



Burnout **Free** Early Childhood Intervention Training

Material and Content
for Professionals and
Parents



Burnout Free Workbook for Professionals in Early Childhood Intervention

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INTRODUCTION

The Training material covers the need of enriched knowledge on burnout prevention techniques for professionals. It proposes mutually empowering practices to meet common requirements and challenges in ECI Services. This training material was produced with the contribution of University Professors, management team and professionals from the organizations participating in the Burnout Free ECI project. The proposed material is innovative as it goes beyond the best of what has been achieved so far in the field of burnout prevention, incorporating the suggestions of all those who face challenges and are at risk of burnout, while taking care and supporting the Children with Disabilities.

The content of this material leads to a Burnout Free ECI Methodology that will have a major impact on professionals, parents and children with disabilities since it will:

- enhance personal and professional wellbeing,
- help professionals working with families and children with disabilities gain knowledge, critical skills and improve their key competences,
- improve the quality of care and education for children with disabilities,
- identify necessary organizational changes for burnout prevention,
- lighten the burdens of professionals and parents, foster their resilience and create better chances for social inclusion.

Module 1.

Professional Burnout

Magda Nikolarazi,
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Introduction

This module introduces you to the definition and some tools for identification of professional burnout.

After the completion of this module, you will be aware regarding:

- the meaning and the symptoms of burnout,
- the differences between stress and burnout,
- the causes of burnout,
- professional burnout in early childhood intervention context,
- screening and self-assessment tools for burnout.



1.1. Professional Burnout: Definition and Symptoms

Magda Nikolarazi, Maria Papazafiri, Vassilis Argyropoulos

Professional or occupational burnout is defined as a syndrome or a state that is accompanied by physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion in relation to one's work (De Stasio et al., 2017). It can be found in any profession (Bakker, et al., 2002), but it mostly affects those who a) interact with people such as medical personnel, social workers, therapists, teachers, educators, lawyers and civil servants, b) experience intense interactions in their work with people, c) have high responsibilities, and d) help and support people who may also have severe needs (Carod-Artal et al., 2013).

The ongoing and prolonged subjection to stress at work that professional may experience, the complex demands, the high-intensity nature of some jobs, and the long hours often overcome the professionals' ability and their personal capacities to cope and may cause exhaustion, depersonalization, a chronic sense of frustration, a feeling of incompetence and lack of personal accomplishment (Brunsting et al., 2022; Carod-Artal et al., 2013; Maslach, et al., 2001).

According to Maslach's model, burnout is a multidimensional syndrome composed of exhaustion, cynicism and depersonalization and a diminishing sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach, et al., 2001). Although burnout definition is usually based on this three-factor model, Tavella, Pavlovic & Perker (2020) suggest that burnout can be based on a broader model according to which one's personality traits (with reliability and perfectionism being pivotal) predispose to a stress syndrome manifested by a general construct of compromised psychological functioning (characterized by exhaustion, anxiety, depression and other stress symptoms) in addition to an inability to feel and impaired work performance with cognitive dysfunction.

1.2. Similarities and differences between professional stress and burnout

The terms stress and burnout are often confused mainly because similar symptoms are often identified such as fatigue, anxiety or lack of motivation. However, burnout is considered as a syndrome with a combination of characteristics including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Also, people with burnout have experienced specific symptoms for a long period of time. Burnout, therefore, refers to a chronic occupational stress, to a progressive condition resulting from ineffective coping strategies to deal with work-related stress situations (see Montero-Marin et al., 2014). Also, in contrast with stress, which you can cope with, burnout is state of mind that cannot be easily addressed, such as going for holidays or working fewer hours (Awa, et al., 2010).



1.3. Causes of professional burnout

Burnout is usually considered as a consequence of prolonged subjection and response to stressors on the job (e.g., Cooper et al., 2001, Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). However, burnout does not necessarily have to be the result of high stress (see Pines & Keinan, 2005).

According to the existential perspective, people who experience stress at work may be the ones who highly value their job, whose expectations and goals are very demanding, who believe that their job is meaningful, and who derive existential significance from their job. Therefore, if professionals do not have the resources or the power to respond to the requirements of their job, when there is a mismatch between expectations and reality in their work, when they feel that their job is insignificant this may cause an imbalance between job's demands and the professionals' response capability, which can be a major cause for burnout (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Within the existential perspective burnout is conceived as a subcategory of stress with specific traits (see Pines and Keinan, 2005). According to the degree of one's dedication to his or her work various types of burnout have been suggested including the frenetic type which involves intensive work that may lead to exhaustion, while searching for success, the under challenged type which involves boring and indifferent conditions that do not provide any satisfaction or personal development and the worn-out or neglect burnout, which involves feeling helpless while facing challenges or feeling uncertain or not being able to keep up with demands and expectations (Montero-Marin et al., 2014).

1.4. Professional Burnout in ECI context

In the ECI context, professionals often express a mixed set of feelings about their work. While they find it incredibly rewarding and interesting, they also acknowledge that it can be emotionally challenging and difficult to manage (Frosch et al., 2018). They can witness and facilitate important milestones and improvements, which can be immensely satisfying (Meadan, et al., 2018). In addition, professionals working in ECI context often build strong relationships with children and their families and become a source of support and guidance for families in need (Pretis, 2011; Snyder, et al., 2011). Working in ECI allows professionals to continually learn and grow. They gain valuable experience and expertise in child development, disabilities, and intervention strategies (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2005).

On the other hand, despite the benefits that professionals in ECI context have, the work conditions can lead to burnout. For example, it is a big challenge to share with families the experience of having a child with disability, cooperate with them in order to find solutions to everyday challenges, to find resources and especially financial ones, and take serious decisions having always in mind the child's overall development, all the needed paperwork and the organization demands. Professionals have to provide emotional support to families who are going through a difficult and sometimes unexpected journey when they discover that their child has a disability. This involves empathetic listening, understanding, and helping families cope with the emotional aspects of their situation. Collaborating with families in decision-making sometimes can be challenging when there are different opinions or when the family's cultural or social background influences their perspectives on the child's needs and the best course of action. Moreover, professionals have to guide families to find and access resources, including financial assistance, therapy services, and educational support, which can be a complex process, and help them secure the resources they need (McWilliam, 1992).

ECI professionals often serve as advocates for the child and the family within the healthcare and education systems (Sihvonen, 2018). This advocacy role can require persistence, negotiation, and navigating bureaucratic processes. Moreover, professionals in ECI need to consider the overall development of the child, which includes cognitive, physical, social, and emotional aspects. Balancing all these factors while making decisions can be complex (Sihvonen, 2018). All the aforementioned can lead to emotional exhaustion (Kohn-McFadden, 2023). Professionals may start to feel that their efforts are not making a significant difference or that they are unable to meet the needs of the children and families they serve. This can lead to a diminished sense of accomplishment (Ntim, et al., 2023).

To assess burnout in ECI professionals, it's important to use standardized tools and questionnaires designed to measure burnout symptoms. Additionally, organizations should regularly check in with their staff through confidential surveys, one-on-one meetings, or group discussions to identify signs of burnout and provide appropriate support. Preventing and addressing burnout in ECI professionals is crucial to maintaining a high level of care and support for children and families.



1.5. Screening instruments and self assessment tools of professional burnout

Burnout is a severe and complex condition that affects professionals in various occupational groups. It is not simply an individual, but also a social problem (Hadžibajramović, et al., 2020). For this reason it is important to screen and self-assess professional burnout in order to understand the capacity, and wellness of professionals as well as identify symptoms and take preventive measures regarding burnout (te Brake, et al., 2005). Also, at the same line, self-assessment is important to identify certain features regarding burnout. In order to adequately address and deal with burnout, it is important to evaluate work aspects and individual features in association with burnout.

In the following section there are some self-assessment tools that can be used to indicate burnout. It is important to stress that the following tools are not used to diagnose or treat stress. Below you can find the most important assessment tools mentioned in the literature as well as indicative online free self-assessment tools. You can try them out to get familiar with them and see which one suits you.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

MBI is a tool that can be used to self-assess whether you are at risk of burnout. MBI includes 22 statements about personal feelings or attitudes related to one's work. The statements are answered through a Likert scale model. It has 3 subscales a. Emotional Exhaustion, b. Depersonalization, and c. Personal Accomplishment. Each subscale includes various questions. It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. The first subscale examines fatigue at work, the second subscale examines the notion of detachment and withdrawing and the third subscale examines the feeling of one's abilities in relation to accomplishing things. This feeling is associated with the two first subscales. A high score in relation to the first two subscales indicates burnout. The MBI is adjusted according to the professional groups to which it applies (Medical Personnel, Human Service workers and Educators) and it can also be used for general use as well as for student burnout (<https://www.mindgarden.com/117-maslach-burnout-inventory-mbi>).

