

Growing up in a Democratic Family.

A MANUAL FOR PARENTS
WITH SECTIONS ON AGES 6 - 10 AND 11 - 14.



QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey 2019-2022

Illustrated Version

September 2021

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Republic of Serbia

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

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“ Call it a clan, call it a network,
call it a tribe, call it a family:
Whatever you call it, whoever
you are, you need one.”

Jane Howard

Preface

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Council of Europe, through intensive cooperation in the implementation of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, promote a democratic culture in schools not only in regard to school Ethos, but also in partnership with local communities and parents. This manual aims to improve the competences of parents in their encounters with different behavioural and developmental stages of children and young people.

One of the most important reference documents in the world, **The 2030 Agenda** for sustainable development, references the main factors that have a demonstrated influence on children's development: from the strong impact of media, to high pressure on families, mobility and flexibility in many areas of life, and the requirement to fulfil tasks in the family, at school, and at work. All these demands combined with a lack of learning about adequate parenting styles and a higher frequency of dysfunctional family patterns, mean that support is required for parents in the process of acquiring competences for democratic culture.

The goal of this manual is to enhance a culture of democracy through the empowerment and development of parents' competences with regards to parenting skills, attitudes, values, and critical thinking, in ways which parents can then pass on to their children.

The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture gives many opportunities to apply missing elements of a democratic culture into the educational system, as well as into everyday family life, which is the aim of this manual. Competences and descriptors correspond to interactions within a family environment. Stories and situations are universal and set up in contexts that do not relate to only certain countries or ethnic groups. At a time when we adults look at children and young people as individuals with their own ideas, thoughts and desires, and social and normative changes are reflected not only in altered family dynamics, but also in a significant change of educational goals, it is important to have manuals like this one available to families, especially for those taking the role of parent.

**Ministry of Education, Science and Technological
Development of the Republic of Serbia**

How to raise children is personal and approaches differ as do types of families. Yet some principles transcend families, communities and even national boundaries. The Council of Europe's Education programme has developed a framework for this concept called a democratic culture.

What is democratic culture? A culture of democracy equips young people to take action to defend and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law and to live with others in culturally diverse society. It enables them to participate constructively within their families and communities, both in person and online.

To make a democratic culture a reality, four broad areas were identified: values, attitudes, skills and knowledge within the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*. Twenty competences were identified to strive towards this ideal, with 135 descriptors. We can all identify with these competences. They include empathy, sustainability and critical thinking, to name a few.

During the height of the pandemic in the spring of 2020 as teachers and students (with the help of parents) were all quickly shifting to online learning, the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Council of Europe decided that parents needed specific support. This idea grew into the present publication written by Professor Rolf Gollob and Ms Svetlana Lazić within the framework of the joint CoE/EU project "Quality Education for All".

Growing up in a democratic family is geared towards parents of two age groups, 6-10 and 11-14, and includes a separate companion volume for older children 15 to 19, called *Living in a Democratic Family*. The volumes are both theoretical and practical and include topics and activities parents can broach together with their children.

We hope that parents and educators will find this publication useful to equip their children with the competences they need for the future and, at the same time, to create a more harmonious home environment where everyone contributes. While written for the Serbian context, the volumes can also provide inspiration to parents around the world.

Sarah Keating

Head, Division of Co-operation and Capacity Building, Education Department
Directorate General II – Democracy, Council of Europe

Introduction

Everyone knows what a family is! Often, it's just mum or dad and the children, sometimes it includes grandma or grandpa, and then there can also be aunts, uncles and cousins. Families can be big or small and very different from one another! There might be half-brothers and sisters or stepparents, or sometimes a pet that is just like a real family member. And when you think about what your classmates' families looked like, these differences can really become clear. So, the question of what a family is is not as easy to answer as it may seem at first sight!

The word family is derived from the Latin word 'familia' and means household community or house cooperative. In the Middle Ages, all people living under one roof were called a house community or *familia*. This included not only the mother, father and children, but also the so-called servants, i.e. the servants and even the cattle, i.e. cows, pigs or goats. A familia could consist of quite a few members. The head of such a household community was always the head of the house, and the familia was responsible for the care of all members, especially when they became old or ill! Through the course of time this understanding of family has changed.


The basis of today's education is trust.

Accordingly, mothers and fathers are confidants, advisors and companions for their children instead of the classical persons of respect. Education is a communicative and counselling practice, parents educate lovingly, with an open mind, and do not obsess over rules. In this manual we place education within the framework of the democracy surrounding us. In a democracy, our task as parents is to help children to find their own way, because growing up today means navigating your way through a jungle of possibilities and finding your own path, while at the same time helping to shape society. Conversation has taken the place of rigid rules, especially while children grow up.


This manual aims to help parents in taking small steps along this path and minimise their stress about getting things wrong.

Parents who want to be counsellors for their children are truly interested in their lives and in the society in which their children will live. This genuine interest is the basic prerequisite for children to open up to their parents about their concerns, problems and feelings. Only when parents become "advisers" will children share their inner life with them. As mentioned above, 'trust' is the key word, and this in turn forms the basis of a culture of democracy.


Democrat




Ines (38), single-mom and yoga instructor. She helps her mom to stay in shape.




Nada (58), a politician, always gives advices to her friends and family about society and democracy.




Relja (17) plays football for the school team. He just has that "something", girls absolutely love his sense of humour!




Ivan (37) works as geography teacher in high school. Ballet was his biggest love when he was young, so he goes to practice whenever he can.




Ana (34) works in a marketing agency, often takes in cats from the street, but Ivan's dog doesn't like that fact.




Mark (9) loves to play outside.




Vera (64) used to work as an accountant in a big company, but she quit to spend more time with her daughters Sara and Ana.



Victor (3) cares for his grandfather the most, cause he makes funny faces when he shouts.




Branko (84) loves to tell war stories to his grandchildren; can't stand it when someone doesn't know about important historical events.




Sofia (12) just loves going to after school biology classes, adores spiders and other insects.


ic family




Vlada (33) owns the gym down the street. Kids from the neighbourhood love him because he always helps them to avoid parents' scolding.




Una (16) plays the guitar all day; can be a bit mean when someone isn't nice to her twin sister.




Sara (40) enjoying a second youth in her new marriage; photography is her passion and the walls in her house can attest.




Todor (10) doesn't hang out much, prefers the magic of a chemistry lab, test tubes and microscopes.




Petra (4) dreams of becoming a magician.



Karlos (41), Mexico native, prefers living in this neighbourhood. His hairdressing salon has become very famous.



Dragan (66) retired postman, but he still can't get used to it. He makes the best cherry pie ever!



Mia (16) delights in spending time with her family and reading.



PART I

Democracy in daily family life

1. Living in a Democracy – some basic thoughts.

Democracy means sharing power. Not one should rule, not several, but all. This applies to the community as well as to the family. In the patriarchal family, only one person rules. All the others are to be subordinate and should obey. An unrestricted autocracy that deprives the citizens of their political freedom was considered reprehensible by the ancient philosophers, as tyrannis. For the family, however, the same philosophers demanded it. Political freedom includes the right to determine oneself. It is only when this is guaranteed for every citizen, that power comes from the people, from 'demos'. Unlike all other forms of political rule, democracy is the only one in which the exercise of power is linked to the consent and participation of the subjects. In ancient democracy, this was enacted by large assemblies in which every male citizen had the right to speak and vote. In the family, on the other hand, only one man had the right to make decisions for all members. No assembly was held. In the direct democracy of antiquity, the independence of each individual citizen was to be asserted. The domestic conditions of this autonomy consisted of patriarchal autocracy. The right to speak publicly in the assembly and the power to call the shots in private at home were directly linked.

Participation in public space also means a say in the private home

In representative democracy, too, the people should rule over themselves. The government is elected by the people and should express their majority will. But even those whose opinions do not agree with the majority should not experience the elected government's rule as foreign. All opinions should be represented in parliament, so that everyone can recognise their democratic representation. As a possible future government, the opposition always has a share in the current government. The deputies appointed to constituencies should represent the entire population, men and women from every class and profession. After winning the right to vote, women began to be represented accordingly, not only through democratic participation, but also through the democratisation of the family. Participation in public space also means a say in the private home. Equality increased and employability, free choice and mutual interest over the child became representative issues of families, as is still the case today.

In other words:

we are faced with the fact that children must also be represented. Because they belong to 'demos' just like men and women.

The democratic family includes all members

For centuries, obedience to the family was considered the highest educational goal. To meet not only the parents but the entire family with devotion was highly valued. This was especially true once children had grown up and had children of their own. In this way it was to be ensured that the children fulfilled the demands of their parents, both in terms of their legacy and in terms of their care. Interests were directed towards the community, not to the individual person. Love and affection were not publicly displayed. The main focus of families was to raise children in such a way that they could successfully work and maintain family values and wealth. The family always comprised of several generations and consisted of a large number of relatives. This is still the case today in many cultures.

Membership of one's own family, which often provides the only protection and necessary support to individuals, is usually stronger than the bond with the political community and its institutions, and nepotism becomes everyday life. Under such conditions it is difficult to establish and maintain democratic policies within the broader community. Because of the cohesion of large families, many attempts at implementing democratic practices fail, and community politics can become dominated by one family network, even when the community has democratic practices in place. Important posts are preferentially given to relatives, and family members are favoured wherever possible. And this is by no means only true for the higher levels, but wherever relations with one's own family are more powerful than the rules of the community. Even in democracies that have existed for some time, there are still very influential families in which political and financial power is combined. This trend can be dated back to ancient times, when one of the main tasks of democratic rule was to reduce the political influence of large families. Democracy had to assert itself not only against the tyrannis,

but above all against the rule of the nobility. To ensure that offices could not be passed on from one relative to another, they were allocated by drawing lots. The community was not to be dominated by large families and their political allies, as was the case in the European hereditary monarchy until well into modern times. Without the independence of children, large families form a political power that is incompatible with democracy. Breaking the chain from one generation to the next is one of the existential conditions of democracy.

Children question the world

Every child creates a new, personal view of the world that did not exist before. With every new experience and at every stage of learning, children begin making their own judgments. This starts much earlier than we realise - from birth. Moreover, children want to have their opinions heard long before they grow up and get involved in the political world. Once children learn to speak, they immediately start to ask questions about the world around them. First, they want to know the names of plants, animals and things. When walking in the forest, parents might notice how few of the bushes and trees they themselves can name correctly. Second, come the questions of why. Often, a child may ask why people need to sleep and why they have to go to bed already.

About self-control, listening and having a say

It is a fact that, just like adults, children need clear rules. But education does not take place in only one direction.

The family is a learning community. Parents change alongside children, as they grow up and develop.

Children have their own tastes, their own preferences and often hold clear views on how things should work. Parents have to know how to deal with this, even if it can be exhausting. It can be painful for parents when a child refuses to do something they did previously without issue: they no longer want to sit on their chair, no longer want to put their shoes on, or announce with great seriousness that from that point on, they will no longer help with cleaning up. What was fine yesterday is a problem today. It can often take a while before we understand what the reasons for these sudden changes could be. Yet we are also often impressed with how con-

vincing their reasons for doing so seem. The goal of parents should be to teach their children to control themselves. But self-control is not the same as discipline, something which is beginning to be demanded by society and education again today. Self-control means knowing what is good for you and what is not. Parents in a democracy want their children to be able to make their own decisions. To achieve this, parents must also give them the right to have a say. In dealing with children, one can experience the effectiveness of democracy first-hand. Parents cannot demand anything of their children which they do not do themselves. Listening is a political virtue, which is why speech and counter-speech are crucial mutual foundations in the democratic family, just as they are in democratic politics.

Modern families dare to try new things

In recent decades the concept of family has changed a lot. The dominance of the ancestor and the patriarchy has come to an end, with most couples now viewing their partnership as equal. When they marry, they no longer do so to claim ownership, but instead, to solidify a promise. Even if not always successful, the intention to stay together for life is often linked to the desire to start a family of their own, and marriage provides a legal framework for this. The oldest division of labour between a man and woman is no longer a matter of course: more and more fathers are now contributing to previously 'female' tasks in the household, thus exposing them to an existential life experience which they previously had no access to. Political democratisation, which was first seen in Europe with the execution of the absolutist during the French Revolution, has not only led to the political self-determination of men, and later, of women, but it has also freed families from the structure containing authoritarian figures of domination. This break away from the paternal family structure suddenly changed the family focus away from their origins and towards their future. While in the ancient familia the key focus was on the preservation of paternal power, the modern family is geared towards enabling and supporting new life.

The fall of the despotic father benefits not only women and children, but also men. Only in a democratic family structure can all family members actively participate and take responsibility.



2. Three styles of upbringing

Kurt Lewin (1890 – 1947), an Austrian psychologist who emigrated to the USA, defined three styles of leadership, relevant to all fields of the community, including the family. These are referred to as the democratic, the authoritarian and the laissez-faire style of leadership. These terms serve as a guide to leadership styles, but do not, of course, mean that all parents conform to only one type: usually parents demonstrate mixed elements from two or more of the styles. However, such concepts can be useful in raising awareness of one's own behaviour as an educator and may encourage one to reflect on the various behavioural styles which exist.

2.1 The democratic style of upbringing

Parents who opt for the democratic style of upbringing do not want to set rigid rules or patronise their children, and instead focus on promoting their independence by offering guidance and support. The democratic style of upbringing should be as transparent and comprehensible as possible for the child, including clearly communicated rules and regulations.

The democratic style of upbringing: One of the most important characteristics of the democratic style is the clear announcement of future plans and activities to children. This

prepares children for the rights and responsibilities that come with life in an open democratic society. The consequences of such communication are clear:

- parents are more likely to give suggestions than to set rigid boundaries
- the child may question rules and receive explanations
- parents are willing to discuss alternative solutions
- the opinions of both parties - parents and children - are generally considered to be of equal value
- the child may make independent decisions within a given framework
- important decisions that affect the whole family are made jointly by both parents and children
- parents continuously offer their children support and stability
- the parent-child relationship is characterised by openness, acceptance, affection and warmth
- when parents express criticism of the child's behaviour, it is done in a constructive and appreciative manner
- if the child has violated rules and the parents choose to apply consequences, the child always understands the reasons why, as well as the length and the manner of punishment.

The democratic style of upbringing has the following advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages

- strong communication between parents and children promotes good language skills and a large vocabulary
- strengthening of the child's self-confidence in his or her abilities and thinking
- children learn to handle criticism
- children develop a greater acceptance of other opinions and a willingness to work together to find solutions
- children are encouraged to make their own decisions and to take responsibility for the consequences

Disadvantages

- requires patience and time on the part of the parents
- children often want to discuss everything
- children often demonstrate a lack of willingness to accept mandatory rules and limits
- outside the family, e.g. at school, the children's eagerness to discuss can be interpreted as disrespect

For many parents nowadays, the positive aspects of the democratic style of upbringing outweigh the negative, and democratic practices are put into practice intuitively, at least in part. Blind obedience and discipline are rarely expected of children by parents anymore, and parents usually work to ensure their children are treated lovingly and are met with clear and comprehensive communication. Creativity, initiative and self-confidence should be encouraged and strengthened from a young age.



2.2 The authoritarian style of upbringing

Until the 1960s, the authoritarian upbringing was the predominant model for raising children. It was only through the course of the student movements of the decade that established hierarchies gradually softened and more liberal forms of upbringing became popular.

The authoritarian style of upbringing is mainly characterised by a strict hierarchy between educator and child. Parents maintain control over their child, who are deemed to be too small or immature to take responsibility of their own decisions. In this approach, parents are the subject and children are the object. The authoritarian style of education does not tolerate any forms of resistance. The child must follow established rules and meet parents' demands as best as they can. If the child does not follow parents' instructions or does not carry them out to their level of satisfaction, they are reprimanded and punished.

Certain statements are characteristic of an authoritarian upbringing. For example:

- "If you don't eat up, you go to bed hungry."
- "When adults talk, children shut up."
- "I decide when you go to bed."
- "As long as you put your feet under my table, you do as I say."

An authoritarian style of parenting goes far beyond a strict upbringing; it also strongly influences the emotional relationship between a parent and child. In general, the child receives little intimacy or attention, and only receives recognition if, in the opinion of the parents, they have satisfactorily fulfilled the demands placed on them. Even then, praise is rather impersonal and objective, and loving gestures are rarely offered.

Further characteristics of an authoritarian upbringing:

- The decisions and wishes of the child are considered irrelevant and unimportant
- A child's upbringing is based on the reward and punishment system
- Daily life is organised by strict rules and control
- Criticism is frequent and a normal form of communication

Possible consequences of an authoritarian upbringing

An authoritarian style of upbringing can have negative effects on a child's development.

Children are denied the opportunity to develop their own thoughts, opinions, independence and personality. This can have a detrimental effect on self-esteem, creativity and social relationships, right into adulthood. Desire to be 'a good child' and please parents can affect children throughout their entire lives and can make life more difficult than it is for others. Consequently, in adolescence these children might experience painful existential crises, without having developed the coping mechanisms necessary to navigate their way out of them. This can lead some to drug use, criminality, or other unhealthy behaviours.



Children who have been brought up in an authoritarian way often display issues in their social environment.

They tend to appear aggressive, struggle to respect authority, and often strive to be the centre of attention. They frequently also replicate the behaviour displayed at home towards their peers. This is particularly the case towards children they perceive to be weaker, with whom they often communicate in a bossy, aggressive, and egocentric way. This can also be seen in their use of language, with frequent use of words such as “I”, “my”, “me” and “mine”.

It also happens that children who have been brought up in an authoritarian household behave in exactly the opposite way: They let their peers push them into a victim role, withdraw and experience feelings of isolation and helplessness. This behaviour is frequently continued into adulthood.

