervention of the adult of reference (teacher, parent...). “These behavioural signs can therefore result in difficulties with attention and hyperactivity, or lead to a real developmental disorder. (...) To be defined as a disorder, they have to be such an intensity and/or frequency as to compromise the functioning of those who are affected in more than one life context, therefore not only in the school or family” (Fedeli, 2017, p. xxx). Moreover, the same authors affirm that “there are many behaviours-problems that take the shape of difficulties of attention and behaviour (including hyperactivity) the behavioural signs of which represent obstacles to development, i.e. conditions of malfunctioning caused only by environmental factors and not attributable to the subject”. Regarding the disorder, instead, “the behavioural signs are placed within a pathological situation (or often a number of disorders, the so-called comorbidity).

“ADHD is a developmental disorder of self-control of neurobiological origin which interferes with the normal psychological development of the child and hinders the performance of common daily activities, so the child cannot direct their behaviour with respect to what is expected from the external environment. The disorder is mainly due to the interaction between a congenital cerebral predisposition and the effects of the environment. Symptoms may include difficulties with attention and concentration, hyperactivity and an inability to control impulsivity” (Capodici, Cornoldi, 2013, p. xxx).

The disorder due to ADHD can take different forms in different subjects; simplifying things it might be said that it can be identified in one of the following areas:

<b>Inattention</b>	<b>Impulsivity</b>	<b>Hyperactivity</b>
Difficulty in following instructions, organising and/or completing a task or activity	Interruption of others when they are speaking, invasiveness with regard to others	Restlessness, agitation, moving from one activity to another
Attention of short duration and difficulty in maintaining concentration on an activity	Tendency to respond precipitately before a question has been asked	Difficulty remaining seated in the classroom, continuous movement
Easily distracted in non-motivating and/or long tasks	Difficulty waiting patiently for their turn	Exuberant behaviour, irrepressibility in speaking

### **11.3. Promoting “feeling good at school”**

For children with attention and hyperactivity disorders it is important to start with small tasks (not just scholastic) that must be appropriately structured in terms of difficulty and duration. It is necessary that their attention be focused on it for the time necessary to be able to carry it out, which will allow positive repercussions on their self-perception with an improved sense of self-esteem. It is useful to diversify the activities through: 1) practical workshops, to allow self-experimentation in the space and the possibility of movement within it, to produce small artefacts in order to satisfy the need to “be busy” in a creative way; 2) theatrical and/or musical experiences, to learn how to intervene at the right time, to “know how to wait” and follow the instructions given by the conductor, because the success of the performance is the result of a choral action involving all the components (each according to their abilities) while respecting the roles of others; 3) use the computer only when strictly necessary, otherwise this facilitator tool loses its motivational appeal.

### ***What NOT to do with the ADHD pupil:***

1. Continuous repetition of “Be careful” is pointless since the problem is precisely that of maintaining attention. It is difficult for the pupil to manage their lack of control and this could create frustration and negatively affect their motivation to work, their sense of self-esteem and the teacher/pupil relationship.
2. Insist that a task be carried out without allowing for interruptions or pauses.
3. Place the pupil in a quiet place away from their classmates and teacher, thinking they can concentrate better; in reality this could trigger a mechanism of isolation and/or feeling of inadequacy and marginalisation.
4. Not to propose novelty for fear that it will distract too much, because this could strongly inhibit motivational retention.

### ***What to do with the ADHD pupil:***

After a catastrophe, many subjects display the classic symptoms of ADHD, which are however temporary symptoms that may vanish over time. Many therefore prove to be false positives. However, the indications for use with ADHD subjects may prove useful.

People with ADHD need someone to regularly draw their attention to the task, so it is good for them to work in small groups or close to the teacher. It is desirable to divide the most complex tasks into parts that are more easily manageable within a set time. The child with ADHD may need to take small breaks during the course of a task. It would also be useful to propose new features (both in the didactic approach and in the execution of the task) to attract the child’s attention. The strong motivational impact of the game could be very useful in the face of long and challenging tasks (transforming exercises into games).

