

# Chapter 252

## Solidarity project: Working on affectivity in childhood

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### **ABSTRACT**

Characterization of the problem: The contemporary scenario has promoted a crisis in the biopsychosocial development of children, who lack a healthy environment satisfying their emotional needs in which they can develop empathy with the people around them so that they establish healthy effective relationships. With this, the contribution of the school, the family, and society is essential to stimulate not only the cognitive development of the child but also and mainly the construction of "emotional literacy", which aims to improve feelings and emotions, in addition to providing the constitution of character and affectivity, which will help towards a sense of

solidarity and love for others. Description of the experience: Inspired by the Educação project, using the dynamic Circle of Love, this Solidarity Project was applied to 11 students from Maternal II, from the Centro Educacional Irmã Isaura Carlesse. Four meetings were held, once a week, at the beginning of the class, lasting one hour, including songs, storytelling, sharing time, biopsychology exercises, meditation, self-massage, and relaxation. Effects achieved: The dynamics and experiences applied helped the children learn to develop qualities such as respect and empathy in a playful and fun way, in addition to imprinting an atmosphere of love and joy throughout the day. It was noticeable, at each meeting, the change brought by the Circle of Love to the daycare center. It is worth mentioning that the success observed in the materialization of this project could only occur due to the acceptance and interest on the part of the daycare center, and mainly due to the joint work with the teacher. Recommendations: Even with all the social ills, it is possible to make teaching something worthwhile and meaningful. Biopsychology exercises, stories, songs, and conversation circles are undoubtedly strategies that help in the educational process and that should be systematically used by teachers in the classroom. However, for all of them, there needs to be a very strong feeling of love on the part of the educator.

**Keywords:** Affectivity, Childhood, Love, Empathy.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PROBLEM**

Children need a creative process, and a healthy environment satisfying their emotional needs in which they can develop empathy with the people around them to establish healthy effective relationships. In this way, with all the crisis that is currently occurring in childhood, the contribution of the school, the

family, and society is essential to stimulate not only the cognitive development of the child but also and mainly the construction of emotional literacy, which has intending to improve feelings and emotions, in addition to providing the constitution of character and affectivity that will help towards a sense of solidarity and love for others.

The objective of this project was to propose and analyze the development of a pedagogical alternative that contributes to the affective aspect of children and the strengthening of positive interpersonal relationships between all those involved in the school.

This Solidarity Project aimed to help these children get in touch with their spirituality and with nature, thus promoting affectivity, compassion, and solidarity with other colleagues and people around them. It is believed that this project can be a starting point for the school that seeks humanization through teaching.

## **2 EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION**

The solidarity project was carried out at the Irmã Isaura Carlesse Educational Center, a kindergarten at the Pequeno Príncipe Hospital, aimed at the children of hospital employees.

Inspired and based on the Educadora project<sup>1</sup>, the Circle of Love was applied<sup>2</sup> for 11 children from Maternal II, from the Irmã Isaura Carlesse Educational Center, given the need to establish positive interpersonal relationships and develop the potential for empathy among children. The main objective of *Círculo do Amor* is to contribute as much as possible to the expression of affective potential, collaborating for the integral formation of human beings, using affectivity as a guiding focus in the improvement of their various capacities and intelligence.

For data collection and project development, a meeting was initially held with the director and research participants so that the project could unfold with due ethical care.

In total, the project consisted of four meetings, distributed over four weeks. These interventions were carried out on Wednesdays in the afternoon, at the beginning of class, lasting one hour, when the central dynamics of the Educadora project were applied. These activities included the songs from the Circle of Love, the story, the moment of sharing, biopsychology exercises, meditation, self-massage, and relaxation.

### *First encounter:*

The initial objective was to create affective bonds between the children, the teacher, and the academics, and to initiate a sense of union and empathy with everything around them, providing a motor activity through the songs.

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<sup>1</sup> Developed at the Instituto Visão Futuro by Psychologist Susan Andrews, its main objective is to contribute as much as possible to the expression of affective potential, collaborating for an integral formation of the human being.

<sup>2</sup> Circle of affection with songs and creative movements, biopsychology exercises, and storytelling that help restore affective ties, teaching children to “open their hearts”

After the academic presentations, the children were invited to form a circle in the center of the room. Then, the song “How are you? Good morning Mother Earth!”, is an invitation for children to wish a good day to those they love – their teachers, classmates, and the creatures of nature. This song makes the child grow in love for nature, of which he becomes aware and forms an integral part.

The next step was to make a circle with the children seated, to sing the song “Família de Amor”. Next, there was a “sharing moment”, a way to develop empathy and strengthen emotional ties with colleagues. During these moments, the children express what they liked most about the day and say something about themselves, and how they are feeling. This becomes important for the child to feel heard and valued and also helps in the communication between the teacher and the class with the child, knowing the needs of each one. While everyone sang, a stuffed animal was thrown to a child who was mentioned in the song, and this, in turn, told the class something new, or something they like to do. Afterward, I chose another colleague to play the pet so, everyone had the opportunity to share.