2.3 The laissez-faire style of upbringing

In the laissez-faire style of upbringing, parents tend to behave passively towards the child. It could also be referred to as a form of ‘anti-authoritarian’ parenting, in which the parents behave in direct contrast to the authoritarian leadership style. Only minimal guidelines are given to children, who are therefore essentially left to their own devices. The laissez-faire style provides no clear framework that offers children orientation and security.

Parents following the laissez-faire style demand very little from their child, and in case of conflicts they rarely take the children’s opinions into account. In the laissez-faire style, parents tend to behave with indifference and a lack of interest, only doing what is necessary and keeping effort levels as low as possible. In extreme cases, parents with a laissez-faire parenting style can neglect their children. The laissez-faire style ultimately satisfies neither the parents nor the child. Parents can be disappointed by the spoiled, ungrateful behaviour of their children, and the children do not learn proper behavioural boundaries.



3. Life is colourful: Patchwork families

Many people are familiar with the colourful patchwork blankets and carpets sewn together from many different pieces of fabric. Even if the patches often look completely different, when put together they form a harmonious picture. A patchwork family follows the same principle: partners come from different families and are “patched together” as strangers to form a new family and a first-degree kinship. Following this,

mothers, fathers and children are “patched together” in life. The possible combinations are almost endless.

And unlike with colourful patchwork rugs, it is often not easy to create a harmonious overall picture within patchwork families, especially when issues arise regarding different values, habits, parenting models and shared finances. Despite this, however, in modern, open democratic societies, in which women have the same possibilities as men to develop and take decisions, new types of families no longer have to be hidden.

If families decide that it is in their best interests to combine, it should be seen as a positive development; not easy, but positive. Living together harmoniously as a patchwork family cannot be forced, especially when there are two different communication models – intergenerational and intragenerational – at play.

Intergenerational communication refers to the communication between family members from different kinship positions; generally between parents and children and grandparents and grandchildren, but also including extended family members such as aunt, uncles, cousins and in-laws. *Intragenerational* communication refers to the communication among family members from the same generational group, i.e. the communication between children, parents, or grandparents.

It is important for families to understand that growing together takes time. If the members of a patchwork family do not try to rush, and treat each other with care, there is a good chance that this colourful jumble can develop into a unique work of democratic art.

All beginnings are difficult: Starting as a patchwork family

Children, particularly at kindergarten and preschool age, often believe that they are to blame for their parents’ separation, as one or other of them does not love them. For children to better adjust to their new life in a patchwork family, it is key for them to understand that their parents love them regardless of their relationship with each other.

For school-age children, on the other hand, the relationship with their parents’ new life partners is often particularly dominated by conflict. Jealousy can play an important role when children feel that the new partner receives too much attention, and teenagers in particular often struggle to accept new partners as figures of authority. There are patchwork families in which this is not the case – but even then, feelings of confusion can arise. For example, a child who gets along well with their mother’s new partner might worry that they are betraying their biological father.

Relationships can start to relax if new partners build a casual friendship with the child instead of trying to replace their mother or father. It is also not advisable to surprise children with a new partner – e.g. by moving them in with the family too soon. A period of getting to know each other through joint activities is usually a more pleasant and successful start to life as a patchwork family.

In many patchwork families exists an element of competition. If both partners have children from previous relationships or if they have children together, the idea of having step- or half-siblings is something which it may be required to come to terms with. Clashes between new siblings often extend to parents, for example if each parent each chooses to defend their own child. The movie *Yours, Mine & Ours* (2005) with Dennis Quaid and Rene Russo is good illustration of this.

Ex-partners also often compete with each other, for example when they want to outdo each other in what they can offer their children, or when their parenting styles differ. In such instances it is important that the underlying conflict between the parents is resolved. When necessary, the patchwork family can be helped through counselling by a family therapist.

Finally, patchwork families can face tangible planning difficulties. Routine does both children and adults good, but it cannot always be achieved in the turbulent everyday life of a patchwork family. If parents live far away from each other, then this problem is exacerbated, due to, for example, different holiday periods. Ideally, ex-partners should be willing to work alongside each other and share responsibility for their children.

4. Living with Children: Democratic family meetings - taking decisions together

Democratic family relationships develop most effectively when all members have an equal opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Successful family meetings require such conditions.

The family meeting is a regularly scheduled meeting of all family members. Discussion topics consist of matters such as beliefs, values, wishes, complaints, plans, questions, and suggestions. It is an opportunity for all to be heard on issues arising in the family.

The family meeting is an appropriate time to plan family fun and to share good experiences and positive feelings toward each other. Regular meetings can promote family harmony by providing time to establish rules, make decisions, acknowledge good things happening in the family, and pointing out the strengths of individual members.

Some parents object to the idea of regular meetings, stating: "we don't need them," or "our family already holds a continual family meeting. We discuss things like this all the time."

Nevertheless, we urge parents to set aside a routine time for family meetings, to promote a commitment on everyone's part to share in family concerns. The meeting time should be convenient for everyone.

If some members decide not to attend, they will have to accept the logical consequences of not attending; for example, being excluded from the decision-making process.

In summary, the family meeting provides opportunities for:

- Being heard.
- Expressing positive feelings about one another and giving encouragement.
- Distributing chores fairly among members.
- Expressing concerns, feelings, and complaints.
- Settling conflicts and dealing with recurring issues.
- Planning family recreation.

Family meetings also support a child's ability to communicate, express their thoughts and ideas, ask questions and expect answers, and listen to each other, among other relevant life skills. Besides that, they empower children's capabilities to be resilient to difficult life situations. Family meetings develop children's competences, self-awareness and attachment relationships. It takes patience and effort, but the end result of the development of important life skills is worth it.

Similarly to building a house, it takes time but lasts for life.



5. www.living-democracy.com: Democratic life in school and at home

In cooperation with specialists from various countries of the Council of Europe, a democracy website has been created under the direction of the PH Zurich, which shows teachers, headmasters and parents in a very concrete way what democratic action and learning can look like in everyday life. Here we briefly introduce the part of the website which is specifically aimed at parents and that deals centrally with questions of democratic and participatory communication between children of different ages and their parents.

Different situations are starting points for the discussion and the development of joint solutions: The eldest child in a family is about to choose a profession and has no idea which profession might suit her. Recently, there has been more frequent feedback from school about the son's unfinished homework, and the youngest child of the family regularly makes shopping difficult, when her favourite biscuits do not end up in the trolley. Do these situations look familiar to you? Do you also sometimes have the feeling that you need to look for new ways of getting into conversation with your children?

The website [living-democracy.com](http://www.living-democracy.com) offers various tips and tricks for everyday life with children of different ages. In addition, the website gives tips on raising children, which, in particular, promote democratic thinking, acting and communication. Only those who experience democratic communication and action in everyday life can develop a democratic attitude themselves and practice democratic communication and action.

For toddlers (1-3 years), children (4-12 years) and young people (13-18 years), there are several situations in everyday life which can be challenging for parents, for example cleaning up after toddlers, practising table manners with the youngest, doing homework, regulating teenagers' use of media and sex education: how do I talk about this with children and young people? The approach to the different topics is always roughly the same and is based on the principle of "problem-based learning". An entertaining cartoon with a description introduces the topic and the problem (or problematic behaviour) is made clear.

Now the user is confronted with the question "How would you as parents react? Further, smaller comic strip drawings

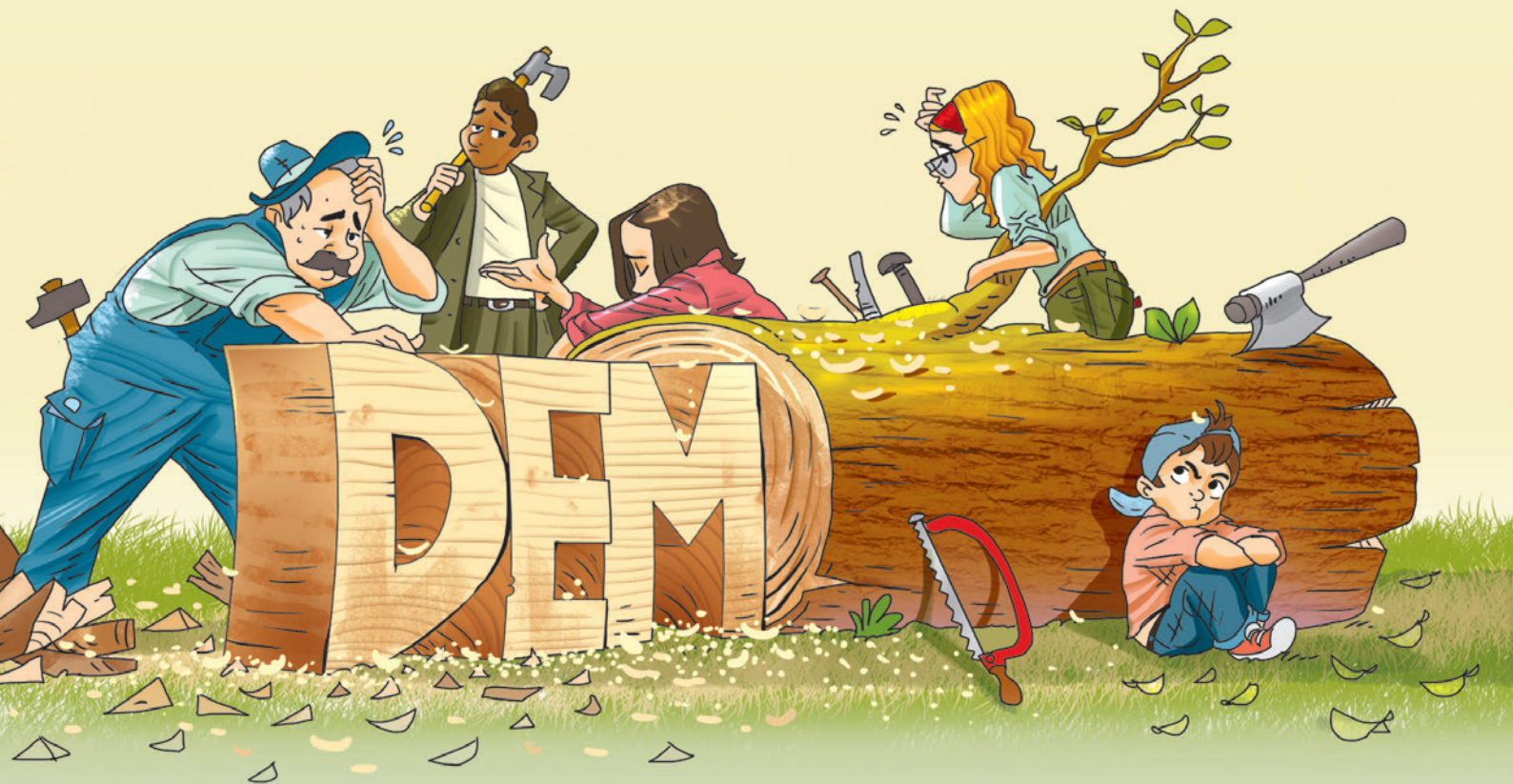
follow, each representing a different way in which parents might react. The user selects the reaction that best corresponds to his own reaction in this situation and clicks on the picture. Now the advantages and possible disadvantages of this reaction are discussed: Will this reaction solve the problem? How will the situation continue? How does the child feel? How does the adult feel? Will the situation change? These and similar questions of reflection guide the evaluation of the adult's reaction.

The next step is to identify alternative actions that can help to solve the problem. Here, modern pedagogical theories and approaches (such as sending ego-messages, non-violent and open communication) are linked to the concrete situation. However, the user not only has the opportunity to obtain theoretical information about the alternative action, but is called upon, with the help of suitable exercises, to train these new ways of communication practically. Some exercises can and should be directly integrated into everyday life, such as filtering out destructive messages from parents' own communication style. This is because one's own behaviour can only be changed if first observed and acknowledged in a practical sense. This action makes abstract theory tangible and transforms it into immediate, new knowledge of the parents' actions. The new patterns of action or conversational cues are relevant not only in the selected, exemplary situations, but can also be immediately applied to other challenging parenting situations at home.

Some of the suggested communication strategies may seem unusual, if not strange and inappropriate, however trying something new is often the only way by which problems can be tackled and progress can be made. In this respect we would like to encourage you to get involved in this experiment! It is at least worth a try in your attempts to get educational problems under control! We hope that entrenched conflicts and situations of seemingly insurmountable stress can be reviewed and re-evaluated with the help of the educational and communication strategies we have put together. Allowing these strategies to offer you solutions and enter into your everyday educational routine can allow you and your children to see this shared time as quality moments, vital in moving forwards on the exciting path of growing up in a democratic society.

PART II

Competences as help for the future



1. Competences as a goal of up-bringing and of education

1.1 What are competences?

Nowadays, the whole world seems to be talking about skills: Am I competent enough to be a mother or a father? Do I have enough skills to ride my bike through dense city traffic? What about my cooking skills? My reading skills? My conversation skills? Many school curricula are based on skills and thus respond to new challenges in our society. Work and coexistence are changing because economic, ecological and social conditions are changing. In order for future generations to prove themselves in private and public life and find their place on the job market, children and young people should be able to apply their knowledge and skills in an innovative and responsible manner. In technical discussions, the term competence is sometimes used synonymously for terms such as talent, aptitude, skill, ability, performance, learning, knowledge or even intelligence.

In order to narrow down the concept of competence, one can try to differentiate it from existing terms. For example, a competency is primarily seen as changeable, learnable and trainable. Accordingly, a competence can be understood as the basis for a successful learning process, while knowledge can be regarded as the product of this learning process.

What is meant by a competence, therefore, is the ability and skill to solve problems and the willingness to do the same. This is very important in today's rapidly changing world:

Nobody can predict which problems our children will be faced with in the near and distant future.

If we give them the skills through which they have the courage and the self-confidence to confront their problems, then we prepare them for this unknown future. If we provide them with solutions, we make a big mistake.

1.2 What are competences for a democratic citizenship?

Competences are invisible, and we can only gain access to them by looking at the actions we all take in our daily lives. Democratic citizens demonstrate their competence through their actions and performance. This includes parents as well as children. In schools it is widely understood, that teaching through, about and for democracy and human rights are key approaches. Why should it not be applied in family life? To be more precise, let us look at different types of competences which support young people to become responsible members of their society. They include the following:

- analysis and judgment
- skills
- taking action and participating
- personal and social competences.

a) Competences of analysis and judgment

Democratic citizenship requires citizens to understand the issues under discussion, which requires citizens to be informed and capable of analysing problems and lines of argument and conflict. This is the cognitive dimension of competence development (learning "about" issues of public life).

Without this level of understanding, a citizen is easy prey for demagogues, lobbyists and populists, and will not be able to identify and negotiate his or her individual or group interests. We depend on the media as a source of information, and we must be able to engage with it critically. Taking action in a democratic society is only possible if we know what we want to achieve. We must be able to define our interests and objectives, balancing wants and needs, values and responsibilities. Public life is a process of decision-making to solve problems and settle conflicts; there is no option not to make a decision, and decisions are not possible without judgement. Increasing complexity in our modernising societies tends to overstrain the 'normal citizens' competences of analysis and

judgment. Addressing trust or distrust towards existing political leaders is one way of reducing this complexity. Education is key in enabling citizens to stay well-informed of the political decisions that affect them.

b) Skills

Children and young people need a set of skills or techniques in order to acquire and use information and to form their opinions independently and systematically. These tools enable future citizens to:

- acquire information both through media and first-hand experience and research – techniques of using print and electronic media, interviews, research, reflection, etc.
- select and study information thanks to techniques of planning, time management, reading, thinking, recording
- determine, present, share, and argue their views
- reflect on the outcomes and processes of learning and application.

To a considerable extent, these skills are necessary not only for young peoples' lives as future citizens but also for the life-long learning process more broadly. They prepare everybody for more advanced academic studies and for qualified jobs. The more this type of learning is also discussed, upheld, and shared within families, the more it will be applied by family members. There is no final goal. We remain learners for our whole lives. Parents and grandparents can learn from their children in the same way children learn from them.

Taking action: The formal skills training just mentioned supports learning for life in democracy. But is not sufficient. Schools, neighbourhoods, and families can all be understood as micro-communities in which children and young people learn how to take part in society through practical experience.



The competences they need to acquire to achieve a well-functioning family life include the following:

- reflecting wants and needs, clarifying and promoting different interests
- negotiating and decision making
- understanding and appreciating the need for a framework of rules and sanctions.

The decisive area of transfer lies beyond the family or neighbourhood, it lies in society as a whole, and extends into adult life.

c) Personal and social competences

Perhaps the concept of competences is somewhat overstrained when it is extended to the dimension of values and attitudes. On the other hand, it is the performance, or the way children and young people behave, that counts, and the disposition to behave can be conceived as a competence. This dimension of competence development corresponds to learning “through” democracy and human rights and reflects the culture of democracy discussed in this manual. It includes the following:

- self-awareness and self-esteem;
- empathy;
- mutual respect;
- appreciation of the need to compromise;
- responsibility;
- appreciation of human rights as a collectively shared set of values

The framework of 20 competences for a democratic culture is therefore not just a framework for schools but gives a clear picture of what we ourselves need to learn and apply throughout our lives.

2. Competences for a Culture of Democracy

2.1 Democracy as a constitutional structure of the state.

First-and-foremost, democracy is something on paper, written into the constitution. In a democracy, the constitution is understood as the central legal document of a state. It regulates the basic organisational structure of the state, the territorial structure of the state, and the relationship with its constituent states. It also records the relationship between citizens and the state, and what rights and responsibilities apply to them. State powers constituted in this way are

bound by the constitution as the supreme norm and their power over the norm is limited. In democratic states, the constitution-making power emanates from the people of the state. Constitutions usually also contain state tasks and state objectives; these are often found in a preamble. Core democratic goals are freedom, equality, justice, security and welfare, which includes the recognition of human and civil rights, popular sovereignty through elections, parliamentarism, parliamentary control of power and the separation of powers. For citizens to be able to exercise their political rights and duties, the state must guarantee them basic social security.