For a description of statements in MBI or access to the products of MBI please visit the following links:

<https://irp.cdn-website.com/2b78aalb560a4fddb587abalc64b9bc3/files/uploaded/Maslach-Burnout-Inventory-MBI.pdf>

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory

OLBI includes two dimensions of burnout: a. Exhaustion and b. Disengagement from work, while personal attainment is not included. It comprises 16 positively and negatively framed items which reflect the theoretical assumption that the two main dimensions of burnout can be interpreted in terms of a continuum that ranges from disengagement to dedication and a continuum that ranges from exhaustion to vigor. Also, exhaustion refers to affective, cognitive and physical characteristics.

To access the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, please visit <https://www.goodmedicine.org.uk/sites/default/files/assessment%2C%20burnout%2C%20olbi.pdf>

Professional Fulfillment Index (PFI) is an online self-assessment tool developed by Trockel et al. (2018). It consists of 16 items that measure three dimensions: a. Work exhaustion, as related to burnout, b. Interpersonal disengagement, as related to burnout, and c. Professional fulfillment. All statements follow a Likert scale model including 5 level Likert items (0 not at all, 1 very little, 2 moderately, 3 a lot and 4 extremely).

To access the Professional Fulfillment Index, please visit

<https://mcgill->

my.sharepoint.com/:x/g/person/kathryn_wiens_mcgill_ca/ER47apWgSPZDiEIYOA5bPAYBCH-VRVN9TiWyjXhZZ9iUdg?rtime=OyVcMm_y2kg

Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) is a screening tool for individual and group assessment. It has two versions: a. the Work related version and b. the General, context-free version aimed at "those who are not currently working".

It takes around 5 minutes to complete BAT.

It has two main axes a. core symptoms and b. secondary symptoms which includes four dimensions a. exhaustion, b. mental distance, c. emotional impairment, d. cognitive impairment, e. Psychological distress and f. Psychosomatic complaints. BAT uses a 5-point frequency scale: 1 (never), 2 (sometimes), 3 (regular), 4 (often), 5 (always) (Schaufeli, et al., 2019; 2020). The BAT has an online version in various languages (https://burnoutassessmenttool.be/project_eng/#handleidingenvragenlijst).

For more information visit <https://burnoutassessmenttool.be/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/User-Manual-BAT-version-2.0.pdf>

Bergen Burnout Inventory is an assessment tool regarding professionals' burnout. It consists of three dimensions a. work exhaustion, b. cynicism and c. sense of inadequacy at work. Each dimension has 5 items measuring each of the three dimensions (Salmela-Aro et al. 2011). All the items were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) (see Salmela-Aro, K., Rantanen, J., Hyvönen, K., Tilleman, K., & Feldt, T. (2011). Bergen Burnout Inventory: reliability and validity among Finnish and Estonian managers. *International archives of occupational and environmental health*, 84(6), 635–645).

You can find it at <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s00420-010-0594-3.pdf?pdf=button>

Burnout Questionnaire: Burnout questionnaire adapted by Michelle Post is a standardized tool for burnout. It consists of 3 subcategories. In each subcategory the user can find 28 questions. It is scored according to 5 point scale, (1 = never/no change 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4 = often 5 = always/much change) (Nashu, & Arora, 2020). For more information visit https://www.onelegacy.org/docs/BurnoutQuestionnaire_PublicWelfare1981_Modified2013.pdf

Burnout Self-Test is an informal online self-screening tool consisting of 15 items. It has a 5-point frequency scale: 1 (Not at all), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often), 5 (Very Often).

To try it please visit <https://www.mindtools.com/auhx7b3/burnout-self-test>

Stress and Burnout Questionnaire is a tool that gives the chance to the user to investigate the warning signals of excessive stress. It is scored according to 3 point scale (0 – for experiencing this only occasionally, 1 – This is true quite frequently (weekly), 2 – This is true often- usually daily).

To find the questionnaire please visit

<https://appliedpospsych.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Stress-and-Burnout-Questionnaire.pdf>

Burnout Assessment is a tool for individuals or organizations aimed to screen burnout. It is very simple to use and it is free. The questions are universal and concern all employees, regardless of work environment or sector. Based on recent research findings Burnout Assessment consists of two key areas. The first one is the Professional Profile including 6 factors that can contribute to burnout: workload, autonomy, reward, community, equality, and values in the professional domain. The second one is the Personal Profile with 5 factors which determine how work affects health: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and relational well-being. It is scored according to 10 point scale (1 Disagree– 10 Agree).

To access Burnout Assessment please visit

<https://www.break-through.ca/burnout-assessment>



Assessment tools



1. PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

1. Fill the line with the correct answer:

BURNOUT

PROFESSIONAL STRESS

According to Montero-Marín et al. (2014), _____ refers to a chronic occupational stress, to a progressive condition resulting from ineffective coping strategies to deal with work-related stress situations.

2. Burnout mostly affects those who (more possible answers):

- a) interact with people such as medical personnel, social workers, therapists, teachers, educators, lawyers and civil servants
- b) working alone in laboratories
- c) have very low responsibilities
- d) help and support people who may also have severe needs

3. Chose Truth or False for the statement below:

Professionals don't have to provide emotional support to families who are going through a difficult and sometimes unexpected journey when they discover that their child has a disability.

T / F

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Module 2.

Resilient Environments as a Preventive Factor for Burnout

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Introduction

In the previous module, you were introduced to the definition and identification of professional burnout, as well as the causes of burnout and the importance of detecting risk factors deriving from the complexity of the role of professionals in Early Childhood Intervention services. In this module you will learn about the conditions of the environment –family, organizations and communities – aimed at preventing burnout.

After the completion of this module you will be able to:

- identify the negative effects of burnout on the Organization,
- familiarize with effective leadership activities and team building activities,
- explain how to improve family cohesion,
- plan the actions for improvement of well-being of families,
- explain the importance of Ecological Perspective and the benefits of Community Asset Mapping,
- recognize the key characteristics of resilient families, healthy communities and organizations,
- explain the benefits of community engagement, positive characteristics of resilient families and organizational prevention factors,
- apply tools to engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

2.A.Healthy Organizations

2.A.1. Definition and Characteristics of Healthy Organizations

Koulouri Chrysoula-Maria, Lymperopoulou Aikaterini, Sfiniadaki Maria, Vernadaki Eleni, Zoi-Mitsi Ourania

A healthy organization incorporates employee well-being into its business purposes and strengthens it via well-grounded practices on leadership support, a culture of continuous learning, healthy quality of work, and Human Resources Management (HRM) practices that prioritize the prosperity of individuals (Raya and Panneerselvam, 2013).

There are two key components of organizational health: 1. health of employees and 2. the performance of the organization. Therefore, **HEALTHY WORKPLACES = employee health + organizational health** (Hassard et al., 2017).

Characteristics of healthy organizations:

- **Leadership:** Leaders play significant role in cultivating meaningful relationships with their workers, which leads to achieving desired job and work-related behaviors .
- **Learning Culture:** Healthy organizations promote education, new experiences, encourage responsible risk-taking and an eagerness to recognize and learn from mistakes and setbacks.
- **Job Quality:** the employee's well-being and organizational productivity is related to manageable workload, concrete role, job safety, flexible work schedules and making sure that an employee is not overloaded.
- **HR Practices:** Healthy organizations evaluate the employees' performance, giving them incentives and support for their career development (Raya & Panneerselvam, 2013).



FIGURE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY ORGANIZATION.
ADAPTED FROM [HTTPS://DROSTEGROUP.COM/HEALTHY-ORGANIZATIONAL-CULTURE/](https://drostegroup.com/healthy-organizational-culture/)

2.A.2. Organization– Related Determinants of Burnout

Stressful, emotional and tiring working environment

A stressful working environment can cause headache, stomachache, sleep disturbances, irritability, concentration difficulties and health conditions like depression, obesity, and heart conditions (APA, 2018).

Some common causes of stress at work are:

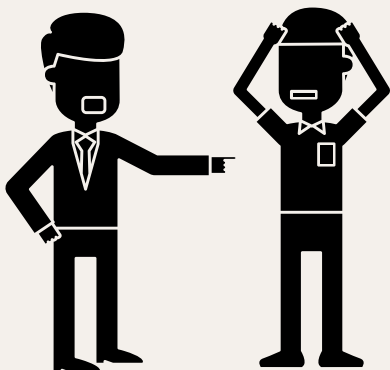
- Fear of dismissal
- Overtime caused by staff reduction
- Pressure of performance to high expectations without job satisfaction
- Lack of control over working performance (Segal et al, 2021).