And as the last activity, the song “Coqueiro Alto” was taught, with movements to stretch the body – sing, move, breathe, and feel good for the whole day.

The objective of this first meeting was to create a moment of connection and approximation with the children so that they could feel safe and welcomed. With these dynamics, we observed that, although the children knew each other, they did not seem to have many moments of affective connection with their friends.

### *Second Encounter:*

When we started the activities, a circle was made with the children so that they could concentrate. We sang the song “Como vai você? Bom dia Mãe Terra!”

And in this atmosphere of magic, the most anticipated moment of the Circle of Love arrived: the puppet theater. A story was told<sup>3</sup> intituled "O monstro que roubou o vermelho", which tells the story of two children who decided to rescue the red and go in search of the monster.

This play aims to playfully introduce some yoga postures and meditation, which were worked on with the children in the next meetings

Children actively participated in the theater. This way of telling the stories proved to be very interesting, as it held the children's attention, as well as provided material for the contents that would be worked on in the next meetings.

It is interesting to note how history and magic are great attractions for children and how we can playfully approach many pedagogical contents, awakening their different senses and intelligence (GARDNER, 1995).

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<sup>3</sup> The story of the “ Monstro que roubou o vermelho” is available in full in the teaching material: The Circle of Love: to open the Heart by Susan Andrews.

The small child lives in a subtle world of dreams and fantasy. Before the age of 7 years, the bridge connecting nerve fibers between the two hemispheres of the brain is not yet fully formed, and the left hemisphere is not fully specialized. So, instead of thinking logically and rationally, young children think in images and fantasies (right hemisphere). That is why we must impregnate the children's atmosphere with fairy tales, imaginative games, and songs (ANDREWS, 2006).

Through activities linked to the narrated story, the children developed several exercises, to work on emotional aspects that influence the affective formation of children.

Work with different senses and intelligence of children (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, body-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) was encouraged, thus becoming an alternative and serving as a counterpoint to the hyperstimulation caused by excessive information these days (WADDIGTON, apud BATISTA, 2008).

Biopsychology exercises were practiced<sup>4</sup>, the mountain posture was taught, to work with physical and emotional balance; the lion's posture, which helps to improve expression and shyness, and the baby's posture, indicated impatience (BATISTA, 2008). Such exercises were imaginatively practiced by the children during the story and will be redone in the next meetings.

Storytelling is not just entertainment, but one of the main means of educating. Children can learn content faster, and various topics such as mathematics, language learning, and nature studies can be introduced. In fact, during the storytelling, all the children's multiple intelligences are addressed: linguistic, logical, mathematical, musical, spatial, corporal-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. And all sensory modalities will be stimulated, through scenery, music, sound effects, smells, tactile stimuli, and even taste (ANDREWS, 2006).

In the play, there was a moment when the children helped the characters to fill their hearts with good energy and love, working on their breathing at that moment. In the end, everyone gathered their hands in the center and we asked them: what are we going to give to the world? And they answer: love! It was in this loving atmosphere that the second meeting ended.

### *Third Encounter:*

New songs from the Circle of Love were taught, as well as biopsychology exercises, which, according to Andrews (2006), harmonize the secretions of the endocrine glands, to balance emotions. Accompanied by diaphragmatic breathing and breathing pauses, these practices stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system and reduce the production of cortisol, known as the stress and aggression hormone. They also flex joints, massage internal organs, stimulate circulation, and channel children's nervous energy, making them calmer and more focused, even those considered hyperactive.

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<sup>4</sup> The biopsychology exercises are inspired by millenary techniques of the science of yoga, which help to restore hormonal balance, ensure good physical and mental health, helping children to learn and become more effective. On the science of biopsychology, read SARKAR, P. R. *Psicologia do Yoga*. Brasília: Ananda Marga, 2007

Self-massage was also taught<sup>5</sup> and the children sat in a circle without their shoes. Massage facilitates the flow of lymph (the vital fluid that removes toxins) and, consequently, the purification of all tissues. A few minutes of daily self-massage relax the muscles, improve blood circulation and increase tissue oxygenation, thus promoting general well-being (ANDREWS, 2003).

“Research by Sybil Hart showed that preschool children – especially those considered more 'moody', – who received fifteen minutes of massage regularly did better on tests of cognitive performance and showed an increase in attention” (ANDREWS, 2011, p. 78).

After the self-massage, the children did a brief relaxation, lying on their backs, closing their eyes, and breathing deeply. In this way, the body better assimilates the benefit of the exercise, and the child develops his ability to relax.

At the time of relaxation, diaphragmatic breathing was taught. According to Andrews (2003), when children are chronically stressed, breathing patterns habitually become inverted – the diaphragm is contracted upwards and the capacity of the lungs is limited, causing less oxygen to be absorbed.

By reducing stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system and activating the parasympathetic nervous system, deep relaxation can, within a few minutes, slow the heart rate and respiratory rate; lower blood pressure; reduce cortisol and adrenaline; relax the muscles and calm the mind (ANDREWS, 2003).

One child showed that he was carrying the heart that was distributed during the theater in his pocket, demonstrating how significant it was to him.