Children with ADHD are lacking, at the level of the organisation of their activities, in the materials to be used and/or the tasks to be performed. It is therefore necessary to structure the environment and refer to clear rules. Teachers can also increase appropriate behaviour



by leveraging the hypothetical possible consequences of certain actions.

A facilitating environment is based on routine, on the organisation of the lesson, on previously established times, on the organisation of the material and the class and on the sharing of rules (not intended as prohibitions, but as suggestions).

## 11.4. Activities

### Build a totem

A totem, in anthropology, is a natural or supernatural entity which has a particular symbolic meaning for a person, clan or tribe, and to which people feel bound for life.

In educational work, the proposed activity might recall the group's need for belonging and common reference point that the totem satisfies as its specific cultural function.

**Keywords:** sense of community, resilience.

#### Aims

1. To share ideas, actions, spaces and materials.
2. To create a "totem" that represents the group.
3. To stimulate pupils' attention through cooperative and shared work.

**Materials:** cardboard boxes of various sizes, sheets of paper or newspapers, scissors, glue, paints.

#### Group of 10/15 pupils (different ages)

#### Activities

Invite the group to express their opinion on what might represent a "totem"; share the idea and plan what they want to achieve. Distribute the materials leaving the children free to choose their technique and give themselves tasks. When everyone has finished their own contribution, display the totem in a space that can be a reference point for the group.

## Exhibiting in a museum

**Keywords:** sense of community, resilience.

### Aims

1. To enhance observation skills to exercise selective spatial attention and on the details of the painting.
2. To create a work within a time limit to make children aware of the passage of time.

**Materials:** rigid cardboards, tissue paper, coloured papier-mâché; glue, scissors, paints.

### Activity

*1<sup>st</sup> phase:* the adults arrange the classroom furniture in such a way as to outline a path; then they place reproductions of abstract paintings on the walls of the class; they invite the children to visit the “museum” by observing the reproductions, stimulating them to describe some of them (those that have most affected them);

*2<sup>nd</sup> phase:* organise the desks so that the children can move freely in the classroom; place the material on the teacher’s desk/table so that everyone can choose materials to work with; creating the work;

*3<sup>rd</sup> phase:* set up the exhibition with the works created by the children.

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## 12. Preventing substance abuse: activities for adolescents

*Veronica Valerio*

### 12.1. Theoretical framework

Every emergency represents an intense existential experience, which arises from the encounter between an unexpected and dramatic event and a number of people and communities who have to try to deal with it. The fragility of the person is confronted by battles and pain, but interpersonal solidarity, mutual collaboration and the resilient ability to cope with adversities, of varying nature and scope, are born from this (Sbattella, 2012). Every event, situation and/or behaviour bring with them a wealth of emotions, positive or negative, which in some way tend to recontextualise their present and readjust it in the face of continuous changes. There are no rational or cognitive actions that are not charged with emotional force, there are no places that are not linked by feelings and emotional tones. Experiences of stress and trauma are part of the great events of life that involve a phase of considerable emotional impact that can lead to behaviours and attitudes typical of depression or the acquisition of behaviours at risk. Recent scientific studies that have analysed the long-term effects in adolescent victims of an earthquake show that, even after many years, children are more vulnerable to symptoms such as depression, anxiety and suicidal tendencies (Shi *et al.*, 2016; Tanaka *et al.*, 2016). Often when a catastrophe occurs, in the stories of individuals or communities, we are concerned first of all with what to communicate to children and how they react, and this is also done by the mass media, mainly focusing on the infant, adult