According to Eurofound (2018), **burnout syndrome is highly correlated to stressful, emotional and tiring working conditions.** People who face chronic stressful conditions may suffer from burnout. However, human services employees, first responders, and those offering educational services are at even greater risk (Abramson, 2022).

Conflicts in the workplace

Conflicts in workplace impact on job burnout both in a direct and in an indirect way through organizational climate. Conflicts in working environment reduce the level of ethics, increase absenteeism and have an adverse effect on productivity and employee performance (Soltani et al., 2015). There are many types of conflict, which can be categorized in:

- Task conflict, which relates to disagreements on work assignments' procedures, content and practices
- Relationship conflict, which can be expressed as continuous disagreements or tension in employees' interaction.
- Value conflict
- Leadership conflict



Heavy workload and long working hours

Overwork hurts people and the companies/organizations they work for (Carmichael, 2015). The findings show that there is a correlation between burnout and heavy workload, as well as extended working hours. According to Rajan (2020), working time plays a crucial role in every organization when making decisions about health, productivity and engagement of the employees. As a result, working time should be regular, so as to guarantee employees' good health, improved productivity and contentment in work life. More specifically, long working hours are associated with burnout in cases that work exceeds 40 hours per week and it is even more probable when work exceeds 60 hours per week (Hu et al, 2016).

Lack of support from management

The role of management and leadership is a determining factor for burnout, particularly in relation to people's interactions and faith in their managers (Eurofound, 2018). When leaders do not effectively support the people, they tend to create an unattractive workplace for staff and lower returns for the organization.



2.A.3. Effects of Burnout on The Organization

Burnout is not just a personal issue, affecting exclusively individuals and their health, but it also affects the organization's overall productivity. Recent research on the impact of employee burnout on organizations has shown a variety of negative consequences. According to Eurofound (2018), the effects of burnout refer to decrease in job satisfaction or motivation, decline in productivity and commitment, adverse responses to clients (including patients or pupils) and reduction of engagement in the organization. The most important ones are listed below:

Performance and motivation

One of the first signs of burnout is lack of motivation. This may manifest as poor concentration and increased disengagement of employees resulting in insufficient performance in work and a drop in productivity. (Eurofound, 2018).

Sickness absence

Although not many countries have specific data on the correlation between sickness absence and burnout, recent studies confirm this relation. In fact, employees who are at increased risk or experience burnout have a higher absence rate than their colleagues. Also, data show an increasing trend in the rate of sick leave due to burnout compared to the past (Eurofound, 2018).

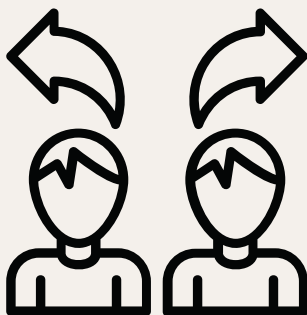


Work ability and disability

Research and data in recent years confirm the link between burnout and work capacity. Burnout is associated with various indicators of poor health and work capability, such as absence due to sickness, periods of hospitalization, or early retirement because of disability. A chronic post-traumatic stress disorder may even result in permanent disability (Toppinen-Tanner, 2011). According to Eurofound (2018), a survey performed in the Netherlands on working conditions (2015) show that according to the participants' responses burnout accounts for approximately 4–5% of people who started receiving disability benefits.

Turnover rate

Many authors have tested and confirmed the positive relation between burnout and turnover rate (Chowdhury, 2018). The high turnover rate has immediate consequences in the work environment; the remaining staff deals with increased workloads and responsibilities; the organizations lose employees with valuable knowledge and the costs for recruitment are high.



2.A.4. How to prevent Burnout in Organizations

The identification of preventive factors in organizations is of great importance to promote personal and work satisfaction, so that employees can work in healthy and happy environments. The most important organizational preventive factors are:

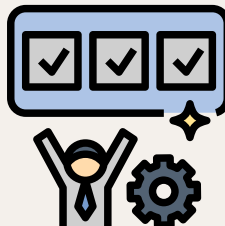
1. Positive communication with supervisors and colleagues

According to Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand (2023), the principles of *positive communication* in work environments:

- Prioritise respect
- Value honesty and enhance trust
- Foster the expression of vulnerability
- Promote open communication
- Encourage information sharing

2. Clear responsibilities and roles

By setting clear roles and responsibilities in organizations, employees know what is expected of them, thus they can focus on the implementation of specific goals and tasks. This concretization of expectations may increase productivity and satisfaction of employees and promote team work.



3. Job control and autonomy

Job control is characterized by:

- the capacity of the employee to make decisions about his/her own work, the pace, the context and the implementation of a task he/she has undertaken and to influence his/her work environment
- the opportunities he/she has for creativity and development of new skills and competencies.

4. Career paths/chances for promotion–development

Career path can be defined as a succession of goals and objectives within the organization through which people have the chance to move to the top level (Beyouk, 2015). Career path strategy is considered to be one of the most powerful preventing factors for burnout (Crawford, 2002 · Callanan, 2003). Career pathing offers employees a strong motivation for professional development and helps them have a clear view of their long-term goals. Thus, employees are more engaged at work and feel more satisfied with their step by step achievements (Sokolowsky, 2022).

5. The importance of clinical and supportive supervision

Clinical/professional and supportive supervision aims to support employees in matters that are related to their work life, by providing them with the adequate skills to reflect on their own practice. Clinical/professional supervision is about supporting a person in everyday work practices, with the purpose to improve his/her work performance and increase their sense of satisfaction at work. Supportive supervision also gives the opportunity to the employees to express their feelings and concerns about their positive or challenging experiences from the work context. Regular professional supervision, as stated by Chiller & Crisp (2012), can improve employees' retention rates. As a result, it is unwise to allocate less resources to effective supervision.

6. Constant and high-quality training of the employees

Continuous and high-quality training in organizations provides employees with essential knowledge and skills, so as to empower their professional role, enhance their creativity and make them feel more satisfied with their work.

The training can be:

o Internal (on-the- job training): it's the kind of training that happens within the work environment. It may take the form of:

- Employee orientation (training of new employees)
- Sharing of knowledge among employees of different expertise
- Mentoring by a more experienced member of the team
- Hands- on activities (practical activities that involve "learning by doing" while being guided by an experienced member of the team

o External: it's the kind of training that is conducted by experts that are not members of the organization. It may have the form of:

- Seminars
- Conferences
- Lectures
- Postgraduate programmes



2.A.5. Prevention of Burnout in ECI Organizations

Much has been written about the preventive measures that organizations can implement in order to cultivate healthy environments and prevent burnout. However, there are very few reports on organizational factors for preventing burnout particularly in the field of Early Childhood Intervention. Our practical experience in the field of ECI has shown us that the following factors are necessary ingredients for promoting resilience and creating a healthy work environment within the Organization.

1. The importance of Reflective Supervision/Consultation

Providing services to children and families who live in stressful conditions or face difficult issues demands significant emotional resilience. Under these circumstances, ECI professionals can feel emotionally exhausted, even to the point of burnout. According to the Center for Early Education and Development of University of Minnesota, professionals who receive Reflective Supervision/Consultation demonstrate improvements in work skills and self-efficacy, but also reduce levels of burnout and turnover (CEED, 2020). These RS/C meetings, allow frontline workers in the Early Childhood sector to acquire the appropriate knowledge and skills in order to manage their emotional reactions while working with children and families. In addition, they learn how to jointly use these emotional reactions with their expertise in child development and parental perspectives, to serve families in a better and more effective way (CEED, 2020).



2. The importance of an interdisciplinary team work and ongoing training tailored to the specific needs of CwD and their families

Offering services to families with infants with disabilities can be very challenging because of their multiple and complicated needs, which cannot be efficiently met by only one field of expertise. In such cases, Chen et al. (2009) emphasize the necessity of interdisciplinary training, team work, and coordination to safeguard and guarantee the delivery of services which are superior, well-coordinated, and family-centered. Through ongoing interdisciplinary in-service training and teamwork, professionals in Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) gain a deeper and better understanding of the role and importance of multiple specialties and are able to approach families and infants in a more holistic way. As a result, they feel more effective, they understand and develop the intervention plan more efficiently and they receive greater satisfaction from their work.

3. Workplace Environment and Working Conditions within an ECI Organization

There are also some other organizational factors that are directly linked to the effectiveness and resilience of professionals in ECI. These refer to adequate staffing, so that professionals do not become overburdened with excessive workloads and are able to provide quality services to families, clarification of role expectations of all team members, open communication throughout the working environment and salaries that reflect the quality of services provided. Many of the above elements are also reflected in the results of the survey on Needs Assessment for Professionals that was carried out during the implementation of this project (PRr1: Report on Burnout: Literature Review & Survey on Needs Assessment).