The idea of the magic heart is a didactic way to help children express their feelings and remember the importance of love and empathy in difficult moments in life, as Maturana (2004) explains that love is central to human coexistence, and actions that constitute others in the realization of the social being is affirmed both in the acceptance and respect for oneself and the acceptance and respect for the other.

In addition to working with their multiple intelligences (GARDNER, 1995), the “magic heart” can be used at times when there is some disagreement, in this way, it is an object that concretizes the act of empathy with each other, as well as exercises the power of listening and compassion that can always be used in any problem you may have, in listening and accepting the other.

After resuming the story, a cutting and pasting activity was started, in which students looked for the color red in magazines, tore small pieces, and pasted them onto a poster that had a heart drawn in the center, thus stimulating the development of motor coordination in children. children.

#### *Fourth Meeting:*

The activities began with the song "Bom dia começa com alegria". Then, biopsychology exercises were performed. In a circle with the children seated, we move on to relaxation and then meditation.

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<sup>5</sup>Formulated by Ayurveda science, to stimulate the lymphatic system, one of the body's main purifiers.

Through meditation, children learn concentration and introspection, listening to their hearts and becoming more aware of themselves. As Gardner (1995) points out, the importance of developing intrapersonal intelligence as a way of “turning inward” and being able to form an accurate and truthful model of oneself and use this model to operate effectively in life.

With the alarming increase of hyperactivity, depression, and emotional problems among children, the regular practice of meditation is an excellent tool that develops the ability to concentrate, helping to control the restlessness of the mind and focus attention, making the child feel relaxed and alert, unlike conventional rest, in which the state of alert is reduced (ANDREWS, 2006).

“Twenty minutes of meditation can give the same state of deep relaxation that can be achieved after six hours of sleep” (ANDREWS, 2003, p. 82).

With meditation techniques, the person develops greater clarity and mental capacity, due to the increase in blood flow in the brain (ACARYA, 2005). A child's brain is very malleable and its neurological circuits can continually reprogram themselves. When the mind is focused, this neuroplasticity occurs more easily. (ANDREWS, 2011). “Instead of feeling unprotected and delivered to the setbacks of life, as is common to happen, people who practice meditation have greater control of their lives and less dependence on others” (BRAIN, apud ACARYA, 2005, p. 109).

In the final moment, the children were encouraged to maintain a state of inner peace, helping to control anxiety. After that moment, the collage heart made in the previous meeting was placed in the center of the circle, and each child “sent love” to someone special. Then, the name of the person to whom the child wanted to send love and the name of the child were written on the poster. A child wanted to send love to the monster in the story. This poster will be posted in these children's classrooms.

At the end of this activity, the children were given to color the drawing of a mandala, with the representation of what was worked on during the meetings: a circle of children holding hands with hearts in the center and between them. The activities ended with the song for our farewell, provoking a feeling of universal belonging and unity among all.

### **3 EFFECTS ACHIEVED**

The present work was developed from participant research because, at the same time that we observed the meetings, we also intervened with the children. As methodological paths, on-site observations and a semi-structured interview with the teacher were developed at the end of the project's application. Reports made after each meeting were also used. With that, it was intended to arrive at an analysis of the influence of the *Educoração* project in the affective formation of children based on the source of information provided by the data obtained.

The dynamics and experiences proposed by *Educoração* were applied to help children learn to develop qualities such as respect and empathy in a playful and fun way. In addition to imprinting an atmosphere of love and joy throughout the day, the project's experiences invite children to feel a connection

with friends, family, and everyone with whom they live. The project also featured cooperative games and group experiences that work with affectivity, helping the child's socialization.

The proposal of this project fulfilled its objectives, since it was perceptible, with the four meetings, the change brought by Educação to the daycare center. It is worth mentioning that the success observed in the materialization of this project could only occur due to the acceptance and interest on the part of the daycare center, and mainly due to the joint work with the teacher.

In a semi-structured interview with the teacher, she reported that the children commented a lot on the monster's story and that they liked the lion's song.

The children were receptive to the interns, there was cooperation and sharing among all during the meetings. All accepted the proposed activities and committed to carrying them out.

The baggage of affective content raised by the story allowed the work with themes related to the affective formation of children: cooperation, helping others, empathy, optimism, and love.

The material from the *Círculo do Amor* was donated to the nursery so that the teacher can continue it before starting the routine of activities. The idea is always to start the day with the Circle of Love, with music, smiles, and hugs, to create a pleasant and welcoming environment for everyone.

#### **4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Yoga postures, stories, songs, and conversation circles are undoubtedly strategies that help in the process of biopsychosocial development of children and should be used systematically by teachers in the classroom. However, there must be a very strong feeling of love on the part of the educator: believing in what he does and cultivating good feelings with everyone around him.

Schools are not just showcases of knowledge, but fertile fields for the sowing of a new human conscience, more sensitive to life in society. And even with all the social ills, it is possible to believe in education as an effective alternative to remedy the pain that resonates in the heart of humanity, and thus make teaching something valuable and meaningful.

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