Having a just constitution in which all the central elements of democratic coexistence are formulated is undoubtedly an important basis for an open society. However, the experience of many citizens around the world shows that what is written on paper is not always reflected in real life. What do articles of the constitution mean for living together (democracy as a form of society) and the everyday life of the individual (democracy as a form of life) if they are not implemented in real life?

2.2 Democracy as a sign of the community-culture

Democracy is much more than just a constitution. Democracy also includes a social dimension: Democracy is – with other words – a form of society. The emergence of “young” European democracies and increasing globalisation, which has affected the borders of existing states, have shown that democracy is not limited to a legal system. Only social anchoring and the transmission of democratic principles enable the functioning of political democratic systems. This can be called the daily culture of democracy. This understanding requires a strong civil society in which pluralism and social difference can exist and conflicts are settled peacefully. Economic competition, carried out under fair conditions, should also be possible in such a democratic civil society. A free and diverse public, supported by broad civic engagement, is another prerequisite for democratic societies. From the perspective of political cultural research, a third understanding of democracy was geared towards everyday life, towards the culture of social coexistence. In recent years, educational psychology, philosophy and political education have taken up this approach by asking about the individual and socio-moral foundations of the political understanding of democracy:

How can democracy be made tangible, and how can such experiences grow?

This is about the micro-level of democratic culture, for example in each family or in the neighbourhood.

It is seen as the basis of democratic political engagement and democratic societies in general. According to this point of view, anyone who grows up in an environment characterised by tolerance and fairness understands diversity of lifestyles as an opportunity, is educated in solidarity and self-organisation, and has good prerequisites to act democratically within society and to participate democratically in the political system.

The Council of Europe developed the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. The model with the 20 competences, developed within the scope of the Council of Europe Democracy Projects, describes how the values of democracy are implemented in schools and in everyday life. In every learning situation, some of these elements are visible. In every classroom many of them are already being implemented, but we as teachers are often not aware of them ourselves.

All parents need to understand them and learn to identify what is happening in their families and homes concerning the development of the competences for all children and youths, in order to become part of a democratic society.

2.3 The visibility of competences: Descriptors

A democratic culture relies on citizens having the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding described in the competence model above. Accordingly, the framework provides detailed descriptors for each of the 20 competences. These are written mostly for teachers and students to understand and implement democratic practices in the classroom and school buildings.

The 20 competences included in the model

Values

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

Attitudes

- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity

Skills

- Autonomus learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- Co-operation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills

Knowledge and critical understanding

- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability

Competence descriptors are statements describing observable behaviours that show when a person has achieved a certain level of a particular competence. This is important for the development of a democracy, because when we see competences and descriptors being applied in family life, we know that society is not just democratic on paper, but that democratic actions and results are observable in reality. The family is an important training place for this: children experience democracy in action as a part of their normal daily routine.

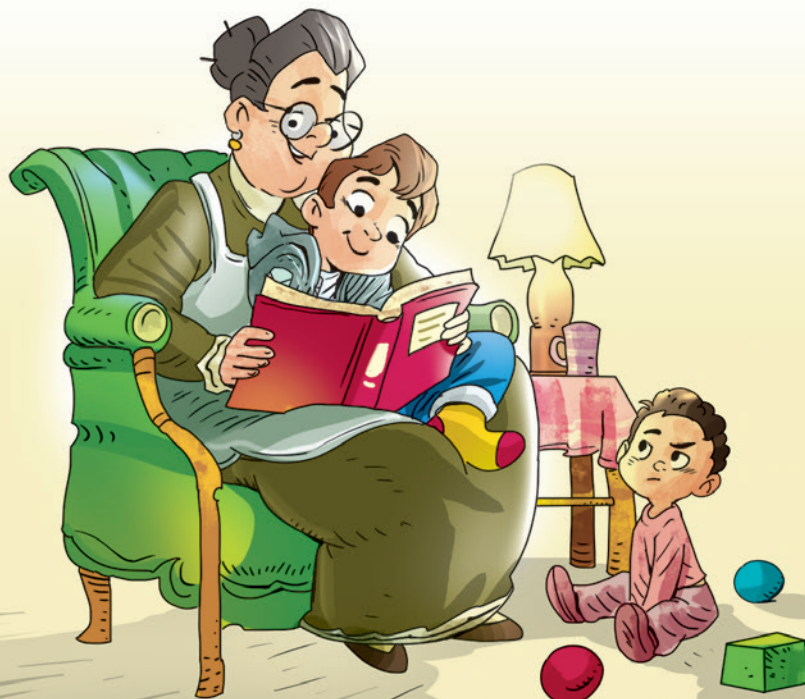
This booklet provides you not only with the competences and descriptors, but also with a 'competence garden' (found on the final page). You and all other key players can make use of this poster to develop a democracy-profile of your class, your school, your staff etc. We explain how this can be done below.

Democracy, as it is commonly interpreted, means a form of governance by or on behalf of the people. A principal feature of such governance is to be responsive to the views of the majority. For this reason, democracy cannot operate in the absence of institutions that ensure the inclusion of adult citizens, the organisation of regular, contested, free and fair elections, majority rule, and government accountability. However, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, these institutions themselves cannot

function unless citizens practice a culture of democracy and hold democratic values and attitudes. Among other things, these include: a commitment to public deliberation, a willingness to express one's own opinions and to listen to the opinions of others, a conviction that differences of opinion and conflicts must be resolved peacefully, a commitment to decisions being made by majorities, a commitment to the protection of minorities and their rights, a recognition that majority rule cannot abolish minority rights, and a commitment to the rule of law.

Democracy also requires citizens' commitment to participate actively in the public realm.

If citizens do not adhere to these values, attitudes and practices, then democratic institutions are unable to function. In culturally diverse societies, democratic processes and institutions require intercultural dialogue. A fundamental principle of democracy is that those affected by political decisions can express their views when decisions are being made, and that these views are taken into account by decision-makers. Intercultural dialogue is, first-and-foremost, the most important means through which citizens can express their views to fellow citizens with different cultural affiliations.



It is, secondly, the means through which decision-makers can understand the views of all citizens, taking into consideration their various self-ascribed cultural affiliations. In culturally diverse societies, intercultural dialogue is thus crucial for ensuring that all citizens are equally capable of participating in public discussions and decision-making processes. Democracy and intercultural dialogue are complementary in culturally diverse societies.

Values are general beliefs that individuals hold about the goals people should strive for in their lives. They motivate action and also serve as guiding principles on how to act. Values transcend specific actions and contexts, and they have a normative prescriptive quality about what ought to be done or thought across a range of situations. Values offer standards or criteria for: evaluating actions, both one's own and those of other people; justifying opinions, attitudes and behaviours; decision making; planning behaviour; and attempting to influence others.

An **attitude** is the overall mental orientation which an individual adopts towards someone or something (for example a person, a group, an institution, an issue, an event or a symbol). Attitudes usually consist of four components: a belief or opinion about the object of the attitude, an emotion or feeling towards the object, an evaluation (either positive or negative) of the object, and a tendency to behave in a particular way towards that object.

A **skill** is the capacity for carrying out complex, well-organised patterns of either thinking or behaviour in an adaptive manner in order to achieve a particular end goal. There are eight sets of skills that are important for a culture of democracy, as listed on the following pages.

Knowledge is the body of information that is possessed by a person, while understanding is the comprehension and appreciation of meanings. The term "**critical understanding**" is used to emphasise the need for the comprehension and appreciation of meanings in the context of democratic processes and intercultural dialogue to involve active reflection on and critical evaluation of that which is being understood

and interpreted (as opposed to automatic, habitual and unreflective interpretation).

Underneath all four dimensions (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding), the Council of Europe has developed descriptors which help to describe the observable democratic actions. These are developed mainly for school purposes yet can also be relevant and important in the daily life of a family.

As an example, we can look at competence 13 (empathy). There are 6 descriptors which show the actions displayed in a family member who maintains a sense of empathy in their daily life:

- Can recognise when a companion needs his or her help
- Expresses sympathy for the bad things that he or she has seen happen to other people
- Tries to understand his or her friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective
- Takes other people's feelings into account when making decisions
- Expresses the view that, when he or she thinks about people in other countries, he or she shares their joys and sorrows
- Accurately identifies the feelings of others, even when they do not want to show them

It is important here to note that the elements of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) are not just actions parents or educators should expect from children or youth. They should also be observed the other way round: If adults themselves do not commit to growing and learning to become better democratic citizens (failures are not only allowed, but considered a normal part of the learning process), then the process of teaching them should not even be started.

To aid the personal learning process and as a proposal to adapt them into everyday family life, the 135 descriptors shall be displayed in the following chapter.

2.4 All 135 Descriptors: How democratic competences appear

a) Values

1. Valuing human dignity and human rights

1. Argues that human rights should always be protected and respected
2. Argues that specific rights of children should be respected and protected by society
3. Defends the view that no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
4. Argues that all public institutions should respect, protect and implement human rights
5. Defends the view that when people are imprisoned, although they are subject to restrictions, this does not mean that they are less deserving of respect and dignity than anyone else
6. Expresses the view that all laws should be consistent with international human rights norms and standards

2. Valuing cultural diversity

7. Promotes the view that we should be tolerant of the different beliefs that are held by others in society
8. Promotes the view that one should always strive for mutual understanding and meaningful dialogue between people and groups who are perceived to be "different" from one another
9. Expresses the view that cultural diversity within a society should be positively valued and appreciated
10. Argues that intercultural dialogue should be used to help us recognise our different identities and cultural affiliations
11. Argues that intercultural dialogue should be used to develop respect and a culture of "living together"

3. Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

12. Argues that schools should teach students about democracy and how to act as a democratic citizen
13. Expresses the view that all citizens should be treated equally and impartially under the law
14. Argues that laws should always be fairly applied and enforced
15. Argues that democratic elections should always be conducted freely and fairly, according to international standards and national legislation, and without any fraud
16. Expresses the view that, whenever a public official exercises power, he or she should not misuse that power and cross the boundaries of their legal authority
17. Expresses support for the view that courts of law should be accessible to everyone so that people are not denied the opportunity to take a case to court because it is too expensive, troublesome or complicated to do so
18. Expresses support for the view that those to whom legislative power is entrusted should be subject to the law and to appropriate constitutional oversight
19. Expresses the view that information on public policies and their implementation should be made available to the public
20. Argues that there should be effective remedies against the actions of public authorities which infringe upon civil rights

b) Attitudes**4. Openness to cultural otherness**

- 21. Shows interest in learning about people's beliefs, values, traditions and world views
- 22. Expresses interest in travelling to other countries
- 23. Expresses curiosity about other beliefs and interpretations and other cultural orientations and affiliations
- 24. Expresses an appreciation of the opportunity to have experiences of other cultures
- 25. Seeks/welcomes opportunities for encountering people with different values, customs and behaviours
- 26. Seeks contact with other people in order to learn about their culture

5. Respect

- 27. Gives space to others to express themselves
- 28. Expresses respect for other people as equal human beings
- 29. Treats all people with respect regardless of their cultural background
- 30. Expresses respect towards people who are of a different socio- economic status from himself/herself
- 31. Expresses respect for religious differences
- 32. Expresses respect for people who hold different political opinions from himself/herself

6. Civic-mindedness

- 33. Expresses a willingness to co-operate and work with others
- 34. Collaborates with other people for common interest causes
- 35. Expresses commitment to not being a bystander when the dignity and rights of others are violated
- 36. Discusses what can be done to help make the community a better place
- 37. Exercises the obligations and responsibilities of active citizenship at either the local, national or global level
- 38. Takes action to stay informed about civic issues

7. Responsibility

- 39. Shows that he or she accepts responsibility for his or her actions
- 40. If he or she hurts someone's feelings, he or she apologises
- 41. Submits required work on time
- 42. Shows that he or she takes responsibility for own mistakes
- 43. Consistently meets commitments to others

8. Self-efficacy

- 44. Expresses a belief in his or her own ability to understand issues
- 45. Expresses the belief that he or she can carry out activities that he or she has planned
- 46. Expresses a belief in his or her own ability to navigate obstacles when pursuing a goal
- 47. If he or she wants to change, he or she expresses confidence that he or she can do it
- 48. Shows that he or she feels secure in his or her abilities to meet life's challenges
- 49. Shows confidence that he or she knows how to handle unforeseen situations due to his or her resourcefulness

9. Tolerance of ambiguity

- 50. Engages well with other people who have a variety of different points of view
- 51. Shows that he or she can suspend judgments about other people temporarily
- 52. Is comfortable in unfamiliar situations
- 53. Deals with uncertainty in a positive and constructive manner
- 54. Works well in unpredictable circumstances
- 55. Expresses a desire to have his or her own ideas and values challenged
- 56. Enjoys the challenge of tackling ambiguous problems
- 57. Expresses enjoyment of tackling situations that are complicated

c) Skills

10. Autonomous learning skills

- 58. Shows ability to identify resources for learning (e.g. people, books, internet)
- 59. Seeks clarification of new information from other people when needed
- 60. Can learn about new topics with minimal supervision
- 61. Can assess the quality of his or her own work
- 62. Can select the most reliable sources of information or advice from the range available
- 63. Shows ability to monitor, define, prioritise and complete tasks without direct oversight

11. Analytical and critical thinking skills

- 64. Can identify similarities and differences between new information and what is already known
- 65. Uses evidence to support his or her opinions
- 66. Can assess the risks associated with different options
- 67. Shows that he or she thinks about whether the information he or she uses is correct
- 68. Can identify any discrepancies or inconsistencies or divergences in materials being analysed
- 69. Can use explicit and specifiable criteria, principles or values to make judgments

12. Skills of listening and observing

- 70. Listens carefully to differing opinions
- 71. Listens attentively to other people
- 72. Watches speakers' gestures and general body language to help figure out of what they are saying
- 73. Can listen effectively in order to decipher another person's meanings and intentions
- 74. Pays attention to what other people imply but do not say
- 75. Notices how people with other cultural affiliations react in different ways to the same situation

13. Empathy

- 76. Can recognise when a companion needs his or her help
- 77. Expresses sympathy for the bad things that he or she has seen happen to other people
- 78. Tries to understand his or her friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective
- 79. Takes other people's feelings into account when making decisions
- 80. Expresses the view that, when he or she thinks about people in other countries, he or she shares their joys and sorrows
- 81. Accurately identifies the feelings of others, even when they do not want to show them

14. Flexibility and adaptability

- 82. Modifies his or her opinions if he or she is shown through rational argument that this is required
- 83. Can change the decisions that he or she has made if the consequences of those decisions show that this is required
- 84. Adapts to new situations by using a new skill
- 85. Adapts to new situations by applying knowledge in a different way
- 86. Adopts the sociocultural conventions of other cultural target groups when interacting with members of those groups
- 87. Can modify his or her own behaviour to make it appropriate to other cultures

15. Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

- 88. Can express his or her thoughts on a problem
- 89. Asks speakers to repeat what they have said if it wasn't clear to them
- 90. Asks questions that show his or her understanding of other people's positions

91. Can adopt different ways of expressing politeness in another language

92. Can mediate linguistically in intercultural exchanges by translating, interpreting or explaining

93. Can successfully avoid or resolve intercultural misunderstandings

16. Co-operation skills

94. Builds positive relationships with other people in a group

95. When working as a member of a group, does his or her share of the group's work

96. Works to build consensus to achieve group goals

97. When working as a member of a group, keeps others informed about any relevant or useful information

98. Generates enthusiasm among group members for accomplishing shared goals

99. When working with others, supports other people despite differences in points of view

17. Conflict-resolution skills

100. Can communicate with conflicting parties in a respectful manner

101. Can identify options for resolving conflicts

102. Can assist others to resolve conflicts by enhancing their understanding of the available options

103. Can encourage the parties involved in conflicts to actively listen to each other and share their issues and concerns

104. Regularly initiates communication to help solve interpersonal conflicts

105. Can deal effectively with other people's emotional stress, anxiety and insecurity in situations involving conflict

d) Knowledge and critical understanding

18. Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

106. Can describe his or her own motivations

107. Can describe the ways in which his or her thoughts and emotions influence his or her behaviour

108. Can reflect critically on his or her own values and beliefs

109. Can self-reflect critically from a number of different perspectives

110. Can reflect critically on his or her own prejudices and stereotypes and what lies behind them

111. Can reflect critically on his or her own emotions and feelings in a wide range of situations

19. Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

112. Can explain how tone of voice, eye contact and body language can aid communication

113. Can describe the social impact and effects on others of different communication styles

114. Can explain how social relationships are sometimes encoded in the linguistic forms that are used in conversations (e.g. in greetings, forms of address, use of expletives)

115. Can explain why people of other cultural affiliations may follow different verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions which are meaningful from their perspective

116. Can reflect critically on the different communicative conventions that are employed in at least one other social group or culture

20. Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (including politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, the environment and sustainability)

117. Can explain the meaning of basic political concepts, including democracy, freedom, citizenship, rights and responsibilities

118. Can explain why everybody has a responsibility to respect the human rights of others

119. Can describe basic cultural practices (e.g. eating habits, greeting practices, ways of addressing people, politeness) in one other culture

120. Can reflect critically on how his or her own world view is just one of many world views

121. Can assess society's impact on the natural world, for example, in terms of population growth, population development, resource consumption

122. Can reflect critically on the risks associated with environmental damage

123. Can explain the universal, inalienable and indivisible nature of human rights

124. Can reflect critically on the relationship between human rights, democracy, peace and security in a globalised world