2.A.6. Tools and practices

The tools and practices that are presented below can be used in organizations or other working environments that are related to CwD to facilitate the team cooperation and communication in order to improve the working environment. All the tools are to be used by you, as team members, including the leader.

Effective leadership activities

LEADERSHIP PIZZA

General aim: This is an activity for the development of leadership skills, which offers the leaders a self-assessment framework.

Subobjectives:

- To track the skills, attributes and attitudes that an effective leader should have
- To provide self-evaluation of the leader
- To translate the self-evaluation into new personal goals

Participants: leader, team members

Duration: 30 min.+

Materials: Paper (with pizza drawing)



FIGURE 2: EXAMPLE OF LEADERSHIP PIZZA. ADAPTED FROM: LEADERSHIP PIZZA | SESSIONLAB

Step 1: Present the model of Leadership Pizza: A self-evaluation tool in which every participant names every slice of a pizza (drawn in a piece of paper) with skills and attitudes they think a leader should gain, in order to be effective.

Step 2: Present an example of leadership pizza and encourage them to think the skills each one thinks are of great importance, from their point of view.

Step 3: Set a time limit and ask the participants to list the most important leadership skills and qualities in their opinion and then name each slice of the pizza with those skills.

Step 4: Ask the participants to share their drawings with the group and justify why they chose those labels and then track common beliefs among the participants about the characteristics of a good leader.

Step 5: Now is the time for the leader to evaluate himself/herself based on the common characteristics that the team had identified in Step 4 (on a scale from 1 to 10). The results of the self- assessment should be the baseline for the leaders to define their own goals.

DOTMOCRACY

General aim:

- To support democratic decision making
- To show your team members that you take their opinion into consideration

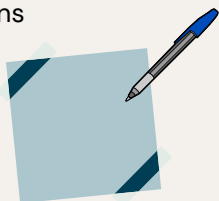
Subobjectives:

- To promote brainstorming in your group and prioritize the ideas
- To assess a group of possible ideas.

Participants: leader, team members

Duration: 30 min.

Materials: Post-its, pens



Step 1: The leader informs the team members about the issue they are going to discuss, which needs quick decision-making and the team members write down their ideas in a post-it and put all the ideas on a wall. Let the participants group similar ideas and delete those that are repeated.

Run through every idea and make clarifications, until all the options are clear to all the participants.

Step 2: The participants can now show their preference for specific ideas, by making dots with a marker.

(Each participant has 5 dots to share, all five of which can be placed on one idea or on different ones).

Step 3: After all participants have voted, choose the most popular ideas. You can discuss the prioritization (most popular – less popular ideas) and define the steps that will follow.

Notes:

- Be aware not to be affected by votes already set ("bandwagon effect")

Adapted from Dotmocracy / SessionLab

Team building activities

TRUST BATTERY



FIGURE 3: TRUST BATTERY. ADOPTED FROM
[HTTPS://WWW.SESSIONLAB.COM/METHODS/TRUST-BATTERY](https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/trust-battery)

In every collaboration among partners, the 'trust battery' (the level of trust or 'emotional credit' the one has for the other) either grows or discharges, depending on the person's reliability and social interaction skills.

General aim:

- To raise awareness of the level of trust team members share
- To encourage all parties involved to identify which workplace relationships need improvement.

Subobjectives:

- To give the leader and the team members an opportunity to think about the 'trust battery' they have for each person in the team
- To promote focusing on activities that could reload discharged confidence batteries
- To improve working relations and resolve possible conflicts

Participants: leader, team members

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Materials: Trust Battery Worksheets

Step 1: Explain to the team members the concept of 'trust battery'.

Step 2: Distribute the trust battery worksheets to the team members and instruct them to write their colleagues' names.

Step 3: Advise the participants to complete the trust battery worksheets based on their past interactions with this person: How much trust do you have for this person?

Step 4: Encourage participants to reflect on how they can improve their relationships with coworkers in case the trust battery is depleted.

Step 5: Contemplate on the exercise by asking the questions below:

- What factors made you rank certain colleagues' trust battery lower than others?
- Are there any relationships that you realize there is a discrepancy in the level of trust between you and the other individual?
- What actions can be taken to improve a low trust battery?
- As a leader or colleague, what actions can you take in order to support your colleagues in recharging their trust batteries?

Alternatives:

Trust Battery can be utilized for individual use to identify the relationships requiring special attention.

It can also be implemented in a group, where group members exchange evaluations in pairs. In order for the practice to be effective, it is vital to have team members who are willing to give and receive candid and constructive feedback, and the leader should be able to deal with any potential conflicts that may arise (<https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/trust-battery>).

MAKING LIST OF CLEAR RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLES OF TEAM MEMBERS

General aim: To enhance the collaboration between the team members and increase the effectiveness of the team

Subobjectives:

- To encourage team members to define their specific roles and responsibilities.
- To give them the opportunity to express the expectations that they hold of one another
- To identify gaps that need to be filled or changes that need to be made.

Participants: All team members

Duration: 90 minutes

Materials: whiteboard, markers, sticky notes, timer

Step 1: Preparation

Draw four columns on the whiteboard (see figure 4),

- Role
- Responsibilities (what I think)
- Responsibilities (what others think)
- Unassigned responsibilities

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES WHAT I THINK...	RESPONSIBILITIES WHAT OTHERS THINK...	UNASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES
ROLE			
ROLE			
ROLE			

FIGURE 4: EXAMPLE OF THE DRAWN COLUMNS RELATED TO ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
RETRIEVED FROM:

[HTTPS://KNOWLEDGE.HYPERISLAND.COM/HUBFS/COURSES/LTDA/WEBINAR%20SLIDES/LTDA%20202002/LTDA%20202004/ROLES%20&%20RESPONSIBILITIES%20-%20IMAGE.PNG](https://knowledge.hyperisland.com/hubfs/COURSES/LTDA/WEBINAR%20SLIDES/LTDA%20202002/LTDA%20202004/ROLES%20&%20RESPONSIBILITIES%20-%20IMAGE.PNG)

STEP 2: Identify roles

Each team member has to write down their role on the first column of the whiteboard.

STEP 3: Identify your responsibilities

Ask each person to think the top 3–5 responsibilities they have and write each one on a sticky note. Then, place the sticky notes on the second column of the board from the most important at the top to the least important at the bottom.

STEP 4: Identify teammates responsibilities

Ask each person to write on sticky notes the top 1–2 responsibilities that they think each of the teammates has and place them on the third column of the whiteboard.

If you think of any responsibility that doesn't match clearly a specific role, write it on sticky note and place it on the fourth column of the board.

STEP 5: Discuss role responsibilities

Now is the time to review the notes that the team members have made. Each member presents his/her "what I think" notes for his/her role. Then each of the other members does the same with "what others think" notes that they've written.

The role owner either accepts or declines the different responsibilities that have emerged.

The statements that are declined are moved to the column of "unassigned responsibilities".

STEP 6: Review of unassigned responsibilities

Review the unassigned statements and discuss with the team whether each of them could be included in an existing role. If not, this may indicate that a new role needs to be created or an existing role to be redefined.

STEP 7: Make a record of the list

Once the team has concluded on the roles and responsibilities, create a document and place it somewhere visible for everyone, like on the noticeboard.

You can make an agreement to review the document in a certain period of time or in case of new hiring or changes in roles.

Adapted from ATLASIAN TEAM PLAYBOOK

<https://www.atlassian.com/team-playbook/plays/roles-and-responsibilities>

Related sources:

<https://info.nicic.gov/ebdm/node/63>

<https://www.atlassian.com/team-playbook/plays/roles-and-responsibilities>

<https://toolbox.hyperisland.com/roles-responsibilities>

<https://knowledge.hyperisland.com/hubfs/courses/Ltda/Webinar%20Slide%20LTD%202002/LTD%202004/Roles%20&%20Responsibilities%20-%20Image.png>

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES (in interdisciplinary teams)

General aim: To enhance communication in interdisciplinary teams.

Subobjectives:

- To experience the function of the team as an outside observer/to understand the dynamics of the team
- To experience different roles in the team conversation; as a watcher/listener and as a talker/active contributor

Participants: Interdisciplinary team members

Duration: Interdisciplinary team meeting (1,5–2 hours)

Materials: Handouts with topics of discussion

STEP 1: Preparation

Prior to the meeting, you have to decide on the topics that will be discussed in the interdisciplinary team meeting.

STEP 2: Make the setting

Create two circles of chairs, one inside the other, like concentric circles. Divide the team in two groups. The one group that will sit in the middle circle will be the 'talkers' while the other group in the outer circle will be the watchers/listeners.

STEP 3: Discussion of the topics

Participants in the inner circle begin to engage with the first topic of the handout. The 'listeners' make notes of the discussion.