and elderly stages. Adolescence, in this sense, is where exactly? Sometimes there is a mistaken belief that adolescents are already grown up, that they know how to provide for themselves and to understand what happened. In reality, we need to reflect on the fragility of the adolescent period, in which children are proceeding towards the construction of their own identities and roles within society. Adolescence is a very dynamic phase of life, which is based on a loss/conquest dyad, and this oscillation renders the adolescent even more vulnerable (Dodin, 2016). Losing their points of reference, in the period of the construction of their own ego, in a damaged and disoriented community, can lead to specific distress symptoms (anxiety, panic attacks, depression) with the perception of a sense of estrangement and emptiness that can involve abuse of alcohol or drugs or forms of uninhibited sexuality, adopted as compensatory strategies. Difficulties in interpersonal relationships and conflict at both friend and family level, forms of rebellion which are typical of adolescence, increase. The use of drugs or alcohol becomes, for the adolescent, a means to detach themselves from pain and anger, under the false illusion of feeling better, with the perception of being strong and invincible. In general, behind every behaviour involving abuse there are always emotional, cognitive and relational factors in the life history of an individual that led them to use these compensatory strategies. To understand the functions of at-risk behaviour it is necessary to go beyond the simple description of a behaviour, to fully understand the meaning it assumes for those who practise it. Behind alcohol or smoking there is always an identity that wanders between testing the limits and the exploration of their own possibilities, accompanied by a desire for experimentation and self-assertion (Bonino, 2005). At the same time, in a hidden way, there is a need to express one's opinion, the rebellion against a perhaps too-narrow context, the attempt to be considered an active part, with a voice and resonance. Adolescents are at an age where they know how to hide their fragility and show themselves to be strong, as if the catastrophe has only just touched them, but in reality the effects of that traumatic experience on the psyche can manifest themselves in various forms, also in the long term. Adolescents

therefore need to rediscover the “safe base” (Bowlby, 1989) and feel listened to and actively participate in a process of social and community reconstruction, with their requests and opinions. It is therefore necessary to involve young people in significant self-realisation projects, working for the community, activities in which they can express emotions and needs, and feel they are the protagonists of a restructuring of spaces and a rebirth of bonds. It is important to create environments to develop creativity, solidarity, sense of humour, operational skills, self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy, which protect against the acquisition of behaviours and/or conduct which are at risk. In this sense, the prevention of the abuse of substances should be considered not only in a strict sense (as information, awareness-raising), but also as a participatory and active education and as a construction of the sense of community, as the guidelines that follow seek to show.

## **12.2. Guidelines for primary and secondary prevention with adolescents**

<b>1</b>	Strengthen the protective factors (family, school, peer group) to encourage the use of healthy and balanced behaviour in terms of personal wellbeing.
<b>2</b>	Create moments of reflection, especially at school, opening a window of confrontation and knowledge of their world and their expectations.
<b>3</b>	Allow them to let off steam, without censorship, in terms of their feelings and needs, seeking together useful strategies for dealing with difficult situations.
<b>4</b>	Create moments of peer education about the meaning and adoption of at-risk behaviour and the choice of resilient and effective strategies. Plan together: “doing with” breaks down barriers and gives voice to the people involved, as well as operational and decision-making capacities.
<b>5</b>	Inform, raise awareness about the risks of substances or behaviours that generate addiction, also in relation to post-emergency situations, which lead to an increase in this type of behaviour in the juvenile and adult population. This applies to all forms of addiction, including sexual addictions and at-risk sexual behaviour.

6	Contain the sense of powerlessness through aid to the community, especially to the weaker groups; rediscovery of the sense of unity and solidarity and the importance of feeling active and supportive.
7	Create an intergenerational line through the narration of experiences, histories and stories, from parents to the elderly, from children to all the operators involved in the emergency.
8	Use the creative arts to express themselves and as a means of resolving traumatic experiences (art workshops, painting, theatre, photography, using music and watching films as a space for opening up and discussion) with the possibility of gathering ideas for reflection, useful in dealing with difficulties. Music, like creativity, is one of the means the adolescent uses to self-identify, so it is essential to focus on this resource, and articulate it in specific activities.
9	Involve adolescents in the choices and planning of a future to be rebuilt together (participation in citizens' meetings, rediscovering spaces and environments, etc.); offer them the possibility of being active citizens in their community, with the help of the institutions and volunteers. For example: accompanying elderly people, company for those who live on their own, providing material aid in the area, collecting the requests of the population and becoming their spokesperson.
10	Contain the sense of powerlessness through aid to the community, especially to the weaker groups; rediscovery of a sense of unity and solidarity and the importance of feeling active and supportive. This allows the development of a sense of personal and social responsibility which positively influences the formation of one's own identity.