125. Can reflect critically on the root causes of human rights violations, including the role of stereotypes and prejudice in processes that lead to human rights abuses

126. Can explain the dangers of generalising from individual behaviours to an entire culture

127. Can reflect critically on religious symbols, religious rituals and the religious uses of language

128. Can describe the effects that propaganda has in the contemporary world

129. Can explain how people can guard and protect themselves against propaganda

130. Can describe the diverse ways in which citizens can influence policy

131. Can reflect critically on the evolving nature of the human rights framework and the ongoing development of human rights in different regions of the world

132. Can explain why there are no cultural groups that have fixed inherent characteristics

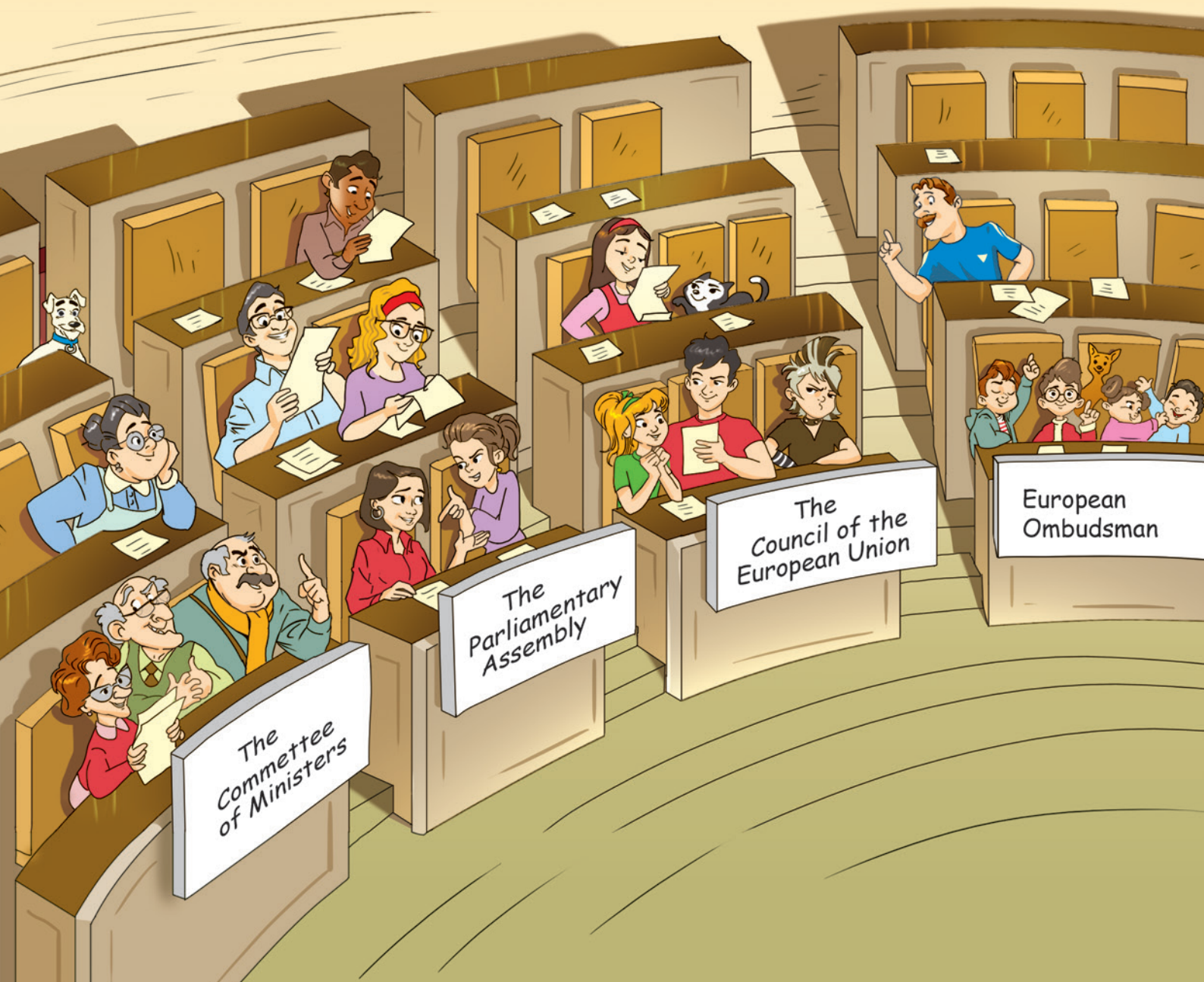
133. Can explain why all religious groups are constantly evolving and changing

134. Can reflect critically on how histories are often presented and taught from an ethnocentric point of view

135. Can explain national economies and how economic and financial processes affect the functioning of society

PART III

Background information



1. The Council of Europe: a short history of an important institution

The Council of Europe is a forum for debate on general European issues. It develops intergovernmental agreements binding under international law, such as the European Convention on Human Rights, with the aim of preserving common heritage and promoting economic and social progress. Serbia became the 45th member State of the Council of Europe on 3 April 2003.

The Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg, was founded in 1949 and is the oldest intergovernmental organisation in Europe with the largest number of members. Its core themes are the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It currently has 47 member states with a total population of over 800 million people.

One of the most important conventions of the Council of Europe is the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). It allows individuals to lodge an appeal with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Victims of a violation of the rights and guarantees set out in the Convention or one of its Protocols can lodge an appeal with the European Court of Justice. The violation must have been committed by a state bound by the Convention.

In addition to the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe has the following bodies:

- the Committee of Ministers, consisting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 47 member States
- the Parliamentary Assembly, whose members are appointed by the national parliaments
- the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which is composed of representatives of local and regional authorities in the Member States
- the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations, which is composed of delegates from those organisations which meet the Council of Europe's accreditation criteria

Serbia is present in the Parliamentary Assembly with seven parliamentarians and seven deputies.

Serbia's cooperation with the Council of Europe has a special significance in the context of Serbia's European integration, considering that CoE activities are also based on the so-called Copenhagen criteria, regarding the stability of institutions, rule of law, human rights and the respect for and protection of national minorities. The chairmanship of the CoE Committee of Ministers (May-November 2007) was particularly important for Serbia's international reputation, considered to be a demonstration of its commitment to European values, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Cooperation with the Council of Europe also takes place via the CoE Office in Belgrade, which started to operate on 16 March 2001 and which works together with the Government of Serbia and other competent institutions, particularly in the areas of reforms in the field of the administration of justice, support to the functioning of Parliament and local self-government, improvements in the higher education system, a strengthening of the capacity of institutions in combating serious crimes, and other fields.

2. Education for Democratic Citizenship: a new way to understand responsibility and rights

Following the end of the Cold War, several processes of modernisation which had shaped our history for a long time suddenly began to accelerate and intensify. These events and changes taking place across Europe have challenged the traditional model of citizenship:

The globalisation of free trade and competitive market economies has brought a higher level of welfare to many people

across the world, but not to all. The gaps of unequal distribution between rich and poor have widened, both within and between communities, threatening social cohesion and solidarity among people.

Competition drives enterprises to permanently increase their productivity and lower their costs of production. This has given rise to a permanent process of innovation, directly affecting products, technology and jobs, and indirectly affecting our whole way of life.

Economic growth has led to increased welfare, but also to an increased consumption of natural resources. Rising CO2 emissions make it increasingly difficult and costly to avert, or to adapt to, climate change.

New information and communication technologies have provided new ways to increase productivity, to exchange and obtain information, and to deliver entertainment, alongside many other things. We live in a media culture, and media literacy – how to use the new media both for producing and receiving messages – is becoming an elementary skill like reading and writing.

Due to economic growth and the achievements of modern medicine, the population in many European countries is ageing, while growing in the world as a whole. Both developments pose serious problems for the 21st century.

Modern societies are typically secular, pluralist societies. Migration across Europe has contributed to this development. Pluralist societies are more dynamic and productive, but also are more demanding in terms of social cohesion in order to

integrate people with different beliefs, values, interests, and social and ethnic backgrounds.

Democracy offers us the best chances to meet these challenges, as any attempt to solve these and other problems through authoritarian rule will fail to take the complex reality of society, economy, environment, conflict resolution, etc., into account on a national, let alone a supranational level. On the other hand, democracy stands and falls with the pledge of equal participation. The more complex our world and the challenges that define our future become, the more difficult it is for the “ordinary citizen” to understand and take part in decision making. Mistrust of traditional political institutions, forms of governance and political leaders are rooted in the feeling of being left out and not listened to. Democracy and human rights are precarious projects, and their survival depends on whether their heritage can be passed on to the younger generation.

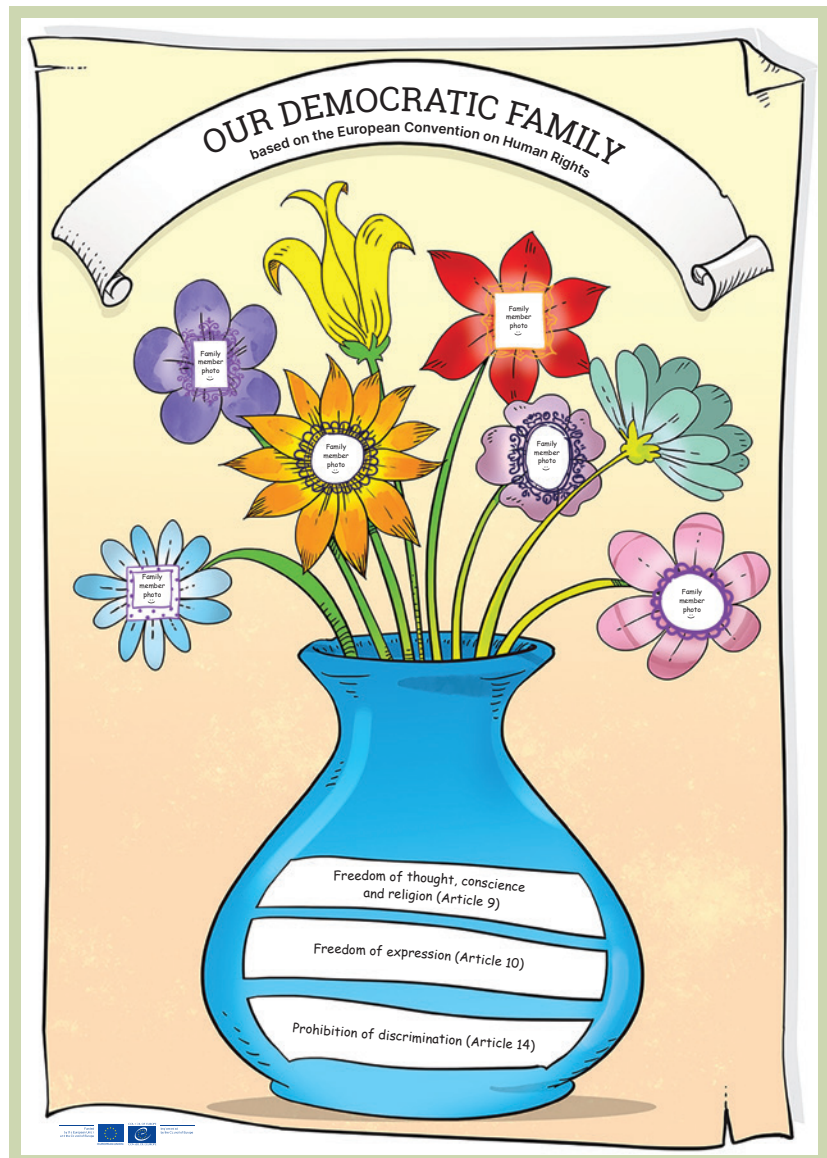
In the face of challenges such as these, it has become clear that new forms of citizenship are required: citizens should not only be informed and understand their formal responsibilities as citizens, but should also be active; able and willing to contribute to the life of their community, their country and the wider world, actively participating in ways that express their individuality, and helping to solve problems. Mounting challenges require strong societies with competent – and therefore adequately educated – leaders and citizens. And families are the centres in which children experience what living together means on a daily basis. Until now, families have existed in many forms and circumstances, and all under different types of political system. What is important to state here is that bringing up children in a democratic society should have a clear goal: teaching children and young people to exercise their rights and carry their share of joint responsibilities.



PART IV

Additional Materials

1. Democracy poster: A checklist to rethink



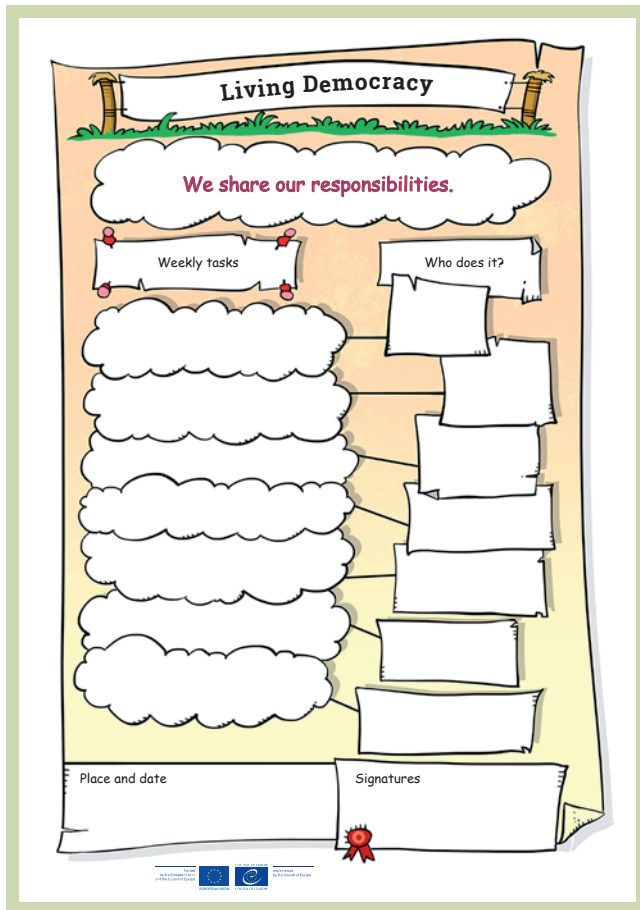
Many flowers in the same vase:

Families today are less understood as a legal community with fixed roles of husband and wife, parents and children. They have become more diverse, they change, but they function and develop their own strengths. In whatever form they appear:

Families are meaningful living spaces and places of reliable care. They continue to be the first place that people turn to when they are in need.

Time together in the family does not come about by itself, but must be actively “produced” by the family members. Working hours, school and lessons, leisure time, sport and voluntary work take place at different rhythms and times and place different demands on individuals. However, families need time together in order to experience the feeling of belonging together. Common celebrations, festivals and rituals support and strengthen cohesion.

2. Cooperation-organiser: the family as a team



Living together – working together.

Why do parents clean and tidy up? Because they look forward to a cosy evening in a tidy home.

Parents derive real benefit from housework. Children, on the other hand, usually don't care at all whether their home is messy or tidy, whether the dirty dishes from the day before are still in the sink or not. They have the ability to feel at ease even in the greatest chaos.

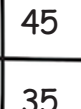

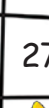
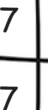
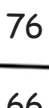






Nevertheless, it makes sense for parents to instruct their children to get involved in the household. For one thing, assignments promote a sense of community: it's fun to sit down at a beautifully set table together, for example. On the other hand, children who take part in household work at an early age become independent much more quickly. This in turn relieves the parents. Even a little support can be very helpful for parents. It is usually not difficult to motivate young chil-


dren to help out. Children love to copy adults. After all, they want to be big and do what the big ones can do. Even little kids can wash fruits and vegetables, water flowers, set the table, clear their own dishes, take care of toys in toy boxes and sort socks. Sure, letting a child join in with cooking and baking, vacuuming and washing up takes a good dose of patience.

And a side note in conclusion: Worldwide studies still show in the 21st century that many men could also get more involved in the household. That could also be a good democratic role model for children to aspire to.

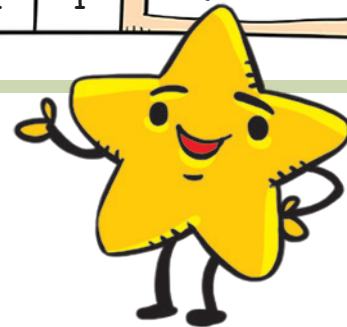
The poster proposed here is ready for print out online. You can change the roles for instance every 3 or 6 months. You might decide that other tasks are more realistic and certainly, somebody else can take out the garbage now out or water the flowers on the balcony. By adding the date and the signatures, this poster will be a document recognised by all.

3. Table game for families: with dice, brains and laughter

	99	98	97	96		94	93	92	91
90	89	88	87	86	85	84	83		81
80	79	78	77	76	75		73	72	71
70	69	68	67	66		64	63	62	61
60	59	58		56	55	54	53	52	51
	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	
40	39	38	37	36	35	34		32	31
30	29	28	27		25	24	23	22	21
20	19	18		16	15	14	13	12	11
10		8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

The game can be played with as many participants as desired. If only one die is available, it is rolled twice. If you come to an event field,  you roll the dice twice, read from the list which democracy event luck has chosen for you and move forward or back. Whoever reaches the goal first is lucky. If you are at the back, you know that in a democracy you have to be patient and live with frustration. The last will be first (maybe)

points	Event and decision
9	The children of your family have, on their own initiative, cleaned the streets around your home of rubbish, separated it ecologically and disposed of it properly. Great! 10 fields forward!
17	Once again you didn't take responsibility for your housework. Bad for everyone. 5 fields back!
26	The residents of the neighbourhood organised a street party together! 5 spaces forward for a strong community!
33	Someone has destroyed public sports equipment in your neighbourhood. This costs additional tax money. 4 squares backwards although it's not your fault.
41	You and your friends sold toys and clothes that were no longer needed and donated the proceeds to a Children's Rights organisation. Good thing! 6 fields forward!
50	You are too lazy to ride your bike more often, even though you know how much car emissions damage the environment. 8 fields back for you and your environment!
57	You have formed a family council and discuss the most important decisions together every week. Great! 7 fields forward!
65	You take time for personal conversations and listen patiently. 3 fields forward for your support!
74	Men and boys around you refuse to cook and clean. You didn't say anything against it. 8 squares backwards, you coward!
82	Your family subscribes to a neutral newspaper because you want to be well informed about all important issues. 5 squares forward, because democrats have to be well informed!
95	You rolled 6 twice. That is chance and luck. You can either go forward 12 fields yourself, or decide whether you want to give it to others.