STEP 4: Switch roles

When the 'talkers' come to a conclusion, the two groups switch circles. Now it's time for the 'listeners' group to become the 'talkers' and discuss another topic and the 'talkers' group to become the 'listeners' and make notes.

The activity can continue until all topics are discussed or for pre-arranged number of topics.

STEP 5: Debrief of the activity

The activity must end with a debrief of the meeting.

Each participant can reflect on his/her experience as a 'listener' or a 'talker'.

Adapted from <https://positivepsychology.com/communication-exercises-for-work/>

Other organizational practices for burnout prevention

- Creating burnout awareness raising seminars or workshops

Recommended resources:

<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/resources/burnout-response-for-leaders/>,

- Making network of professionals working in ECI,
- Participating in programs or organizing meetings with other organizations to facilitate the sharing of good practices.

2.B.Resilient Families

2.B.1. Promoting Resilience in You and Your Family

Sonja Alimović, Renata Martinec, Ana Wagner Jakab

What does resilience mean?

Resilience encompasses more than just elasticity, which is the ability of a substance or object to regain its original shape. It also involves the capability to withstand and swiftly recover from adversity, demonstrating toughness.

(<https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>).

When our body is exposed to a virus, it starts to fight and create immunity, becoming more resistant to this threat. It is similar when we are exposed as individuals or our family as a unit to some stress situations. We begin to adapt, find coping strategies and become more resistant to stress.

It could be said that resilience is an oxymoron—it develops when a person or family faces challenges and difficult situations. That would mean that resilience is not an inbred trait and as such stable throughout life but it is developmental construct and a dynamic process (Hawely & de Haan 1996).

Personal or family resilience is the capacity to face and deal with difficult life situations, using personal or family resources that help us or our family system to face changes and challenges in a healthy and powerful way. Some risk and protective factors will make us or our family either more vulnerable or make it easier to us facing the challenges.

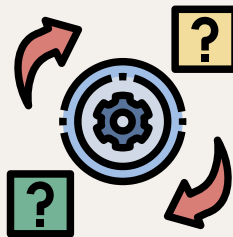
Risk factors include some challenging situations such as: poverty, violence, premature birth, single-parent, divorce, maltreatment, illness, psychopathology, homelessness, massive trauma such as war or natural disasters or death (Masten & Reed, 2002, Fernandez, et al. 2013). Numerous studies have also shown that parenting a child with difficulties may also affect family dynamics (Hogan, Shandra & Msall, 2007) Sometimes risk factors appear repeatedly or simultaneously and affect us cumulatively (Masten & Reed, 2002).

Professionals working with parents in ECI have to be aware the stressors to be able to recognize the potential cause of stress and burnout. Also, professionals must know how to support parents and which techniques to recommend to decrease the impact of stressors on parents' well-being. Therefore, they have to know about protective factors, coping strategies, effective parenting, etc.

Protective factors are qualities of persons or contexts that make certain high-risk situations easier to overcome. Protective processes refer to the way protective factors work (Masten & Reed, 2002). Individual protective factors, such as hardiness, encompass a set of personality traits that function as a source of resilience when confronting stressful situations, along with a problem-solving oriented approach to coping (Dolbier et al., 2007). Three basic elements comprise hardiness. The first is when we perceive challenge or **change as normal** and natural and opportunity for our personal growth.

The second is **commitment** that means that we have a sense of purpose in our life and involvement in directing life. Finally, it is **control**, which is the belief that we are capable to impact life circumstances.

A protective factor is also the coping style we use while facing problems. If this style is focused on problem-solving, it could be protective and supportive to us (Dolbier et al., 2007). Even though some people develop resilience naturally by themselves it is possible to develop resilience through learning and implementing new positive behaviors.



If you, as professionals, try to build your own resilience or help others build their own resilience, you can work on your own growth and development and build skills over time (accepting change, setting goals, improving problem-solving skills, nurturing optimism and yourself in general, becoming more proactive etc.)

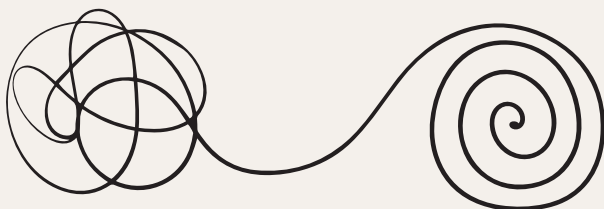
In reference to Fernandez et al. (2013), the notion of family resilience redirects the attention from individual family members and their personal resilience towards the collective strength of the family unit as a protective factor. Within this context, some key protective factors include effective coping strategies, family cohesion, and the family's belief system. Positive coping strategies are those geared towards problem-solving. Cohesion means connection among family members. In cohesive families, family members have a common goal that they strive for and around which they engage in order to achieve a common result for the benefit of the family. Spirituality is one of the family values that has proven to be positive for the family.

If you, as professionals, try to help build resilience in family you support in ECI, but also in your own family, you can recommend or use those tips yourself such as: spending and planning time together with family, improving communication (active listening and clear expression), embracing differences, reminding of strengths and uniqueness of family, nurturing positive attitude. (<https://everymind.org.au/news/building-family-resilience>)



Some authors (Bayat and Schuntermann, 2013) wrote about promoting resilience within families of children with disabilities specifically of children with autism and they emphasize how important it is to find meaning in this situation. The way family members give meaning to disability can help them utilize family resources (protective factors), create a family structure and achieve a balance among resources, stressors and demands, or in other words, risk factors. It is supportive and important for the family members to share and express their experiences, perception and feelings. While doing that they can ask themselves and family members further questions. What does their child's disability mean to them and child? How does it affect family identity? What are their roles regarding child's treatment and demands? How does this experience affect their global view of the world? Does this challenge and change influence their family belief system? Do they feel spiritual support?

Key take away- In facing difficult situations, it is important to find present meaning and also build new meaning. It is not only adaptation it is also transformation. Challenging situations bring some losses, but from these losses some new strengths and values can be developed. Encouraging resilience means to see already existing individual or family strengths, but also to find new ones that emerged from the challenge. In order to get to that place, it is important for family members to invest attention, energy and time for nurturing family relations and strengths.



Effective parenting

Parenting plays a crucial role in nurturing a child's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth from infancy to adulthood (as indicated by Brooks in 2012). It's widely acknowledged among researchers that various parenting styles and strategies have varying impacts on a child's development. Fletcher et al. in 2005 also emphasize the importance of taking into account parenting practices, which encompass behaviors such as a parent's active participation in a child's education and activities, and these practices are intertwined with the strategies parents employ for discipline.



Canadian Paediatric Society (2004) recommends positive/effective discipline which should be given with affective bond to the child, be consistent and perceived as "fair" by the child.

Parenting strategies have to be appropriate for the child's development, temperament and age. Therefore, parents will not use the same ones for infants as for teenagers:

a) Infants need security and protection, so parents need to fulfill their needs like feeding, sleeping, playing and interaction with others. During the infancy attachment develops. Attachment represents a deep and enduring emotional bond between two individuals across time and physical proximity, as explained by Ainsworth in 1973. The absence of attachment can have adverse effects on a child's overall well-being. In order to develop secure attachment, infants have to constantly receive attention and affection from their parents as they fulfil their needs. Children with secure attachment will develop as independent, warm persons without fear of being abandoned (Schipor & Bujor, 2018). To help child develop secure attachment, parents have to perceive and react to important signals the child is showing. By fulfilling their child's needs they help their child to develop trust in people and by developing trust, the child will develop secure attachment.

b) During the toddler years, children experiment and exercise their own will and often get frustrated which will lead them to misbehaviour and tantrums. These behaviours are quite disturbing, but parents should keep calm since punishment can only aggravate the behaviour. They should set limits and establish routines. It helps if they guide and teach a child. Furthermore, parents must ensure the safety of toddlers, reduce aggressive behavior, and mitigate destructive actions. A significant number of parents tend to exhibit excessive protectiveness towards their children with disabilities, and this, in turn, limits these children's chances to explore and engage with their surroundings. This way child lacks the opportunity for spontaneous learning in real environment. So, they should rather provide safe environment for exploring and doing different tasks for a child, then to do things instead of them.



c) Preschool children need consistency in rules and actions and praising good behaviour. They develop social skills through social connections with peers. This way children learn how to be responsible and self-disciplined. You should encourage parents to involve them in peer relations and play, explain the rules to them and encourage them to follow the rules.