## 12.3. Activities

### Prevent dependences by becoming aware

**Key words:** trauma, resilience, primary prevention, network work.

#### Premise

The path is aimed at adolescents from the first- and second-year secondary schools pupils and is dedicated to knowledge about emotional and sexual wellbeing and the prevention of at-risk behaviour, with a view to personal and relational maturation. The delicate period of adolescence correlates to a fragility resulting from the traumatic experience, therefore it becomes a fundamental requirement to equip children with those educational and psychological tools that will allow them to face any critical situations in a

resilient way. The project includes a series of theoretical meetings and a peer education phase in which the adolescents can get involved. The dedicated time frame runs from January to June, with two monthly meetings for a total of 12 meetings.

### **Aims**

1. To prevent forms of distress among the young, enhancing personal growth.
2. To provide theoretical-practical knowledge about aspects of health, emotional and sexual education, to prevent at-risk behaviour.
3. To promote effective relationships and healthy confrontation with their peer group.
4. To strengthen their sense of responsibility and constructive criticism with the acquisition of effective and resilient strategies to cope with difficulties.

### **Resources**

The resources involved are professional operators from a multidisciplinary team based on an integrated work and approach:

- Psychologist
- Sexologist
- Educator
- Doctor
- Social worker

### **Path**

*Preventing addictions* is a theoretical-practical project that can be of help in self-knowledge and self-awareness, of one's own body and one's relationships, in order to have an array of knowledge suitable for the full path of life. The first seven meetings will be articulated in the following modules:

1. Knowledge of the operators with the classes involved and illustration of the project; analysis of interests and expectations.
2. Education about the emotional and sexual sphere, from a medical, educational, sexual and psychological point of view.
3. Education about relationships and/or couples: mutual respect, correct communication, contraceptive methods.
4. Education about addictions as a form of juvenile difficulty: substance use and abuse (tobacco, alcohol and drugs).
5. Education about sexual wellbeing: emotional and/or sexual dependence, unwanted pregnancies, contraceptive methods and promiscuous sexuality.
6. Strengthening of the parent/child bond: listening to each other, confronting each other, becoming allies.
7. Feedback on the work done: final meeting between operators and adolescents, strengths and weaknesses.

The second phase of the project includes the last six peer education meetings, coordinated by an operator who assumes the role of observer

and mediator; in these groups the students experiment with the issues dealt with, sharing stories and experiences. The group constitutes a safe base and a container of similar experiences, from which they can learn together and grow.

### **The resilient garden: teenagers and the elderly together**

**Key words:** resilience, stress, trauma, secondary prevention.

#### **Premise**

The path sees teenagers (aged 15 to 18) as protagonists, coordinated by two operators, and the elderly. The adolescents are involved in the process of physical and social reconstruction. Their need to feel active can be directed towards supporting their wounded community, especially towards the weaker groups, through activities that recreate moments of daily life, with the enhancement of new resources. In general, every elderly person has a passion for gardens and gardening, an activity or pastime that generates relief, commitment, tranquillity and movement in the person on a physical and mental level. After all, plants and flowers have always been symbols of life, rebirth and resilience. The path can be pursued in green areas adjacent to the emergency sites (tent cities, homes for displaced people, etc.).

#### **Aims**

1. To recreate moments of daily life to restore a sense of normality that is now lost or fragmented, objectively detaching themselves from the trauma of the disastrous event.
2. To promote intergenerational links.
3. To encourage the resources of adolescents and the elderly through the search for resilient strategies to cope with difficulties.
4. To provide space for knowledge and socialisation.

#### **Materials**

- Gardening tools (spades, rakes, pots, hoes, scissors).
- Greenhouse tools (sheets, iron posts).
- Seeds, plants and flowers of all kinds.

