

Activity: What may help understand a child's mental health?

A few tips you may think about:

- 1) Asking him/her directly: They are children, but they can answer back to a simple question such as «How are you?» or «How are you doing?».
- 2) Exploring temperament: When talking with children and parents we may ask about their usual way of behaving? Are they more phlegmatic or impulsive? How they react to an unexpected stressor?
- 3) Exploring usual coping strategies: Moreover, we may ask about what usually helps them coping with stress: «Which are their usual strategies?».

Activity

In a second grade elementary school class, some of the pupils have experienced prolonged bereavement and estrangement from some people in their household (grandparents, uncles, etc.).

What kind of activities would you think about as teachers to reframe this pandemic period in school by intervening as a primary prevention?

- ❖ How would you build, based on the guidance provided, a stable and safe environment?
- ❖ How would you recall the period by enabling pupils to recognize and express their emotional experience?
- ❖ How would you make it possible for the various pupils to interact with each other so that they feel acknowledged in each other's difficulties?

Activity

Giulia, is a 12-year-old girl, finished school last year with a decent score in all courses. No dysfunctional behavior was ever reported to the extent that her parents, who have only lived in Italy for a year, showed up at school only for parent-teacher meetings. The girl is very shy and only established a meaningful relationship at the beginning of the year with a classmate who is her cousin (born and raised in Italy).

Once went back to school, you notice that Giulia spends free time during breaks always alone; she also seems to have stopped talking with her cousin. She often appears tired, distracted and apathetic despite completing the proposed classroom activities. During some tests she bursts into tears and does not verbalize any discomfort except somatic symptoms to which she blames her difficulty ("I have a headache," "My tummy hurts"). This situation continues until January, with an increase in the girl's absences.

1. What are the warning signs you can notice in Giulia? Remember that observation should cover multiple levels and include the level of intensity, duration and pervasiveness of behaviors.
2. Why can Julia be defined «under observation»? What kind of vulnerabilities do you notice?

Activity: Useful strategies for inclusive learning

D. is a second-grader with a certified cognitive disability. He has a special needs teacher but does not like to leave the classroom for educational activities, he prefers to be with his classmates even though he follows differentiated programming. D. has developed good verbal language and has begun to learn to read, write and do calculations behind the pace of learning of the class. D. uses the computer to convey his learning, through a writing program that translates written words into symbols; he loves history and enjoys sharing his PC works with classmates.

1. What strategies could the teacher adopt to make D. participate in the history lesson?

2. Would small group work be preferable? If yes how would you exploit it?

Activity: Managing inclusive classrooms online

Due to a high number of children testing positive for Covid-19 it is decided, in accordance with current regulations, to send the class to distance learning. There are 4 pupils with special educational needs in the class.

What kinds of activities could you think of as teachers to ensure the inclusiveness of these pupils even in the online distance learning mode?

- ❖ Try to imagine a lesson in which you would have the whole class participate
- ❖ Think about which lesson mode, whether synchronous or asynchronous, you would adopt
- ❖ Consider whether or not you would need the cooperation of the family
- ❖ Consider whether to initially divide the class into small groups and then provide a time for a collective lesson

Activity

Alex is a 4-year-old boy described by his parents as a "difficult" child: even as an infant it was difficult to get him to sleep and he currently sleeps with his parents. Weaning was described as a disaster because Alex refused to try new foods and textures, preferring breast milk; he is currently a very selective child in feeding. He has always had frequent episodes of anger and when faced with frustration cries inconsolably.

Alex recently became a big brother; a baby sister (Carolina) was born, whom he eagerly awaited throughout his mother's pregnancy. Five months after Carolina's arrival, the parents consult a specialist because the mood in the house has become, according to them, unbearable! To every parental request Alex responds with sharp no's, runs around the house, makes a mess of everything, breaks his little sister's toys, responds in angry tones to any question asked of him. He has resumed biting his parents and soiling his underwear with pee and poop.

The parents appear exhausted by his behaviors and emotional reactions; they report to the specialist that they are constantly punishing him: taking away toys, yelling, grumbling, pushing him away when he loses control of his emotions and behaviors...but all of this seems not to be working and they ask for help.

Why is Alex referred to as a "difficult" child?

1. It is evident that there is a difficulty in attunement between Alex and his parents at the present time, can you catch the signs of such difficulty?
2. As an adult, how could you promote attunement between you and Alex if while you are looking after Carolina, Alex picks up one of her toys and breaks it right in front of you?