Although parents need to adapt strategies to the child's age and development, some strategies should always be the same. Many authors now describe techniques of positive discipline, and parents should be encouraged to use some of the following:

a) **Consistency** – parents should set appropriate limits and rules and clearly explain them to a child by telling and showing the example. They should behave according to these limits and rules all the time in all situations. If rules have to be broken in some situations, you should pre-explain to a child. E.g. if the rule is that the child always has to put the toys away, parents should be consistent and ask the child to put them away every time after play. If they know that child is going to be tired, they should encourage him/her to finish playing a bit earlier, or help the child tidy up, but do not do everything by themselves.

b) **Positive communication** – parents should actively listen, be open and respect the child's opinion and feelings. Reflect what the child is communicating and explain the child's feelings ("I hear you are angry. Losing the game makes you angry, I see"). Control their own communication, speak clearly and consider the tone of the voice and use alternative, appropriate forms of communication as a support for better understanding (use objects, pictures, photographs, gestures etc.)

c) **Positive reinforcement** – parents should praise and acknowledge good behaviours and actions. Focus on strengths and positive behaviours. Praise the tasks that are well done. Explain what is well done and which behaviour is good, like "it was very nice that you have shared your toys during the play".

d) **Redirection** – when the child is misbehaving, parents should focus her/his attention on something else (e.g. "Let's see what's there in the other room.")

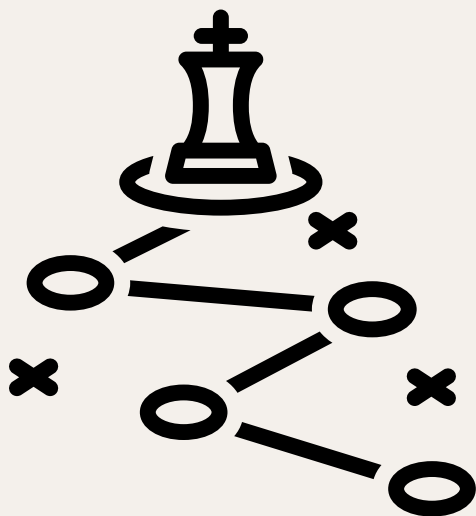
e) **Time in** – parents should spend quality time with the child. Engage in one-to-one leisure activities in relaxed atmosphere, without therapeutic and learning goals. Just relax and enjoy.

f) **Time out** – when the child misbehaves, parents should remove him/her from the situation for pre-set time after the previous warning. E.g. first they should warn the child “If you keep doing this, you’ll have to stop playing and sit aside”. Before time-out, they should set the time of being out of the situation, e.g. “You’ll sit here for one minute” and provide the child with some concrete information like looking at the watch or you can count out loud. Recommended reading:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/pdfs/infants-0-1-w-npa.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/pdfs/toddlers-1-2-w-npa.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/pdfs/Toddlers-2-3-w-NPA.pdf>



Supportive environment

Supportive environment is created in a way that promotes good relations, positive atmosphere, open and kind communication. Such an environment encourages development and promotes well-being which is important for children and parents.

Supportive environment for children must be safe and must encourage exploring, and at the same time it has to be structured and provide predictability that will make child feel secure and trusting towards people. Children must have a responsive person, who supports independence and feeling of competence (The Iris Centre, 2015).

To achieve such an environment, parents should carefully design the physical environment. They should child-protect all dangerous places in their home, like stairs, corners, hard edges etc. Create the play area and learning centre filled with different materials. They should motivate the child to explore and move. Many children with disabilities in early childhood have a delay in motor development, so they explore only the environment on the reach of the hand. Therefore, they should bring everything closer to a child, at the reach of the hand. Also, parents should provide the child with different, multisensory materials, not only toys but also the objects with everyday use.

Supportive environment also creates opportunities for child's interaction with parents, other family members and peers. Many children with disabilities have to be encouraged to communicate, and they lose interest for communication as soon as other person does not respond to his/her signals. Therefore, encourage other people around a child to be very responsive to the child's signals. Encourage them to wait for the child's reaction when in interaction. Try singing, reading, storytelling in slow and soft voice, that could encourage the child's attention to communication.

As much as supportive environment is important for children, it is important for parents too.



Authors suggest that interventions promoting parental support to a child should consider parents' busy schedules and other common barriers that parents meet (Jarvis et.al. 2017). Parents often lack support from their friends and other people from their community (Powers, 1993). Sometimes, friends of families with children with disabilities do not know how to provide support, sometimes they feel sad for them and start avoiding their own friends just to spare them their emotions. Conversely, tending to a child with a disability demands a substantial amount of time, most of which is devoted to therapeutic interventions, often leaving little time for socializing with friends. Therefore, professional support should be provided. The parents also have a right to ask for the professional support that should include providing information and practical assistance, positive role models and demonstration of activities, so as emotional affirmational support and sometimes even counselling. Furthermore, parents can ask professionals to inform them about where and how they can obtain what kind of support. (Douma, 2006; Letourneau, 2001). These professionals should increase parents' understanding regarding their child's needs and strengthen them for seeking the social support and get involved in community life.

Many parents of children with disabilities recognize group support meetings as a good social support. During the meetings of those groups, they are able to exchange experiences, different information and practical advice, and listen and support each other. Solomon and colleagues (2001) suggest that this kind of support can be valuable in three main areas: the sociopolitical realm, offering a feeling of influence within the community; the interpersonal aspect, fostering a sense of connection; and the intraindividual dimension, which involves personal transformation.

Besides the support from professionals, parents can also benefit from formal and informal social support. While there are variations among mothers and fathers, the majority of parents discover support from colleagues and benefit from formal, family-friendly policies offered by their employers, which significantly enhance their overall well-being (as stated by Greenberger et al. in 1989).

2.B.2. Tools and Practices

The many tasks and responsibilities involved in raising children with additional needs can be associated with feelings of worry and exhaustion, but it can also be an interesting journey of discovering resilience and personal growth. In line with contemporary knowledge resilience can be considered as the ability to be satisfied, fulfilled, and empowered after something difficult or bad has happened. **Although such thinking will be unusual or impossible for some of them, you need to know that being resilient is a process that includes learning, discovering, empathy, cooperation, and self-care.**

So, here are some discussion points, suggestions, strategies, and activities to build resilience through which you could sustain parents' wellbeing, foster positive family dynamics and positive parent-child relationship and at the same time promote your own family's resilience.

1) Discussion points

By asking these questions written below, it is possible to gain insight into the various parameters that define undesirable psychosocial reactions and stressful conditions in parents. It is also possible to consider how parents assess their strengths and coping strategies, and what their needs are in terms of receiving adequate support. Parents can write the answers independently, or during your common conversation with the intention of supporting parents' motivation and/or a more detailed assessment.

WHAT MAKES ME STRESSED?



HOW DO I REACT TO BEING STRESSED?





WHAT OTHER POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES COULD I TRY?



WHAT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD? WHAT DO I ENJOY?

WHAT AM I DEPRIVING MYSELF OF?

WHAT WOULD I LIKE OTHERS TO KNOW OR DO?



DESCRIBE A GOOD DAY



DESCRIBE A BAD DAY



2) Suggestions on how to overcome stressful and challenging situations that may occur in family life

Overcoming stressful situations is very important for healthy family dynamics which represent the base of security and attachment. For this reason, it is essential to encourage parents to understand and accept different attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that can contribute to better family functioning, as follows:

- Explore different viewpoints and contemplate areas of success and potential enhancement.
- Be able to discern both the favorable and challenging aspects of an issue.
- Gain insights from prior experiences to either avert or mitigate the recurrence of similar situations in the future, or to modify the customary reaction to adverse events.
- Engage with the everyday challenges and disruptions that arise in family life. If you extend kindness and self-compassion, you will handle family life with increased patience.
- Establish a schedule with your child, designating specific time slots for both educational activities and play. Particularly in moments of crisis or change, there might be a need for some flexibility in these routines. At the same time, it is important that you maintain a schedule and consistency.
- Empower your child to build trust in their ability to resolve issues and make sound decisions.
- A positive and optimistic outlook can empower children to perceive the positive aspects of life and persevere, even in the face of the most challenging circumstances.
- Change can frequently evoke fear in children and teenagers. Assist your child in recognizing that change is a natural aspect of life, and new aspirations can take the place of goals that may no longer be achievable.

3) Strategies to build resilience

Discuss with the parents which strategies are of interest to them and elaborate their potential implementation in the parents' lives.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

- Incorporate enjoyable and healthy activities into your daily schedule. This will rejuvenate you and prevent feelings of exhaustion.
- Prioritize the well-being of your physical and mental health, as it forms the cornerstone for effectively handling the demands of daily life.
- Write a journal – organise your thoughts and experiences. This is an evidence-based strategy for improving coping skills and reducing stress.
- Talk to others who may have advice or strategies that could help you in your situation. Often others who have already overcome the same problem are the best advisors.
- Seek insight in any given circumstance. What valuable lessons can be gleaned from both positive and less favorable results?
- Allow yourself to take a break – reward yourself with something you love and enjoy.

EMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Be kind to yourself. Treat yourself as you would comfort and support a close friend who has undergone a similar experience.
- Reach out to others for support, sharing your emotions. Compassionate individuals have the ability to significantly improve our well-being.
- Discuss with a friend. Can he or she provide a different perspective?
- Allow yourself to experience disappointment, sadness, or any other emotion you need to process. If possible, try to confine these emotions to moments when you can manage them effectively; this is a constructive approach for developing self-control. If you find it challenging to manage or alleviate stress or intense feelings, don't hesitate to reach out to a friend, a trusted individual, or seek professional assistance.
- Use humour.

PHYSICAL STRATEGIES

- Rest. Give yourself the necessary time to rejuvenate. Your body and mind require rest and approximately 6 to 7 hours of sleep (or more if you're fortunate).
- Deal with your fatigue. If you find yourself lacking in energy, structure your daily activities in a way that aligns your peak energy levels with the most crucial moments.
- Get moving. Be active. Discover an activity that brings you joy, whether it is hiking, gardening, or yoga. If you can't find the time, formulate a plan to incorporate physical activity into your life in the upcoming days.
- Start meditating, deep breathing, mindfulness, or engage in another form of psychophysical relaxation. Developing the ability to physically soothe yourself offers a multifaceted advantage, promoting emotional, cognitive, and behavioral calmness.

4) Activities

Here are some activities that may be helpful in sustaining both parents' and your own resilience. Basic guidelines are outlined at the beginning of each of them. If necessary, you can give additional explanation about the reasons and procedures of their implementation. Furthermore, you can support and help parents in some steps of certain activity, if needed.

A) MOOD JOURNAL

A mood journal can help you to identify and recognise your emotions, and to understand their causes and triggers. It also can support you in exploring new and/or different coping skills.

SITUATION	EMOTION	RATE INTENSITY (0 – 100)	HOW DID I REACT	HOW ELSE COULD I HAVE REACTED OR DONE
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B) GRATITUDE LIST

Many times, in our life we are focused on negative experiences. However, life also consists of beautiful and pleasant things. Try to think about what is good and inspiring in your life and what you are grateful for. Perhaps we should remember and appreciate them more often. So, for example, you can personally or together with other family members think about everything you are grateful for and fill in the table below.

I want to thank to... We want to thank to...	
I am grateful for... We are grateful for...	
I feel supported when... We feel supported when...	
I appreciate... We appreciate...	
It makes my day when.... It makes our day when....	
I enjoy when... We enjoy when....	
I am grateful to my family for... We are grateful to our family for...	

TABLE 1. GRATITUDE LIST

C) WISH BOARD – VISUALIZE YOUR GOALS AND DREAMS

Create your personal or family vision board that represents your life goals and dreams. It can be a daily reminder of what you are striving for, and a motivator for setting smaller goals and strategies that will make it possible. You can make it on plain paper using different visually art tools, colours, photographs, drawings, words, poems, quotes, affirmations, etc. The template for the vision board can also be a good idea to give some guidelines (figure 9). Further, you can use some digital version by using a tool like Canva – Free Vision Board Maker (an online editing software) to make a digital vision board that you can make your computer wallpaper or print out.



FIGURE 5. WISH BOARD

D) RESILIENCE PLAN

You can explain to parents that this exercise will help them to use their resilience resources to create a personal resilience plan that can help them overcome current or future challenges.



Step 1: Describe your current difficulty	Describe your current challenge or difficult situation(s).
Step 2: Identify supportive people around you	Name people who are supportive in your life, who keep you upright when it would be easier to fall.
Step 3: Identify different strategies	For instance, are there specific methods you employ, such as meditation, keeping a gratitude journal, taking a walk, enjoying particular music, or receiving a massage, to alleviate stress?
Step 4: Identify sagacity	Sagacity embodies the wisdom and discernment you possess, whether it is drawn from sources like song lyrics, novels, poems, spiritual texts, quotes from notable figures, the counsel of grandparents, or your own life experiences.
Step 5: Identify solution-oriented behaviors	Which proactive behaviors do you display to address the issue effectively? For instance, do you find it necessary to acquire fresh information, strategize, engage in negotiations, express your thoughts, or seek assistance from others?
Step 6 Execute your resilience plan	The subsequent action involves implementing your resilience plan. To accomplish this, determine the sequence in which you will employ your diverse sources of support, strategies, wisdom, and solution-oriented actions. Where should you begin with your resources? Typically, the most appropriate starting point is the smallest step you can take. To create your resilience plan, as depicted in Table 2, mark the number 1 next to the initial resource you plan to employ. Proceed to assign numbers in a logical sequence to the various resources you intend to use. After that, implement your first resource and continue following your resilience plan step by step until you have effectively overcome the challenge.
Step 7 Evaluate your resilience plan	Discuss the following question: • What has been your experience of putting your resilience plan into action? Has it proven effective in helping you overcome the challenge? • Which particular resources, be it skills, support, strategies, or insights, were most beneficial to you, and what were the reasons for their effectiveness? • Have you not used any resources, and if so, why? • Is there any further information or elements you wish to incorporate into your resilience plan? • Are there other areas in which you could apply your resilience plan, and if so, how might this lead to improvements in your overall well-being or circumstances?

TABLE 2. RESILIENCE PLAN

Difficult situation: The child has not been admitted to kindergarten

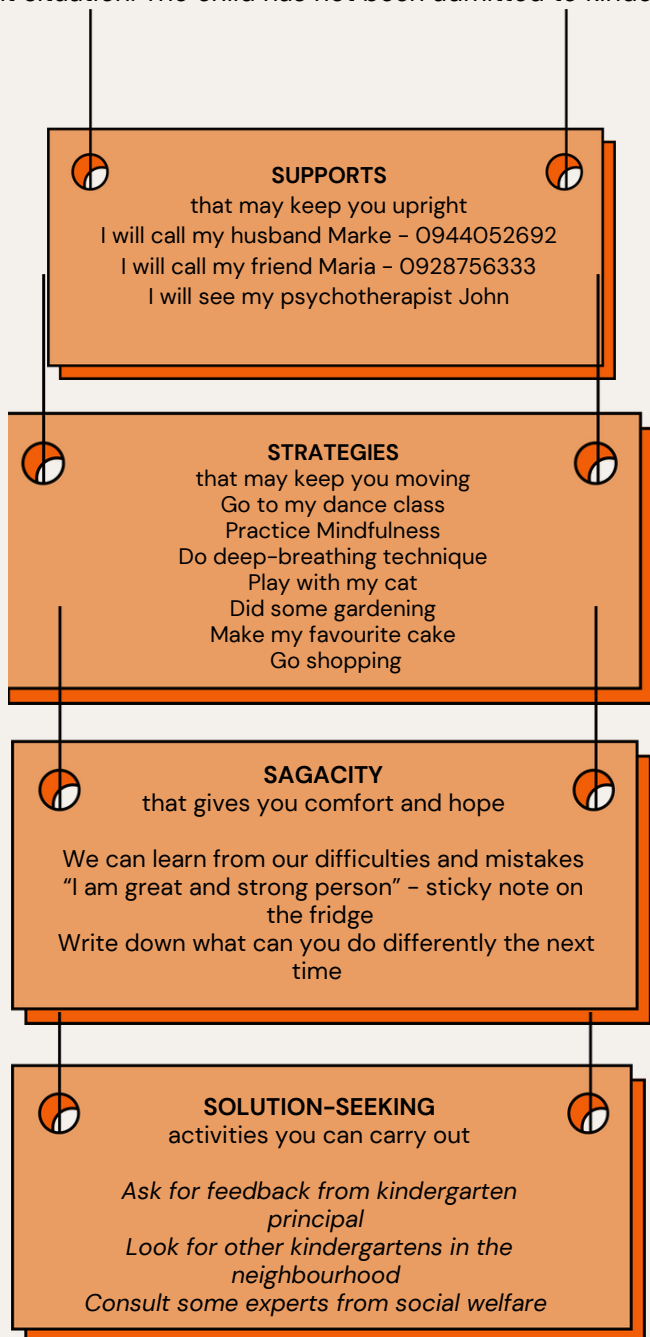


FIGURE 6. EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED RESILIENCE PLAN

5. Recommended further readings:

1. Bourke-Taylor (2023): *Building resilience in the face of adversity*, <https://sourcekids.com.au/resilience-in-the-face-of-adversity-how-can-parents-stay-buoyant-and-calm/>

2. <https://www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/wellbeing-activities.html>
<https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience/guide-parents-teachers>

3. <https://PositivePsychologyProgram.com>

2.C. Healthy Communities

2.C.1. Definition and Characteristics Of Healthy Communities

Koulouri Chrysoula-Maria, Lymperopoulou Aikaterini, Sfiniadaki Maria, Vernadaki Eleni, Zoi-Mitsi Ourania

A healthy community is more than just good medical care. It also includes the social and environmental factors that help people thrive. A healthy community is always working to improve its physical surroundings and its social relationships' values and norms and provide the required resources for people to provide support to each and reach their full potential (WHO, 2015).