Family or table games have a tradition that goes back thousands of years. In the tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs, precursors of today's games have been found that are up to 3500 years old. Family games are still very popular today, because they not only offer alternatives to everyday computer life, but also enable an intimate communal experience. They also promote numerous skills that are particularly important for children.

For smaller children aged 3-8, these include coordination or dexterity, matching colours and shapes, numeracy, memory, linguistic comprehension and, very importantly for our democracy context, children learn to "win" and also "lose" and to abide by rules.

But older children and adults can also grow from playing board games. Here, however, the focus is on the further development of other competencies: creativity, testing tactical skills, planning ahead, logical thinking, consistent action, assessing other players, etc.

The best thing about family games is that all these skills are developed "along the way". Because there is still one thing in the foreground of every game:

the shared experience and the fun of playing!

PART V

Living together with children of different ages (6 – 10/11 – 14)



1. Living together with our children

Dear parents, upon your child starting primary school, you have mechanisms in place on how to influence their upbringing. This fact makes you feel great, creating satisfaction with both yourself, and your child and their achievements. Through their time at primary school, however, your child will begin to enter into a new phase in which they begin to challenge everything they have learnt until then, and you may start to find that your demands provoke a rebellion. This can lead you to wonder what is happening to your child and your parental authority.

This handbook arose from the need to understand the styles of upbringing in families and to list the competences needed to support a democratic culture.

Competency descriptors show us how and when democratic competences emerge. Of course, bargaining does not mean completely agreeing on everything. It also implies differences in attitudes and opinions, which, although an unpleasant experience at times, is a significant experience important for the exchange of opinions and ideas.

a) Democratic decision-making

Democratic decision-making in the family is the key to building a relationship of trust, respect and acceptance between all family members. Therefore, it is not surprising that the parents of primary school children in Serbia try to understand their children, giving them the opportunity to participate in decisions that concern them. Thus, for example, children of lower school age actively participate in making agreements with their parents on what will be cooked the next day, what needs to be bought and whether it can be budgeted for this month, how often children should visit and interact with their grandparents, and how their bedroom should be decorated. Children's opinions are listened to and respected, but often parents are the ones to make the final decision. There are ways, however, of ensuring real democratic decision-making takes place within the family:

- Every member of the family has the opportunity to speak their idea, suggestion, or wish

- If ideas differ, an argumentation and explanation behind the reason is sought, and a decision made based on that.
- Children should learn to prioritise as a decision-making technique. (For example, 'Would you rather visit your friend or go to the zoo?')
- When there is a dilemma in the family between two proposals and there is no possibility of agreement, it is possible for all family members to vote.
- Turn-taking can be a good way to implement respect of different people's ideas. For example: today one person chooses a film and tomorrow someone else will.

b) Conflicts

Conflicts within families with children of these age groups often occur at the end of the working week, or in the summer holidays. While the school year is in progress, conflicts are often thematically related to learning and homework. Because of this, parents often decide to take their child's mobile phone away from them during the school day. In fact, children often suggest implementing this measure themselves. However, it can also be the case that the complicated relationship which children have with their peers gets reflected in their relationships and behaviour at home. Outside of the house, children often feel that they have to behave and repress any negative emotions in front of other people.

Children can sometimes therefore act perfectly well-behaved in public, but once at home, they play up and misbehave.

This behaviour is a way of them letting out their frustration and anger they feel towards others: particularly peers and authority figures. Children understand that their home is a safe space for them to act like this as they know their parents will always love them regardless.

However, it can cause great stress for parents, who believe that they are doing something wrong. This stress is experienced through negative feelings towards themselves and their children and is directly attributed to the demands of parenthood (Vuković, 2017, 33). They are aware that conflicts cannot be resolved immediately and need to be dis-

cussed with cool heads later on. There are families in which conflicts are resolved by the end of the day, so before going to bed thoughts and feelings are summarised and resolved with kisses, but there are also some families in which conflicts are left to deepen.

c) Joint family activities and/or rituals

Joint family activities and/or rituals are very important for preserving the unity of the family and the closeness of all members. As commonplace as it may seem, ritual actions breathe life into the family, improve mutual relations, and over time become an unofficial standard for everyone. Activities that parents with primary school aged children perceive as rituals are having daily or weekly meals together, cooking together, making and decorating cakes and pastries, walking the dog, watching a family movie on Sunday mornings, cycling, going for ice cream or cookies, visiting shopping malls etc. Precisely because they are a part of everyday life and form its context, they do not represent a selective experience, so it is difficult to single them out and see them as such. However, they are very important for everyone.

This manual is to help parents realise the actions that form the basis of a democratic upbringing and parenting style, which help them to develop their own attitude and find their place in society.

2. Characteristics and development of children 6 – 14

2.1 Who is my child – who am I?

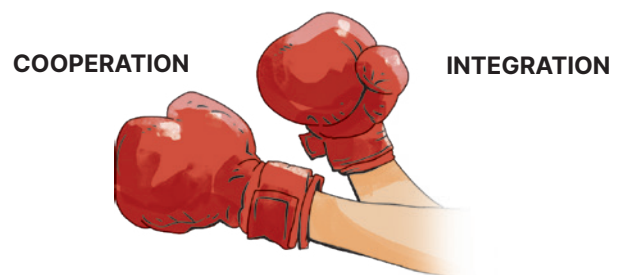
Sometimes it is very difficult to implement democratic practices in up-bringing and the family context. In a family setting all members have the right to true authenticity. Each individual has their own worries, responsibilities and views. Misunderstandings which can arise from these differences can lead to arguments and create an unpleasant atmosphere. This means that no one is happy.

Trying to balance the need to be a good partner, parent, neighbour, employee etc. can be hard and can lead to feelings of exhaustion and loneliness. Therefore, it is key to take care of your own health and wellbeing. This will help to improve your situation and reshape your thinking to make things easier in the future.

In situations like the one described above, all of us have a kind of 'fight' between two significant processes in human relations: cooperation and integration.

Cooperation is the process of helping others and sharing in their ideas, worries and joy. **Integration**, on the other hand, is the process of taking care of yourself, allowing yourself to feel authentically, and prioritising your own thoughts and needs. These two processes are contradictory to each other, and having too much of one, at the expense of the other, can lead to problems.

If a person only cooperates with others, he/she will start to lose sense of their own self, and this can lead to the development of negative emotions. On the other hand, if a person only thinks about themselves, they can quickly lose the support of other people around them. The key to life is to find an equal balance between these two points.



It is important to know that you can't offer others (cooperation) what you don't have yourself (integration). Without loving yourself, you can't love others properly, and without taking care of yourself, you can't take care of others. Because of that, sometimes it is better to stop with cooperation and take care of integration. It means that in some situations NO can be the best answer you can give someone. It's not easy to say NO. We have been taught to cooperate and feel good from helping others. But there is a catch: At the same time as saying NO to others, you say YES to yourself.

To successfully take care of others you must first learn to take care of yourself. In family relations those processes are known as surviving and thriving. To be successful at this, it is important to understand some basic facts and findings in contemporary pedagogy and family upbringing which have derived from neurological developmental science. One of the most important things to learn is that the brain is a 'social organ' developed through experiences.

“ Every situation is an opportunity to learn and improve reaction(s) (Nelsen, Irvin, Dafi, 2007).

Everything which occurs in a child brain correlates directly to what happens in the brain on an adult. However, children do not yet have the experience to process the daily information they are presented with through their experiences, as everything is new to them and their brains are busy making sense of this. Young children often cry as a way of freeing their brain of excess information. In this way, adults are at an advantage in that they understand reality, and it is therefore important to allow children to feel, and to give names to these feelings. Through doing so, children learn to understand their emotions, and recognise them in the future. In order to develop essential life skills it is important to integrate the parts of the brain in both vertical and horizontal directions.

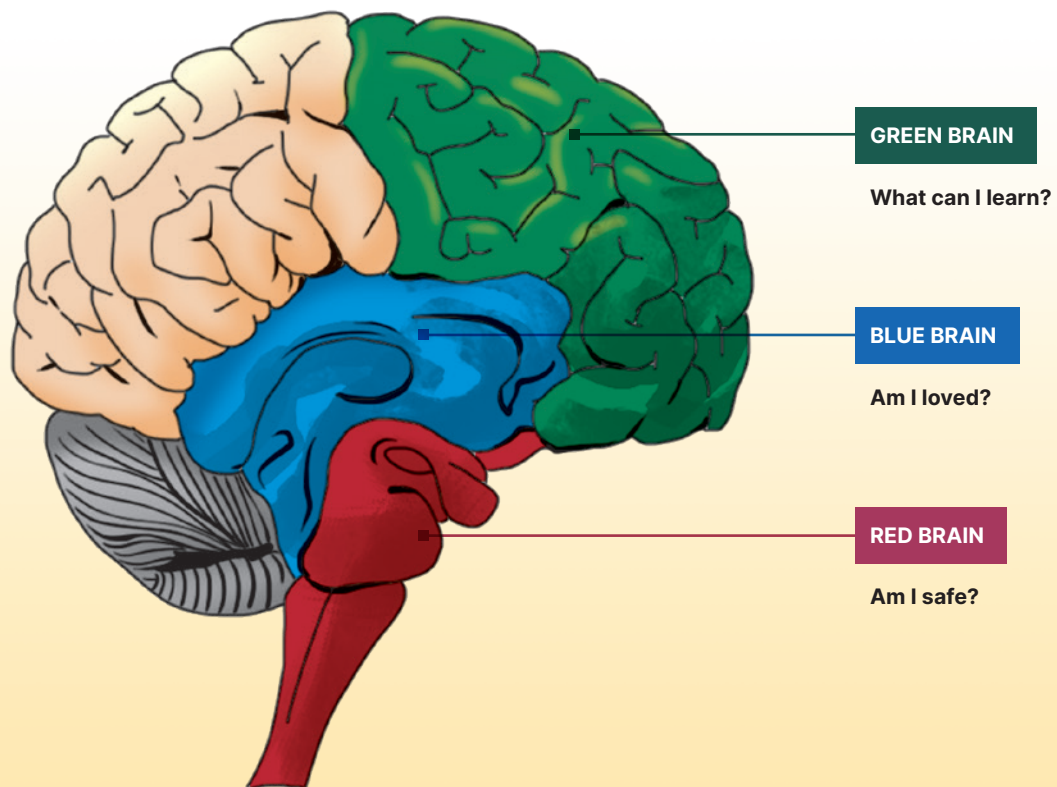
2.2 The architecture of my child's brain

“ Knowing about the way the brain changes in response to our parenting can help us to nurture a stronger, more resilient child”. (Siegel & Payne Bryson, 2011, pp. 25).

The human brain shows potential for developing throughout the entire human life. This information is very encouraging, and for this reason, we should all learn to integrate own brains in a vertical and horizontal path.

Vertical parts of brain

The human brain always functions as a whole (Lorch, 2016) and is made up of several parts in a vertical view.¹

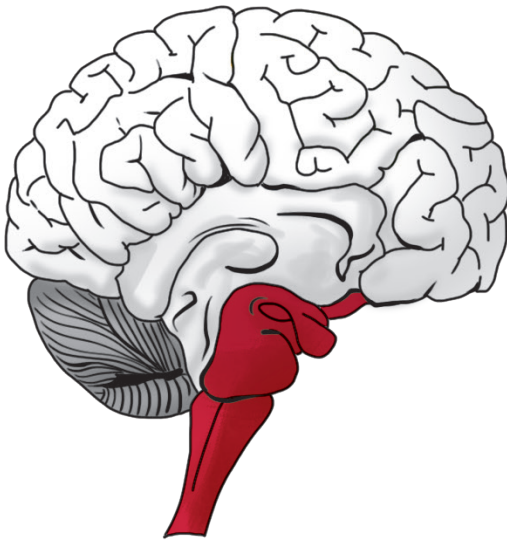


¹ Muškinja Ivana, national coordinator of Familylab association in Serbia. More at: <https://www.familylab.rs/ivana-muskinja/> It is digest of guest lecturing titled „Child brain development“ she made in Preschool Teachers Training College in Novi Sad, on March, 4th, 2020.

RED BRAIN

The RED BRAIN is called the 'reptile brain', since reptiles eat their children. This is where human's instinct to punish and beat their children comes from. It invokes primal, unconscious reactions, important for our safety, for example when in traffic, or in dangerous situations. The red brain is important, yet it can also be primal. For example when a person is surprised or shocked by something it can cause an instinctive reaction to jump in fear.

Functions related to the red brain are fight, run or freeze. Looking at the picture, telling the girl not to be afraid of the parrot won't help. Her body has frozen and the only thing we can do to help is chase the parrot away. The child in the yellow jacket is in the position of fight. He doesn't know what is happening to him (and might also be tired, hungry or thirsty) and the only way he can channel and present his emotions is by throwing a tantrum. The older boy in lower picture is protecting himself from punches and running away from the situation.



FUNCTIONS:

- Fight, run or freeze
- It is active from the first day of birth

DEVELOPMENT NEED:

- SAFETY



BLUE BRAIN

The BLUE BRAIN is reserved for emotions. Everything we feel, like love, anger, happiness and sadness is processed in this part of brain.

Try to recall a situation when a certain smell has transported you to a former time, triggering the exact same emotions you felt back then. Situations like this are activated by your blue brain.

It is important to understand that in situations of shock, triggered by the red brain, any emotional reactions such as crying, laughing or shaking demonstrate that the blue brain has then taken control of the situation.



FUNCTIONS:

- Emotions
- Early memory

DEVELOPMENT NEED:

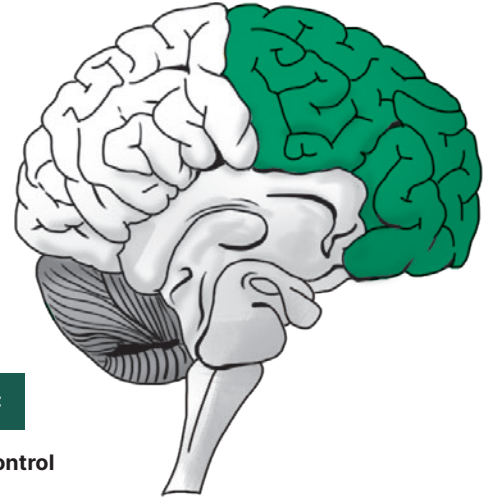
- CONNECTION



GREEN BRAIN

The GREEN BRAIN is where we store all the information that we have learned and can explain.

Everything we learn, know, improve, find, try out etc. is dealt with in the green brain. This part of the brain is a unique attribute to humans.



FUNCTIONS:

- Impulse control
- Empathy
- Problem solving
- Cooperation
- Moral judgment
- This part of brain knows the answer to question "Why?"

DEVELOPMENT NEED:

- LEARNING IN RELATIONSHIP



But only in situations which are comfortable and familiar does the green brain stay green. When we feel insecure or feel any sense of disharmony in the vertical parts of our brain, the green brain (or upstairs brain) becomes less effective. If we are overwhelmed by unpleasant emotions, it can be hard to think rationally and we end up using the lower parts of the brain to decide how to act. The more we move away from the rational part of the brain, the closer we get to the reptile brain. Eventually we flip out!

We can see these kinds of situations in children of all ages as a part of everyday life. For example, a young child has a tantrum on the floor, and their parent is standing over them and shouting. Adolescents tend to yell and fight back against their parents, which, if the issue remains unresolved, can lead to the child walking off. In these instances, the brains of both parents and children drop from green, to blue, then to red. It is a natural reaction, independent of maturity level, education, or job.

In the first presented situation of a red brain, the young child is in a state of shock and deaf to almost everything. This is the time when the adult, after their first, natural reaction to yell, can make crucial improvements in their behaviour to protect both their own feelings and the feelings of their child.

The moment when an adult starts to question events and their behaviour is the moment when their brain starts to integrate in vertical.

Their mirror neurons are reactivated and, upon seeing the adult start to relax, the child also begins to calm down and then cry. The child's brain now shifts vertically to the blue part. Don't forget, the adult is responsible for maintaining the quality of their relationship and communication with their child. Therefore, they must be the first one to vertically integrate their brain.



Horizontal parts of the brain

Everything we feel is managed in the right part of the brain. In the left part of the brain we understand everything and thoughts are clear. The right side of the brain is the first part which develops after birth. Children only experience feelings and reality without truly comprehending the reasons why they feel or what the name of the feeling is. The left part of the brain is shaped by social experiences. For instance, when a child feels a particular way, and an adult explains the way they are feeling and the name of the emotions they are experiencing to them, it is very important for the child's wellbeing. The child becomes familiar with emotions and knows that their feelings have names, while also learning to recognise them and understanding that they will pass.

It also means that every look, smile, telling off, and hug are important in shaping your child's brain.

“As children develop, their brains ‘mirror’ their parent's brain. In other words, a parent's own growth and development, or lack thereof, impacts the child's brain. As parents become more conscious and emotionally healthy, their children reap the rewards and become healthier too. This means that integrating and cultivating your own brain is one of the most loving and generous gifts you can give your children” (Siegel & Payne Bryson, 2011, pp. 19).