#### **Activity**

The activity foresees an initial moment in which the young people are involved in planning and organisation by two operators, with whom they establish the principles and guidelines. The first moment is dedicated to the collection of the names of the elderly people living in the tent city, and then to set up a meeting to illustrate the project: “The resilient garden: teenagers and the elderly together”. The activity involves the construction of a small greenhouse to be used as a garden, in a small area adjacent to the various tents, and will consist in the cultivation and care of flowers and



plants. Around a large table, the old folk introduce the young people to the knowledge and techniques of planting, flowering and irrigation systems. Thus began a moment of exchange of information and valuable lessons. After carefully examining the various crops to be grown, the first day of real work begins. The young people have the task of setting up the greenhouse, the elderly of selecting the plants and flowers. Together they work on the realisation of the tent camp garden or dedicated space, where they start to breathe a more relaxed air. They exchange feelings, knowledge, advice and even reproach for not having done the job properly. All this seems normal and everyday. The project extends to the assignment of temporary housing or even beyond.

### **Being together with music**

**Keywords:** stress, resilience, secondary prevention.

#### **Premise**

*Curative music* is an ensemble music workshop with self-built instruments that involves teenagers aged 15 to 18 years. The workshop takes place at least a few months after the disastrous event and can be implemented for a whole year, at the end of which there will be a final concert by the young people involved, open to the whole community. It will take place in the afternoons so as to create a space for adolescents, in which they can feel free to stay, do and plan.

Music allows the expression of oneself and one's emotions and helps to give breath and voice to one's ideas and requests; it "cures" and "relieves" wounds.

#### **Aims**

1. To give young people the opportunity to express themselves through their passions, focusing on their own resources.
2. To promote socialisation, sharing and the reconstruction of bonds in a phase of emotional stress and fragility.
3. To provide an outlet for resistance through the creativity of the materials and music.

**Materials:** caps, bottles, lids, jars, funnels, plastic pipes, glasses, etc.

#### **Activity**

The project *Being together with music* is an ensemble workshop that involves two meetings a week, each lasting an hour and a half, coordinated by two operators/musicians, outside of school hours. The first phase is the conception and creation of musical instruments through the use of recycled or recovered materials: percussion instruments invented by them (rainsticks,

maracas, timpani, plates). The second phase consists in the composition of pieces accompanied by classical instruments as well, such as barrel organ, guitar, piano, and the preparation of a full-blown concert of ensemble music. At the end of the workshop, a show will be put on where the participants will perform in front of their families and the whole community.

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She participates in conferences in Italy and abroad. She has written monographs, essays and articles, including: Zizioli, E., *Narrazioni decentrate*, in Fiorucci, M., Pinto Minerva, F., Portera, A. (ed. by), *Gli alfabeti dell'intercultura*, ETS, Pisa, 2017, pp. 455-464; Zizioli, E., in collaboration with Franchi, G., *I tesori della lettura sull'isola. Una pratica di cittadinanza possibile*, Sinnos, Rome, 2017.





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## Children after a natural disaster

Catastrophes and natural disasters lead to numerous problems in the education of children and teenagers, who present as the most vulnerable subjects in the communities affected. Often, in these circumstances, adults (educators, teachers, parents) do not know how to respond to their needs, reactions and feelings. What do we need to know about childhood trauma? What answers should we give to children exposed to the effects of catastrophes (mourning, destruction, widespread fears)? What educational activities might support them in their resilience?

This book, born from experiences gained in the aftermath of the Amatrice earthquake in Italy in 2016, offers paths, through guidelines and educational activities, to confront together with children and teenagers post-catastrophe situations, the return to school, the intelligent management of emotions, and the maintenance of a sense of community.

**Stefania Mariantoni** is a psychologist and psychotherapist and co-ordinates the Social Planning Office of the VI Mountain Community of Velino to which belong the municipalities of Castel Sant'Angelo, Borgo Velino, Antrodoto, Micigliano, Posta, Borbona, Cittareale, Amatrice and Accumoli. From 2012 to 2017 she was Councillor for Social Policies for the municipality of Rieti, with responsibility for social and health policies, solidarity, integration, housing and social cohesion policies. She coordinated various editions of the "Rieti Città Amica dei bambini" Festival. She is technical director for the implementation of the "Velino for Children" Project (Sisma 2016). She is editor for the text: *Individui, Comunità e Istituzioni in emergenza. L'intervento psico-socio-pedagogico e lavoro di rete nelle situazioni di catastrofe* (with A. Vaccarelli, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2018).

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