Surviving and thriving are important human reactions, which help us to feel, understand, cooperate and act. These are very complicated and complex procedures which are determined by age, experiences, and roles in life. We are obliged to survive and to thrive throughout our whole lives, not just for ourselves, but also to help our children and to teach them to do the same:

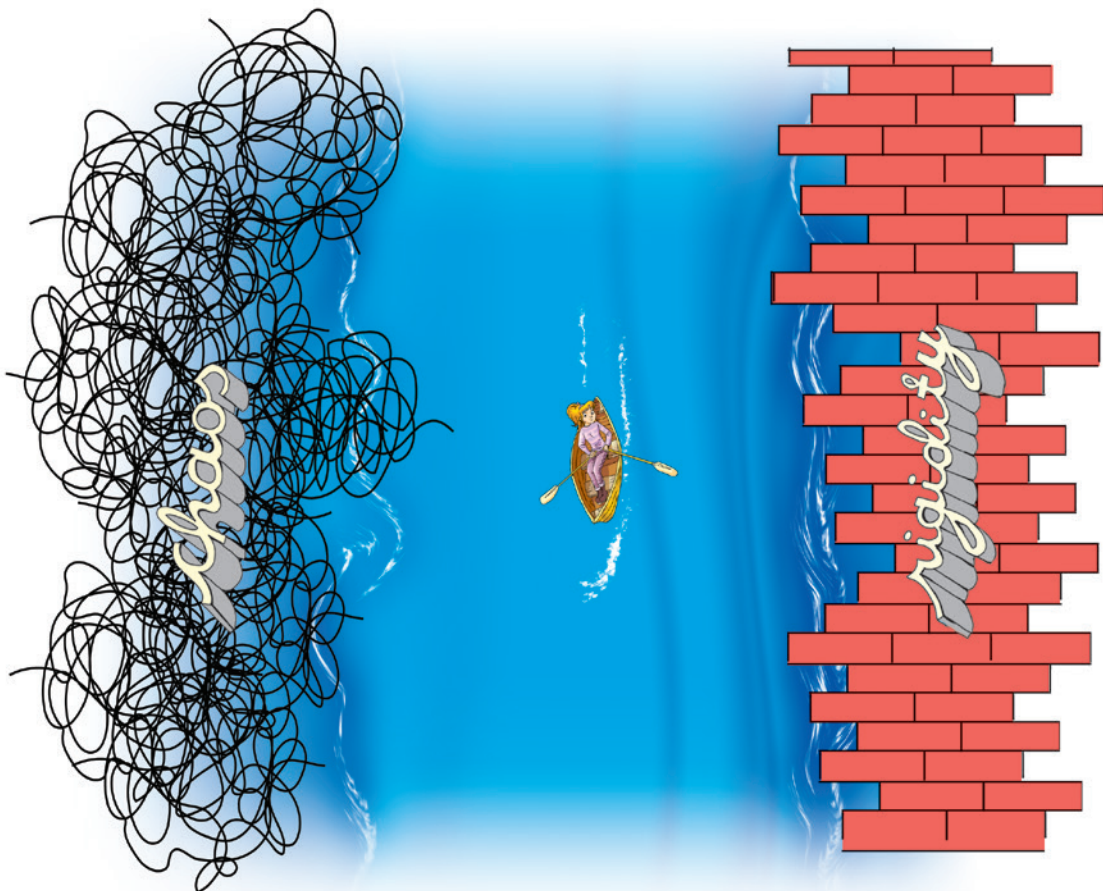
“ The moments you are just trying to survive are actually opportunities to help your child thrive” (Siegel & Payne Bryson, 2011, pp. 11).

If we imagine our life as a “river of well-being” (Siegel & Payne Bryson, 2011, pp. 44), then we float in the middle of two riverbanks, unable to moor due to their difficulty to access. The right bank (feelings) is impassable and full of plants. There

is no path to get through. The left bank (rational) is full of bricks structured logically. Neither side is nice. Waves near the banks are very high and the boat could roll over or run aground. Because of that,

it is very important to sail in the very middle of the river, where the waves are smallest. This will help us to navigate through.

Learning to integrate the vertical and horizontal parts of the brain is one of the most important skills to learn in life. It requires time, experience, wisdom and knowledge. It also requires communication between siblings, family members, and with the wider community. Full integration is generally reached by the mid-twenties. Girls integrate fully at around the age of 21, and boys at around the age of 23.



3. 7 topics for parents of children 6 – 10

3.1 Introduction

We have picked seven situations to master in everyday life with children between 6 and 10 years of age. Of course, there are countless other situations, and every family is different, however these topics cover a broad range of issues frequently present for families:

- Fears in Children - Important for the development
- Nightmares - When children see monsters at night
- Mobile phone – a world-wide reality
- Aggression - How to deal with outbursts of anger?
- When parents separate - How to cope with changes in life?
- Tidying up - Children feel responsible for their world
- When children use swear words – how to react?



“ Children of today cooperate and say YES to discipline only in situations where they feel equal and respected by authority figures (Juil & Jensen, 2014).

Today this is the precognition for discipline (it used to be enough that the child respects authority).

So, try to establish and to maintain democracy in relationships. Try to achieve a **relevant leadership**/style of upbringing.

Relevant leadership means giving children an equal dialogue with adults in order to help them in developing their own personality and giving children space and time to figure things out on their own.

However, it is important to recognise that we don't want simply to provide just another parenting guide. We are more interested in asking ourselves:

- How do we act as parents knowing we are navigating our children into a democratic society?
- What does it mean when we hope and expect our children to take responsibility for themselves, for others and for the world?
- How does this fact shape our actions and reactions?

Here are short texts on the 7 topics. Together with your children you are asked to analyse the situations and find possible solutions together. All parents know: finding solutions is a development, not just a task that can be solved simply in a few minutes. Let us remind ourselves of Confucius. The path is the goal and each path is associated with setbacks. These setbacks cause tension, adventure and developmental pain such as feelings of panic, fear and disappointment. But setbacks also give us orientation and provide moments of success which are connected with feelings of happiness, joy and fulfilment.

3.2 Fears in Children - Important for the development

The monster under the bed, the frightening man in a hat or the neighbour's dog: childhood fears are often incomprehensible to adults, but for the child the fear is real. And an important part of their development. This requires empathy from the parents - and sometimes a little imagination.

Developmental anxieties in children

Fear is not a bad thing. On the contrary: it can protect the child from getting into dangerous situations. That is why certain fears accompany the different developmental stages of your child as a natural protective mechanism. You remember when your child started to crawl between the age of 6 to 10 months, and they moved away from you by themselves. It is assumed that the separation anxieties that occur at this stage of development are intended to prevent the child from moving too far away from the parents.

These fears are typical at certain stages of development:

At the age of seven months to two years, fears of separation and loss occur most frequently in children, including the fear of strangers. Children between the ages of two and four years go through the 'magic' phase. They interpret their environment very creatively. Magic and monsters can certainly play a role in this. This is also reflected in their fears during this phase - for example, monsters lurking under their bed at night.

Between the ages of five and seven, children are increasingly aware of real events such as accidents or disasters, but do not yet understand them properly. This can also lead to anxiety.

At school age, school-related fears often occur, for example the fear of going to school, classmates or exams. Of course, there are also other fears that arise from styles of upbringing or specific situations, for example a fear of dogs after the child has been bitten by a dog. However, these are very individual, while developmental anxieties occur to varying degrees in almost all children.

How do fears of children manifest themselves?

Fears manifest themselves in different ways in children. This not only depends on age but is also very individually dependent on the child. There are three different levels:

- **Physical level.** The child complains of stomach aches, headaches or sleeping problems, for example.
- **Behaviour.** The child wants to escape the situation by running away; or it freezes.
- **Narratives.** The child talks about what he is afraid of.

How parents can help

Fears in children are something quite **normal** - and fortunately they can be overcome. Developmental anxieties in particular usually go away quickly with a little parental support. Parents' main task is to put themselves in the child's shoes and understand their fears. With statements such as "You don't have to be afraid", "You're already big" or "Don't make such a fuss", you give your child the feeling that you don't take his or her fears seriously.

Empathy is needed here. If you urge your offspring too strongly to confront their fear, this may lead to fears worsening in some children.

However, you should also not protect your child too much, and allow them to confront their fear. Overcoming fear is an important experience for their future development, because they will encounter problems and fears in their adult life as well.

Talk to your child about their concerns. Ask them what they're afraid of and gently encourage them to confront this fear. Give them the freedom to try out things for themselves, but always give them support. You might also tell them about your own fears and what you are doing to overcome them - that way they will have a positive role model.



3.3 Nightmares - When children see monsters at night

A specific type of fears are nightmares. These affect the sleep of all family members, and therefore dominate family discussions more than almost anything else. If children sleep badly, they suffer, and as a consequence, so do the parents. As if arguing about bedtime wasn't enough, sometimes sleep problems disturb children later at night. Cognitive development progresses rapidly in the first years of life, and new experiences are frequent, exciting and fascinating for the child.

As we know, people process things in their dreams - both positive and negative, and emotions and conflicts get processed through nightmares.

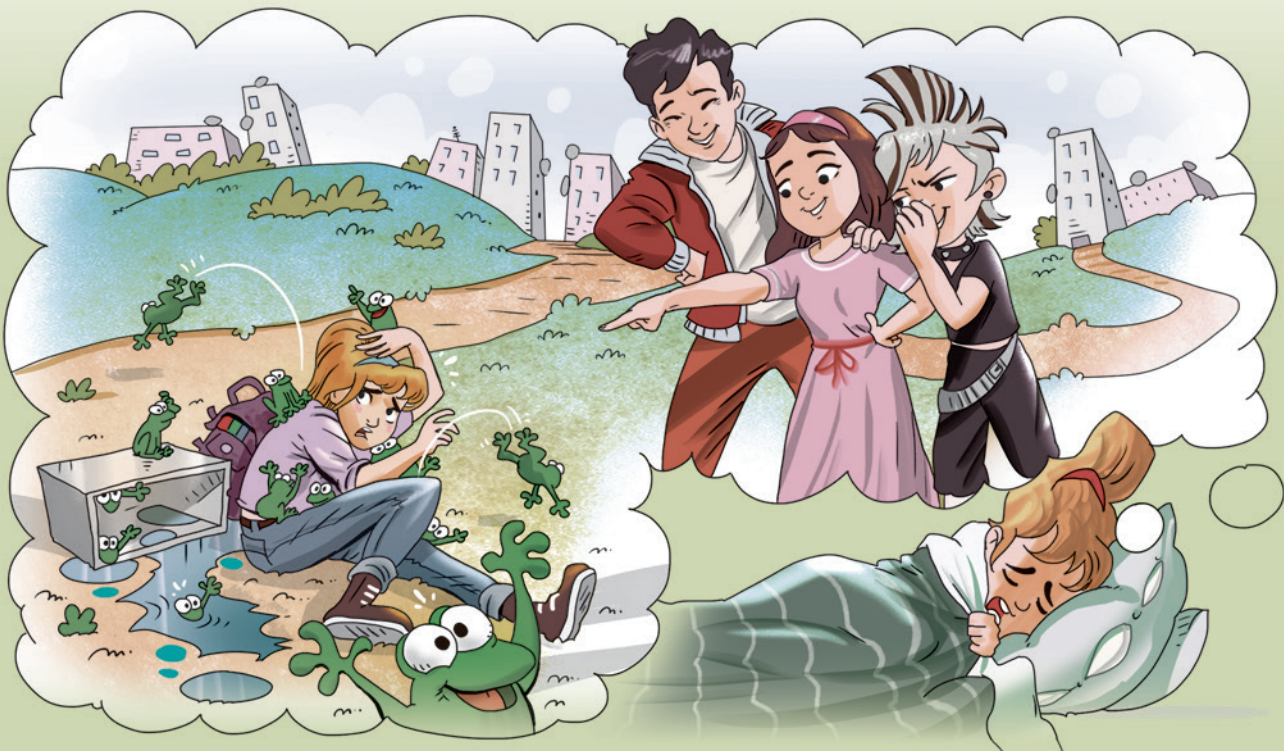
These often remain strongly in the consciousness of children. Just like beautiful dreams, they help children to internalise events, impressions and feelings from a young age. Often sensitive and creative children are particularly affected by nightmares. A Finnish study has also shown that identical twins are more often affected than fraternal twins.

Nightmares cannot always be explained by negative events. When children have experienced something particularly exciting that they enjoyed, the brain is equally challenged. Sometimes the subconscious then processes what has happened in the form of a dream.

What to do when children have nightmares?

When children wake up screaming and crying, they need one thing above all: comfort. Taking them in your arms, gentle stroking and reassuring words are just what they need. It also makes sense to tell children in this situation that they have had a bad dream, but that it's all over and everything's OK. Children can learn to distinguish between dreams and reality, while also learning about their emotions and how to overcome difficult moments.

Maybe your child is afraid to go back to sleep now because they fear the next bad dream. Such fears can be better combated, even at older ages, with the use of a dream catcher or a night light. Otherwise, parents can take up the fight against



the monsters alongside their children: In this way the water from a spray bottle becomes “magic water against monsters”, which is sprayed around the bed together. This encourages the child to actively take their fears into their own hands.

It is true that nightmares help children to process experiences. However, if bad dreams persist over a longer period, parents should help their children to process them. A reassuring but objective conversation about the things that frightened them in their dream should be held. Sleep therapists recommend letting children paint what happened. By painting and drawing, children can express themselves and at the same time free themselves from what is bothering them. Parents and children can then put an end to the nightmare by tearing up the picture together.

Part of life

Nightmares cannot be prevented in children. Like other sleep problems, they are part of life for both children and adults. Sleep research today is certain that we process the events of the day during sleep, and having a nightmare every now and then is therefore not a cause for concern. However, if children frequently suffer from sleep problems such as teeth grinding or movement disorders, parents should investigate the cause.

Children's sleep problems can be caused by tension at home and high pressure to perform. Neither of these causes can be eliminated overnight.

Parents who understand their children's worries, listen to them, and encourage them solve many fears unconsciously. General advice to parents is to attempt to reduce the stress level of everyday life.

3.4 Mobile phone – a world-wide reality

At some point almost every child asks when they can have their first mobile phone. Among other things, parents are told by their child that all their peers already have one and that they feel excluded without one. In reality, there are both pros and cons to giving your child a mobile phone, and in the end it is for you to decide, as the decision is not black or white.

Pro - What speaks in favour of a child having their own mobile phone

Today, the question is no longer if, but when a mobile phone is coming. According to different surveys, the majority of schoolchildren stated that they used a mobile phone every day (access to a mobile phone or internet at home (% age 15+) in Serbia was reported at 92.39 % in 2014, according

to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognised sources). Therefore, it is better for children to learn the necessary skills early on, and under supervision. Otherwise, they will gain their first experiences on the devices of other children - most likely unsupervised. Which age is ultimately the right one to give your child a phone depends on the child's behaviour and maturity. It may not necessarily have to be a smartphone, after all, and a button phone is sufficient for simple arrangements. However, the ability to use touch screen and apps can be easily learned by 6-year-olds.

Once a child knows how to use a mobile phone, this also has advantages for parents. Their offspring can be reached at any time.

If the bus is late, there is no fearful waiting, but a message from the child's mobile phone. With a smartphone there are more possibilities. The children can determine their location and find out about public transport connections. Parents also have the option of using a location function to track their child's movements.

Smartphone manufacturers and app developers have long since geared their offerings to the needs of parents and children. For example, being able to control what content your child accesses and using “family functions” to view information on how long apps and websites have been used.

Against - Why a mobile phone is not for children

Real life cannot be simulated through a phone. Children should play in nature, interact with other children and move. If you put a smartphone in the hands of a child, you run the risk that they will miss out on these experiences. The risk of addiction to digital media has been proven and it is difficult for children to reflect on their usage behaviour. If a child feels the urge to reach for their mobile phone every few minutes, parents risk losing control. Once a smartphone is there, numerous risks arise:

Smartphones are distracting and restrict the ability to concentrate. Constant communication via social media such as Facebook and messenger services like WhatsApp means stress, and performance at school may be affected by its use.

Children often reveal personal data on the net without reflection, while content on the internet that is harmful to minors can also be easily accessible.



To really control all these risks, parents would have to monitor their mobile phones around the clock - but doing so is impossible. Parental controls exist, but can you really guarantee that they will work properly and not be tampered with? And who, as a parent, wants to constantly admonish and monitor their child because of their mobile phone? Ultimately, it depends on the individual child's development and sense of responsibility.

It's a reality

Mobile phones and devices can bring about new educational and creative opportunities for our children. They can also bring increased distractions, and decreased privacy. But whether their impact is positive or negative, mobile phones and portable digital devices are not going away.

As parents (together with teachers, industry leaders and policymakers) we ensure that kids can access the benefits of mobile technology and digital media, while protecting them from potential negative consequences when we don't turn a blind eye and find ways of dealing with the topic.

The World Health Organisation has introduced screen time recommendations depending on a child's age:

- Infants (children up to 18 months) shouldn't spend any time in front of screens.
- Toddlers (children from 18 months till 2 years) can watch or use media program or high-quality applications only in the presence of adults who overview and direct their use and help them to understand what they see.

- Children from 2 to 5 years shouldn't spend more than one hour per day. This should be in the presence of adults who watch the program or play with them.
- Children older than 6 years should have a specific time frame planned for electronic and digital media and it should be clearly determined what kind of media they can use.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/24-04-2019-to-grow-up-healthy-children-need-to-sit-less-and-play-more>

3.5 Aggression - How to deal with outbursts of anger?

To understand aggression in older children, we have to look back to their younger years. All parents remember well how quickly moods changed when one child took away another child's toy in the playground. Aggression and violent behaviour could frequently follow.

Why does my child become aggressive?

Children also have bad days sometimes. However, when they are small, they do not yet know how to deal with it.

As younger children are not able to express themselves well, they can often act aggressively instead. Through this behaviour, they draw attention to the fact that they are not happy.

Especially between the ages of two and four, infants have yet to develop their impulse control. This process lasts until about the age of six. Yet older children also become aggressive from time to time, and this is completely normal. After all,

even adults do not always act peacefully and rationally, and become loud or argue. **Developing a healthy way of arguing and resolving conflicts is important.**

If a child shows aggressive behaviour very often, it is a sign that something else might be causing it. An aggressive child may suffer physically or mentally, or they may have problems in kindergarten or school. It is also possible that they do not feel sufficiently valued by parents or relatives, reacting with anger to a significant event such as a new sibling, school enrolment or the death of a pet or relative.

It is quite clear: Aggression in children indicates that something is wrong and that they feel bad. Therefore, you should treat your son or daughter with love and work out what is going on together. As mentioned, to some extent, aggressive behaviour is normal, even if unpleasant.

However, when it happens too often or becomes a routine, it is important to take steps to prevent it. If you find yourselves as parents unable to make progress alone, or your child exhibits aggressive, violent behaviour on a daily basis, it is time to seek help. There may be, as mentioned, an underlying cause for the behaviour. To find out, speak with other parents (even if this might be hard to do), contact an educational counselling centre, or visit a child psychologist together with your child.

Prevention: Tips for a non-violent home

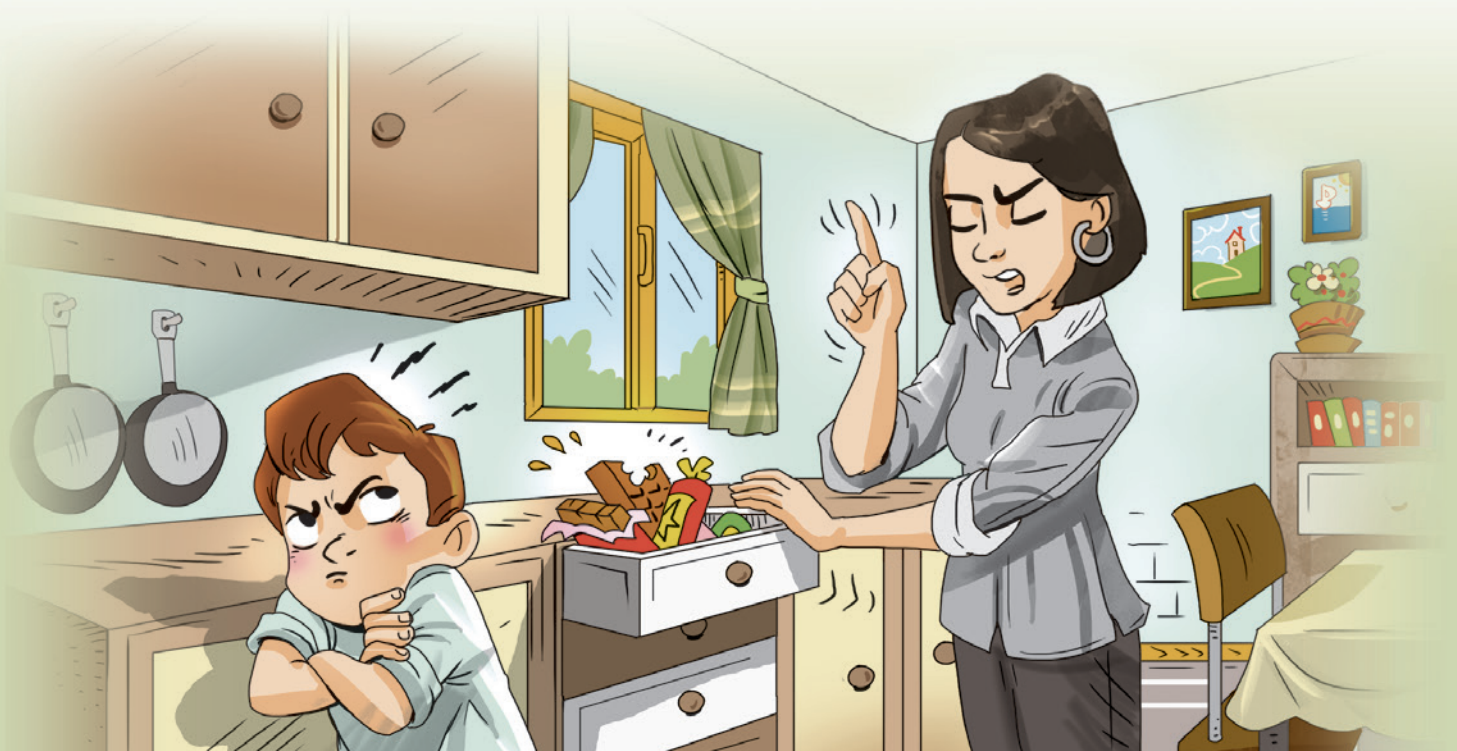
Even if the temptation is sometimes great:

Do not react aggressively in the face of your child's aggression.

Instead, establish clear rules and adopt a strategy for action that will help you calm them down.

Here are some tips to help you do this:

- **Set up rules:** Clear rules can help prevent aggressive behaviour. Agree with your child on which aggressive actions are not allowed - for example, hitting, scratching and biting.
- **The consequences:** Think together about the consequences of breaking the rules. For example, you can send your child to his or her room., or you can identify certain actions that will calm them down. However, do not punish your child by withdrawing love, leaving them alone, and leaving the room.
- **Praise:** If your child behaves appropriately or gets their aggression under control on their own, praise them. In this way, they know that you will give them your attention if they are well-behaved and that they do not need to summon it with a tantrum. You can also establish a reward system.
- **Discuss the causes:** Instead of punishing your son or daughter for aggressive behaviour, it is better to talk to them about what triggered their anger attack. This will help your child to understand their own feelings. In addition, the conversation will help them learn how to express their anger verbally next time.



3.6 When parents separate - How to cope with changes in life?

While separation may mark a liberation and the end of a long and difficult journey for a couple, for the children it is a difficult start to a new phase of change in their life. When and how you tell the children and how you behave towards your children has a significant influence on how your child copes with this change. It's never easy when a couple breaks up. When children are involved, it's even more difficult. While divorce is the end of one period of life for parents, separation usually means the end of the world as they have known it up to now for their children. In the worst case, fear of loss, health problems and behavioural problems can be the consequences.

Separation need not be a disadvantage

A consolation for divorced parents: Evidence of many examples show that children do not suffer any disadvantages from the separation of their parents, once the process is over. Years of observation of divorced children and children from "traditional two-parent families" did not reveal any serious differences in personality development or social behaviour. Children today grow up in a wide variety of family constellations, from single parents to patchwork families, without being stigmatised for it.

Moreover, they are very capable of coping well with the separation of their parents, but we need to bear in mind that it takes them about two to three years to adjust. This new balance is possible if parents also navigate the new situation well, maintaining a strong, or at least a cordial relationship with one another. As much as the separation hurts, the most important thing is not that the parents separate, but rather, how they do it.

Separation: When and how to tell the children?

Only tell your children about the separation when it has been finally decided, for both sides. It is just as unnecessary to express a wish for separation on one side as it is to speak of separation after an argument out of a spontaneous impulse. You will only put an unnecessary burden on your children. Only when both parties agree that the relationship can no longer be saved and concrete plans for separation are being considered should you involve the children.

Do not wait too long before you do so. Give your child enough time to get familiar with the idea of separation before one of the parents actually packs their bags. When the time comes,



both parents should sit down with the child and talk about the separation. Avoid going into too much detail about the reasons behind it, as this usually only leads to mutual accusations that can have a negative effect on the parent-child relationship. Instead, keep it short and direct your attention to the concrete future of your children.

They now, above all, need a lot of closeness, attention and the feeling that both parents are still there for them, even if many things around them are changing. If children see that their parents have the situation under control and can concretely imagine what their everyday life as a child of separation will look like, they will have less fear and be less inclined to blame themselves for the separation.

The goal of a separated couple with children should always be to cooperate despite all insults in order to continue raising the child together.

In this way, children can continue to maintain a healthy relationship with both parents without having a guilty conscience or having to choose who they should love more. This kind of situation could burden your child far beyond the period of separation.

3.7 Tidying up - Children feel responsible for their world

Lego bricks as far as the eye can see, and not an inch of free room on the children's floor is a sight that parents despair. Children, on the other hand, feel comfortable in chaos. They do not yet know what order means. Like so many other things, children must first learn to tidy up.

All parents know the feeling of cleaning up after playing and suddenly finding yourself alone. Don't take it personally; your child wouldn't let you down on purpose, he probably just doesn't see the need to clean up his room.

Children are not born with a sense of order. Especially in their early years, the whole world is an exciting chaos for them - they have to learn that there is such a thing as structure and order.

If you want your children to develop a sense of order then you have to set an example for them. If you take care to keep your home clean and tidy, your child will soon follow your example with a little encouragement. But be honest with your-

self. Is your home a place to spend your life or an exhibition place for expensive objects? Are you an everyday example of taking action? Is it done by the mother AND the father? Although nothing wrong with getting support from a cleaner, if you yourself don't take care of the house at all, how can your child learn?

Teach your children why tidying up is important: for example, because it makes it easier to find your things again or because you can play more freely if you don't step on toys all the time.

How to teach children to clean up

When parents clench their hands above their heads and reproachfully throw a "Clean up the room!" into the room, little is gained. With these tips you can teach your child to keep order in a playful way.

Proceed playfully: Children should enjoy cleaning up. Only then do they happily contribute to doing it. So, make sure that it does not become a constraint or punishment. Instead, start early on to integrate cleaning up into playtime. For example: the cars must now go into the garage, or all the stuffed animals must go to sleep in the box.

Give concrete instructions: Abstract instructions like "Clean up this mess!" are not helpful. Instead, give concrete instructions. "Put building blocks in the box" or "Books on the shelf" are orders that children are more likely to follow than "Clean up!"

Child-friendly shelves and boxes: If children are to tidy up on their own, the shelves and toy boxes in their room must be designed so that they can reach them easily. With colours and pictures, you can mark where each toy belongs and make it easier, even for the little ones. After the second grade they can write their own stickers for boxes.

Don't be too picky: Not everything has to be perfectly tidy all the time. Children often play with a thing for several days and do not want to tear down a house that they have built up with difficulty in the evening just to make it look neater.

Set clear rules: Kids love daily routine. Make sure that the house is cleaned up every evening and insist that the toys your child is not playing with at that moment must be put away before they get to play with the next one. Such a structure will help your children to orientate themselves better than through arbitrary instructions.

Announce tidying up: Announce the tidying up time to your child at least 15 minutes in advance so that they are not abruptly pulled out of their game.

Sort out toys regularly: Overcrowded cupboards make tidying up difficult. Sort out broken or no longer age-appropriate toys regularly to keep the children's room manageable.

Helping out: No one can expect a child to clean his or her own room. Even with school children, support is sometimes needed with, for example, organising school supplies.

When children develop their own order

By the age of around seven, cleaning up should no longer be a problem for most children. By now they are becoming increasingly independent and should want to organise their room themselves instead of following their parents' orders. Give them (to a certain extent) this freedom. Then they will be more concerned with keeping order. If agreements are not kept, stay consistent. Insist that your children clean up their room themselves, even if it might be quicker if you did it. Do not rely on rewards. This gives the impression that cleaning up is something you do not want to do voluntarily.

3.8 When children use swear words – how to react?

“Shit”, “idiot” or “freak” – children quickly pick up words and adapt them into their language use. When parents discover that their children are swearing, it can cause deep shock. It is at this point when it becomes time to talk about the causes and find solutions. Whether from television, the neighbourhood or school, at some point children are confronted with swear words. Depending on their age they proudly or consciously carry their newly learned achievements home and of course chat at the table at home about the “idiot” at the desk next to them.

“Where did you pick up that word from?”, “Don’t say that!”, “I don’t want to hear that at home!”, often follows as a spontaneous reaction from parents. For your children this equates to a reason to repeat these bad words as often and loudly as possible, lighting a swearword firework. How should you as parents react to this? After all, you don’t want your children to swear and establish such expressions in their language use.

Children and their enthusiasm for swear words

Small children especially are susceptible to picking up swear words quickly during their language development. On the





one hand, they eagerly pick up new words and phrases at a young age, and on the other hand they like to test their limits. The disbelieving looks use of such words render are appealing enough to make children continue it.

The older they get, the more they register that they can provoke reactions with the chosen words. They immediately gain more attention.

Therefore, it is likely that your children will use swear words even more frequently if you react with shock to what they say.

How to react:

You cannot completely protect children from swearing. But it is your responsibility to ensure that they are treated sensitively and reduce bad language.

Keep calm: If your child starts to rant, you should first remain calm. An overreaction is more likely to be counterproductive. Prohibitions and impulsive teachings only make swearing more interesting for the child.

Address the problem: Sit down with your child and ask them why they use swear words. Make it clear that such words are very hurtful. If necessary, explain to them the meaning of the terms in appropriate words. If you enter into a dialogue with

your children, your words will get through better than if you command or forbid them.

Define the source: Television, older siblings, classmates or yourself...Find out where your child picked up the curse word. Parents also sometimes slip out curses. Therefore, you should also critically examine yourself, take your role model function seriously, and refrain as much as possible from using swear words.

Let off steam: Children also have bad days and want to express their frustration. Create a limited amount of time per day for your child to let off steam. However, this should be a short period of time and should not lead to excessive swearing. It is better to create alternative outlets: A little romp in the playground to clear your head often works wonders.

Alternative swear words: To fight ugly swear words, look for weaker expressions, e.g. "darn" instead of "shit". Or simply invent new swear words such as "boring cottage cheese" or "simple-minded swamp hedgehog". Imaginative word combinations of arbitrary terms are funny, and your child will enjoy creating them.

Swear jar: For older children who already receive their own pocket money, it can be useful to set up a swear jar at home. Each member of the family is then encouraged to throw in a small amount of money for each curse word used. Decide together what the money should be used for.

4. 6 topics for parents of children 11 – 14



4.1 Introduction

Dear parents, we know you aren't in the easiest time in your parenthood now. Please have in mind your children are in a very tumultuous phase of life. Sometimes they think that they rule the world, and a few days later they feel like they can't do anything and no one understands them. On top of this, they can't explain their thoughts and feelings to others, or even to themselves. They often feel like they have no one.

Be positive, EVERYTHING IS OK WITH YOUR CHILD! This time is an important period for your child in developing and strengthening their mental health. They are completely fine and healthy!

Don't forget, IT WILL PASS. It may take between seven to ten years, but this period will end in their twenties.

Adolescence is characterised by psychological changes which follow physical growth in puberty and finish with identity forming. It usually lasts from the age of 11 to 20. Adolescence starts with puberty, but the two are not the same. Puberty is related to biological changes in the body, while adolescence covers a broader scope (*Trebamo li brinuti? (Should we be worried?, 2010)*).

Adolescence can be divided in three phases:

- **Preadolescence.** Usually characterised by arrogant, noisy behaviour and defiant opposition. It is often called the phase of opposition.
- **Adolescence.** Directed at finding independence in all areas of life.
- **Postadolescence.** The time when adolescents enter into the adult world, start to accept adult roles, and form their own gender and professional identity.

Adolescence is seen as the part of life where a person tries to find a balance between childhood and maturity.

It is also the part of self-upbringing when a young person starts to reject authorities, parental control and becomes closer to peers. It is a time of rebellion, testing of limits, strong and unexpected mood changes, internal conflicts and conflicts with others (Zotović, Petrović & Majstorović, 2012; Zotović & Beara, 2016).

It isn't easy being a child at this age. They have a lot of responsibilities and personal development to undertake, for instance, accepting their physical looks, their new gender roles, achieving emotional independence from their parents, accepting social values, and creating their own personal values to maintain throughout their life. Although changes in these areas are ongoing from birth, they are the most pre-

alent and radical during adolescence. These changes are crucial for development but can cause significant stress to your adolescent, and to those around them. The more you empathise using your own experience as an adolescent, the easier it will be for you to understand and get on with your child. It is the time when previous methods of upbringing and punishment are no longer effective, and the only significant influence parents can have is through the quality of life they can provide (Juul, 2011).

The next lines from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* give us a good understanding as to how adolescents feel:

“Who are you?” The caterpillar asked. Alice replied rather confusedly: “I ... I don't know right now ... of course, I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I've changed a few times since then.”

In the following chapters we shall present a range of common household issues which can be solved using a democratic approach:

- Learning with a computer - increasingly important
- Dangers on the internet – a positive approach
- Free space – support for development
- The right pet for a child – responsibility and joy
- Siblings in constant conflict – learning for life
- Addiction prevention – a never-ending story

4.2 Learning with a computer - increasingly important

Computers are indispensable in everyday life, as Coronavirus has made clear.

In the rooms of most children in Serbia is a computer. As parents, what should we think about this? The experience of the Coronavirus pandemic has made one thing very clear: without digital competence, children (and not only children) are lost. While university students and most of those attending high schools are mostly autonomous in performing tasks through distance learning, parents of small children have found themselves transformed into part time teachers, a responsibility which needs to be balanced alongside their work obligations. There are 517,826 pupils in Serbia enrolled in primary education in the year 2019/2020. They attend 3286 schools. Since the pandemic, the burden of implementing online schooling has frequently fallen on parents. Those who are able or have online jobs have been more flexible with monitoring and helping kids with their teaching load. Those whose physical pres-

ence at work has been required have often struggled and have not even been able to rely on grandparents due to age related contact restrictions.

Computers at school help with learning - worldwide

Computers are part of the everyday life of children and young people. Studies show that new media plays a very important role in the leisure time of school children. For young people the PC is even more important than the television. A life without the internet is unimaginable for them. They use it to chat with friends and exchange information in social networks, play online games, and look for information for class. In primary schools, new media also plays an important role during possible project weeks in the schools. For example, pupils have the opportunity to engage in digital photography workshops and edit their own photos using a computer program. In subjects such as languages, mathematics or science, children and young people frequently work with educational software. Computer programs are now also being used in kindergarten, speech therapy sessions and school remedial education.

Learning on the PC: What's the point?

But are computers useful at school? Results of scientific research showed that computers can increase the quality of teaching and improve learning outcomes. Children enjoy

working with computers and the Internet. If new media is used in open learning settings, pupils have the opportunity to acquire learning materials independently. In doing so, they not only learn how to use the computer, but also acquire media competence.

Many parents do not use the new possibilities

Many parents agree that computers are an important addition for learning purposes. Nevertheless, many parents only use them rarely themselves and are not aware of the benefits. The near future will show whether or not home schooling has changed this in Serbia.

Learning on the computer will remain important in the future

Computers and the Internet will play an increasingly important role in schools in the future. In a study, 50 experts were asked how they assess the role of new media in teaching and learning in the future. In the opinion of the interviewees, the importance of computers will increase in the future. At the same time, students are likely to become ever more heterogeneous, which could present schools with new challenges. In this context, learning can be made more flexible and better tailored to the individual student. Experts agree that teachers are indispensable for the use of new media. Not much is known about the use of computers at home and in the frame-



work of homework, but it seems that some parents are concerned about the amount of time their children spend in front of screens. An important proposal for managing computer use could be to let your children show you something new, on how they do research, how they learn a language, or how they communicate with others. Be interested!

4.3 Dangers on the internet – a positive approach

Using the Internet has been a slow learning process for many parents. But for most children and young people it is completely second-nature to use the internet for recreational activities. This makes it all the more important for parents to provide their children with comprehensive information about the dangers of the Internet. It is not a good idea to start with talking about the dangers. It's like talking about driving a car. It is true, driving *could* be dangerous, but first and foremost, it is useful!

Make rules for your child when they surf the Internet.

Learning with computers and through the use of the Internet are part of the school curriculum. In our information society, this knowledge is becoming increasingly important for the professional future of our children, however it is important to also watch out for the dangers which may lurk there. If children have their own smartphone or computer, parents often

lose track of their online activities. It is impossible for them to manage and control their actions all the time.

Because of this, parents should take care to understand fully the dangers that the internet can pose, and then pass this knowledge on to your child. In addition to explaining the potential risks, you should also lay down a few ground-rules. Make your child aware that these rules are not intended to prohibit, but to protect them from harm. Talking to your child about their browsing behaviour on the Internet can also help to ease concerns about what they are really doing when online.

Avoiding dangers on social networks

Social networks are extremely popular among children and young people, and members engage in several different ways, e.g. looking at pictures and videos, exchanging information with friends, and informing oneself about a range of different topics. However, there are also many dangers involved. Personal data, for example, is like currency on the net. With social media providers, in chats and in competitions, children often disclose this kind of information without much hesitation. This can not only lead to a plethora of spam mails, but also to harassment by paedophiles and other adults with bad intentions.

The safe use of social networks must therefore be learned. Installing age limits on websites is generally useless and easy to get around. It is therefore important to advise your child on



how to remain anonymous on the Internet. Using a nickname or fake name helps to protect your child's identity. It is also a good idea to create a second, meaningless e-mail address for your child, which they can use for all their activities online.

Before your child joins a social network or downloads an app, read the Terms and Conditions. This will tell you whether and to what extent the provider restricts your rights when you use it.

Take child protection on the Internet seriously.

Cyberbullying cases are becoming increasingly common, with malicious rumours, insults and compromising photos or videos spreading rapidly on the net. Worst of all, in most cases the spread cannot be stopped, and the information remains (possibly forever) on the Internet. The same applies to all the comments, photos and the like that your child posts on the net. Make it clear to your child that the Internet never forgets anything. Make sure that they know that unpleasant things could happen at any moment. Whatever happens, your child should be able to trust you and know that he or she doesn't have to be embarrassed.

If you want to play it safe, consider buying one of the many parental control programs available on the Internet. These allow your children to access only checked Internet content. You can choose what you want to allow: the programs offer different settings for this.

Alternatives to the Internet

Dealing with media needs to be learned. If you see your child at risk of becoming dependent on certain online activities, you should set limits for them. Fixed Internet times help your child to not lose touch with the real world. Above all, offer alternative activities such as trips together time with friends, or a game night. However, this only works if you take part in it too.

4.4 Free space – a support for development

Children are curious by nature, but they do not always have the opportunity to satisfy their thirst for knowledge. Parents exert the greatest influence on their children's willingness to learn.

Children are curious by nature and want to discover their world.

The forest offers interesting opportunities to introduce children to plants, animals and nature. For those who have the opportunity, for example, to accompany a forest ranger in the forest as a family, they will learn a lot more about life in the forest. Such experiences are usually unforgettable and often formative for children. Because with them, their interest in certain topics that were previously hidden from them suddenly increases.

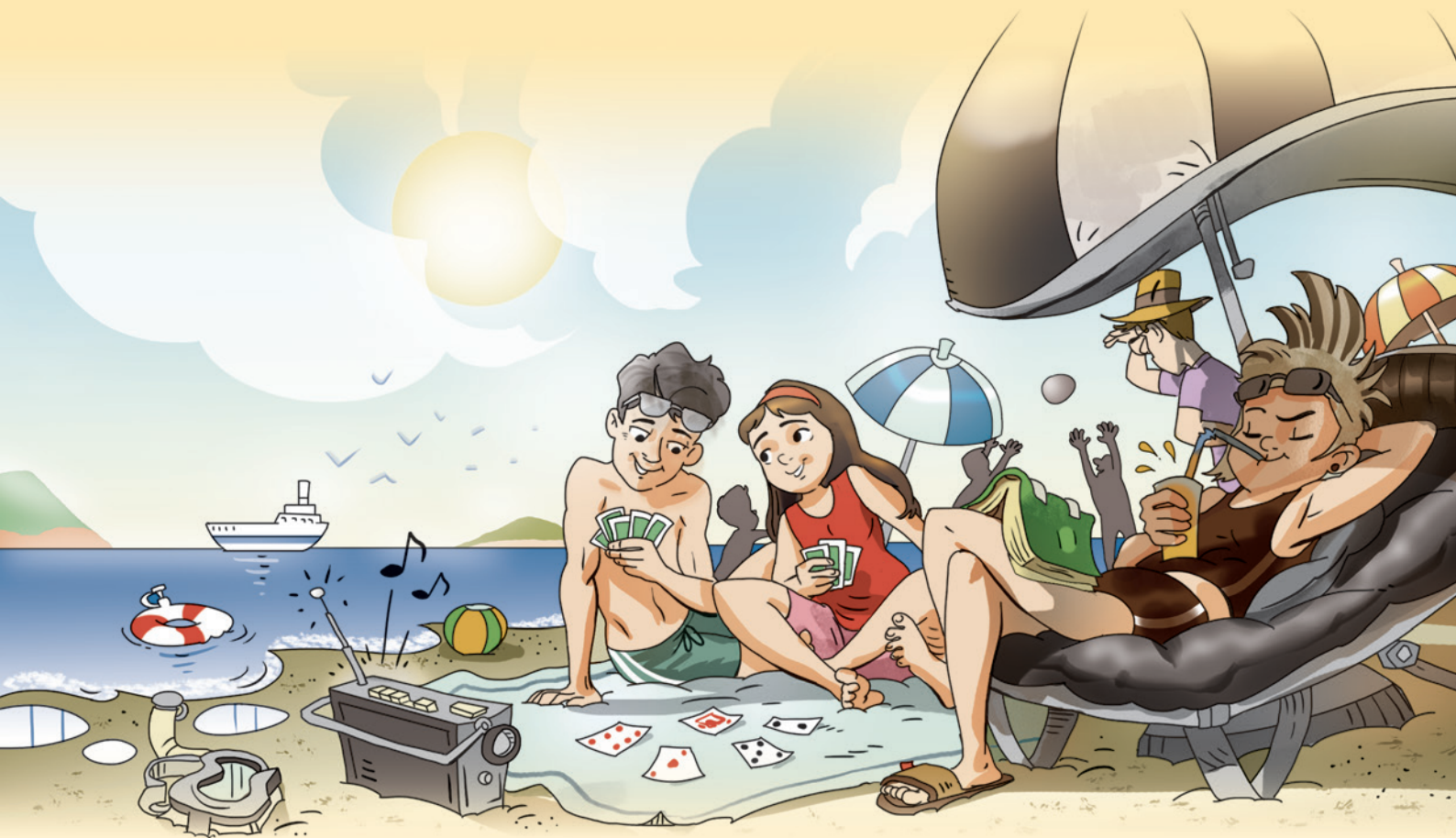
The hobbies of parents or siblings can inspire a child.

General conversations and discussions at the dinner table, or joint excursions are also valuable channels to provide children with new experiences and adventures. Such journeys of discovery can be a rewarding experience for children, remaining stored in their brain for a long time and having a lasting effect on their interests and curiosity.

Emotional feel-good environment

A curiosity and thirst for knowledge are given to children by nature. As scientific studies have shown, parents exert the greatest influence on their children's willingness to learn. First comes emotion. It creates the basis for a child to enjoy learning. That's why learning should take place in an emotionally comfortable environment. But not all people learn in the same way, and each person has their own individual learning style, depending on their learning type.

Therefore, it is important not to force a child into a particular learning pattern. Some children need a lot of initiative from their parents, while others need very little. Children should never be either over- or underchallenged, but rather their learning impulses should correspond to their child's personality. Music and movement are popular and valuable means with which to impart new knowledge on children, as many children have a strong urge to move around, and music is known to activate more areas of the brain than simply reading aloud.



Leading to independence early on

As children love to experiment and try new things, it is important for them to feel trust from others. If parents remove all difficulties or dangers and argue that it is 'for the sake of the child', they are hardly helping them on their learning path. It is better to teach children independence from an early age through the use of methods such as problem-solving strategies. Learning through experience is the motto, and this means enabling learning through various channels such as hearing, reading, seeing and acting. It is in this spirit that we talk to our child: How do you learn best? What is your goal? Is there a meaning behind what you are doing?

Time and space for individual development

Education in a democracy pleads for resource and solution-oriented action that builds on the strengths of the child. The democratic motto is that each individual shall find their place in this society. Unfortunately, the school system is often still strongly error and deficit oriented. Many questions of grading are under discussion, political decisions throw good grading systems out of kilter, and competence ambiguities between school authorities and school management show clear shortcomings. These inadequacies on the part of adults are always at the expense of children. However, if you

want to keep children's curiosity and thirst for knowledge, you have to take them seriously with all their questions. This requires time and space for their individual development.

4.5 The right pet for a child – responsibility and joy

Few things fascinate children as much as animals. It is not without reason that a cuddly toy is often an indispensable companion in the first years of life. But it is not a full-fledged substitute for a real animal. So, it is quite possible that your child may one day express the wish to have a pet of their own. What you as parent need to keep in mind when making the decision is that a pet is always a balance of both joy AND responsibility. What else could be closer to the values of a democracy?

Awakening a relationship with the environment: A pet can be a faithful companion for a child.

Before giving in to your child's pleas, there are a few things you should be aware of. Most importantly, a pet is not a toy and it can't just be left in the corner once the novelty has worn off. Choosing a pet for your child always means work for the parents, yet there is a lot to be said for having an ani-

mal in the house. Experts largely agree when it comes to the positive effects of pets on children.

Pets reduce feelings of stress and give children emotional comfort; stroking and touching them releases happiness hormones.

City children, in particular, have little contact with nature and the animal world without pets. With a dog, a couch potato is forced to walk, and this romping around can quickly transform them into a nature lover. Children with a pet also fall ill less often and have a stronger immune system. As your children quickly learn to respond to the needs of their animal co-inhabitants, they expand their social skills. In addition, children learn to take responsibility through a pet.

Problem children in particular benefit from having an animal friend. The daily care and nursing routine strengthens their personality development and their psychological stability.

They become calmer and more balanced. In short: children with pets learn to take on responsibilities, act independently and develop social competences.

Thinking the purchase through well

However, instructing the child in handling the animal properly remains the responsibility of the parents. Children and pets will only have a close relationship if they learn that pets are living beings with their own free will and cannot be forced to cuddle. In addition, parents should teach children rules in how to deal with their animal, for example not disturbing it when sleeping or eating.

Before buying a pet, you and your family should clear up a few points:

- Which pet is suitable for our family?
- Is the house large enough to keep the pet in an appropriate manner?
- In the case of rented apartments and houses, is keeping pets allowed?
- Can we dedicate enough time to a pet?
- Can we afford the costs of a pet? E.g. food and vet bills which can be expensive for low-income households.
- Do we have friends or relatives who can take care of the animal when we are on holiday?
- How long do we want to take care of a pet for? Small animals such as hamsters and mice only live between 1 and 4 years, while small turtles can live to be 40 years old if kept appropriately. Even rabbits can reach an age of up to 10 years. Cats and dogs can also live for between 10 and 18 years
- Is anyone allergic to pet hair?



4.6 Siblings in constant conflict – learning for life

Quarrelling between siblings is part of everyday life in families and is perfectly normal. Brothers and sisters love each other, but they often argue, especially at a young age. Interests, experiences and moods are often very different. However, having different opinions is a core element of a transparent society, and democracy also involves the competition of good ideas. Learning to deal with this cannot start early enough.

What to do when it happens:

Quarrelling between siblings is an everyday occurrence and is an important process for development. Through arguments, the different dispositions and character traits become apparent, and children learn to distance themselves from their brother or sister and gain self-confidence. Conflict among siblings is therefore also important as a learning process for social life outside the family. However, many parents

get annoyed by ongoing quarrels, and resentment can often affect family life.

When the yelling and bickering among siblings becomes unbearable, parents wonder: When should I intervene? How do I prevent an escalation next time? It is important to find the right time. If parents intervene too early, they deprive the siblings of the chance to solve the dispute themselves.

On the other hand, if they intervene too late, a peaceful solution is sometimes no longer possible. The best time to step in, therefore, is when all accusations have been made and parents realise that the siblings are not getting anywhere through arguing.



Parents offer their children help if they give them the feeling that they are taking the situation seriously. Threats, a raised index finger or even teasing are of no use to anyone.

Those who feel understood in their anger are also ready to understand others. This applies not only to children, but also to adults. Summarise the situation for your children in a way that is appropriate for their age: Three-year-old children argue differently than eight-year-olds. Following this support, children should be better able to find a solution to their argument independently.

If the quarrel escalates and the siblings become violent, parents should separate the quarrels. Then the conflict has reached a stage where you can no longer do much with words. The siblings have to calm down again before a solution can be found.

How do you avoid unnecessary quarrelling?

A good basis for preventing quarrels are firm rules that are binding for everyone. It is best to draw up these rules together with your children.

- To develop rules, you can ask yourself the following questions:
- Which toys and personal items are not to be shared with siblings?
- Which swear words are not allowed?
- What type of physical contact is allowed?
- What rights and duties do the children have?
- When negotiating the rules, no child should be neglected or feel unfairly treated.

And another tip in passing: Boredom is the breeding ground for every argument between siblings. If they are busy, they have less reason and desire to pick a fight.

4.7 Addiction prevention – a never ending story

Internet, mobile phones, gambling, alcohol, smoking. Many parents wonder what they can do to protect their child from addiction problems, or how they should react if their child is already displaying addictive behaviour. Whatever you do, keep in mind that children should be responsible for their own decisions, and in a democratic society it is impossible to control them completely. Six small tips can help you to learn and try your best in dealing with such situations:



Making your children strong - Protect your children from addiction problems.

Much of what you do in your day-to-day upbringing of your children also has an addiction-preventing effect: encourage your child. Listen to them. Let them feel that they are valuable. Show them how to manage stress and teach them to control their impulses and postpone rewards. All this will help to make your child stronger and also prevent addiction.



Being a role model

Parents are role models when it comes to addictive drug or media use. Your own pleasure-oriented, low-risk consumption of alcohol can have a positive influence on your child. The same applies to an orderly, non-excessive, use of media or mobile phones. If you smoke, it helps your child if you deal with it self-critically and talk openly about what made you smoke, for example.



Imparting knowledge

Information alone is of course not enough for successful prevention. Nevertheless, it is important that your children are aware of the risks involved in the use of addictive substances. This applies to legal alcohol as well as to drugs. Knowledge about gambling, internet use etc. is also part of this. Help your child learn in an age-appropriate way.



Cultivate the relationship

A relationship of trust between children and parents is very important. It is the result of an everyday style of education. Maintain a dialogue with your child from a very young age. Take it seriously. Ask them for opinions. A relationship of trust will also play an important role if you experience more difficult issues with your child, for example if they start to use cannabis or play games all the time.



Maintain clear attitudes

Parents should clearly state their position on addictive substances and the use of addictive substances and (as far as possible) enforce it: No alcohol consumption before 16 years, no use of tobacco, cannabis or other illegal drugs, and media use that complements and does not infringe on other types of leisure activity.



Reacting when using addictive substances or playing games continuously

If you are worried about addictive drug use or behaviour, try to talk to your child. This is the best way to find out exactly what is going on. Take a clear stance and be consistent. If you are uncertain or the situation is worrying, do not hesitate to contact a specialist centre. Addiction advice centres, youth advice centres and educational counselling centres are available to support you.

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