Healthy communities are vibrant and constantly changing organisms.

Some of their key characteristics include a strong emphasis on public involvement and personal autonomy in decision-making regarding one's life, health, and well-being.

Additionally, there is a focus on maintaining a tidy, secure, and high-quality physical environment, including the quality of housing. Covering basic needs such as food, water, shelter, income, safety, and employment for all individuals is also a priority.

Furthermore, an essential characteristic of a healthy community is being resilient, supportive, and avoid exploitation of each members.

Lastly, ensuring that all members are exposed to diverse experiences and resources, and have the opportunity to contact, interact and communicate with various stakeholders is valued (Hancock & Duhl, 1988, as cited in Ashby, & Pharr, 2012).

Ecological perspective

Organizations, professionals and families are members of the community in which they live. They influence and are influenced by the community, the quality of which has a serious impact on their personal, social and professional well-being.

Ecological Systems Theory

Child development is substantially influenced by the social contexts, both immediate (family, school or early child care setting) and distant (settings in which the child is not directly involved and broad societal or cultural contexts), in which children are embedded. The ecological approach underlines the importance of the environments that surround the family as they have an impact on the way the family and the individual function, thus, highlighting the the vast number of factors in the environment affecting the child's development (Niles et al., 2008). According to Bronfenbrenner there are five environmental systems that interact with each other and influence child development. These are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Figure 7). When one component changes within a system, the whole system is affected (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

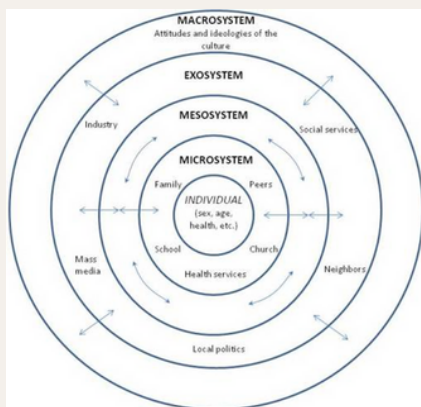


FIGURE 7. BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOSYSTEMS
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_Systems_Theory)

Ecological Model in ECI

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory forms the basis of modern approaches in the field of Early Childhood Intervention (ECI). From this point of view, ECI services do not only aim to meet child's developmental needs, but also consider child and family as a system, which is part of the wider community. The quality of interactions within the family system but also among all other systems, access to learning opportunities and the participation of child and family in community life determine the child's development. The goal of ECI is precisely to ensure all of the above. Understanding the ecological perspective is of particular importance for both professionals and families, as it also highlights the need for their active participation and involvement in the community.

Connecting With The Community

In order to enable professionals and families to actively participate in the community, thorough understanding of how the community functions is a prerequisite.

The importance of understanding power dynamics in the community

Understanding power dynamics means that professionals and families can comprehend the community decision-making process, can identify those who are excluded and the reasons for this exclusion. Questions that can help people to get a better picture of power dynamics are:

- Who makes the decisions?
- Who have greater power or influence?
- Who is involved in the decision-making process and who is excluded from it?

Community Asset Mapping

Asset mapping is the process that the community applies in order to identify the actors and their interconnection in individual, institutional, economic, physical and cultural level (Lightfoot et al, 2014).

The benefits of Community Asset Mapping procedures are:

- Identification and dissemination of existing local resources.
- Best utilization of available resources to showcase community connections and respond appropriately to the existing needs within the community.
- Point out and value the strengths and resources within communities.

Information can be turned into a Community Resource Guide available to the members of the community.

There is a range of asset mapping applications, which you can use in order to engage families and other community members in identifying services and settings that promote health and well-being.

Community Engagement

Being an active member of a community means being engaged. Community engagement is essential to building healthy environments that promote professional, social and personal well-being.

Benefits of Community Engagement

Community engagement is the continuous process of people and groups living in a specific geographic area, having common interests and exposed to similar situations, collaborating and working together to tackle issues affecting the well-being of those people. (Clinical and Translational Science Awards Consortium [CDC], 2011).

Its benefits are multi-dimensional. In particular, community engagement:

- enhances the direct participation of local people in all aspects of community life from decision-making, implementation and policy
- strengthens local capacities, community structures and local ownership
- enhances the optimal allocation of resources in different contexts.
- builds on existing local capacities (Bedson & Abramowitz, 2019).



Building Community Support

Raising Awareness

Awareness-raising is the process of transferring knowledge and information on a specific topic, to educate people aiming to guide them towards specific attitudes, behaviors and beliefs (Network, T. A. P., 2019). Raising awareness enables the harnessing of public opinion's influence to advocate for the needs of families, ultimately shaping the political determination of policymakers.

Enabling inclusive dialogue

Enabling inclusive dialogue is a complicated procedure that not everyone is familiar with. To enable families to identify and address issues of concern, it is imperative to incorporate the perspectives of various individuals and make sure that no one is excluded based on gender, age, class, ability, financial status, religion etc. To encourage people to actively participate and share their opinions freely, you should be willing to listen to different and controversial opinions, which can only be achieved if people feel safe to express themselves without fear of being judged. This means not only appreciating various perspectives and views, but also paying attention to persons' concerns, worries, emotions, and suggestions in order to promote open communication (Child Resilience Alliance, 2018).



Benefits of becoming an active member in the community – For Professionals In ECI

Healthy communities require healthy and active members. For ECI professionals, the benefits of active community participation are multifaceted. On the one hand, you can benefit yourselves from community programs and services that promote your personal well-being, but also contribute to the creation of new ones based on your own needs. Such community services could include educational programs, mental health services, physical activity opportunities and social networking with other professionals in the field of special education. On the other hand, by being active members, you gain good knowledge of the community system so that you can empower families to make informed decisions, link them to appropriate services and provide assistance in supporting these services to cater to the needs of the family and the child, which are most often quite complex when it comes to families with children with disabilities. Meeting the needs of the family through a holistic approach, reinforcing its support network, creating learning opportunities and chances for participation within the different community environments, contribute to the proper functioning of the family and create the most appropriate conditions for a child to reach his or her full potential.



2.C.2. Tools and Practices

All the tools and practices that are presented below can be used in order to strengthen your personal, emotional, social skills & competences, improve your cooperation with the families with CwD, meet the requirements of your demanding roles and cope with challenges within the community, enhancing your resilience, improving your wellbeing and ensuring that you will remain socially active. You can use the tools and practices for your own benefit and, at the same time, work with the families and give them appropriate guidelines, if needed. The implementation of the tools and practices is very important so that you can support not only the families but also yourselves.

Community Asset Mapping

GENERAL AIM: Community members specifically identify community assets.

Create a map about a detailed list of the structures you may receive support. It is extremely important for you to know how, where and when you can contact when you feel the need to do that.

Community Assets include:

- Citizen associations and local institutions,
- Churches,
- Book clubs,
- Non-profit organizations, businesses, social service agencies,
- Health services (hospitals and clinics),
- Libraries,
- Educational settings (schools, colleges or universities) (Burns, Paul & Paz, 2012).

PARTICIPANTS: Families and professionals

Some methods for collecting data include interviews (in-person or over the phone), organizing focus groups, administering community resident surveys (either on paper, electronically, or through mail-in), hosting community forums or events, making observations, conducting dashboard surveys, creating inventory of skills, resources, or institutions, and analyzing pre-existing data sets (such as census, housing, or social services data) (Burns, Paul & Paz, 2012).

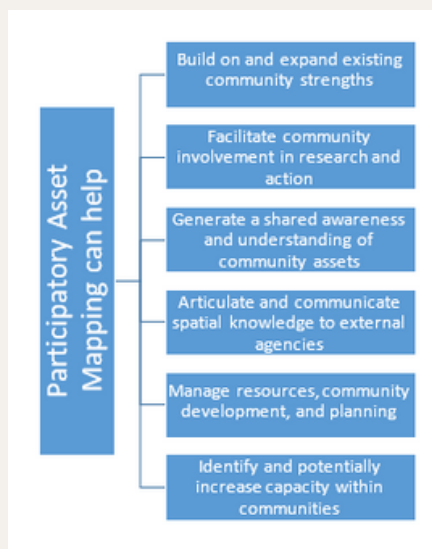


FIGURE 8. HOW PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING CAN HELP COMMUNITIES. PAUL & PAZ, 2012)

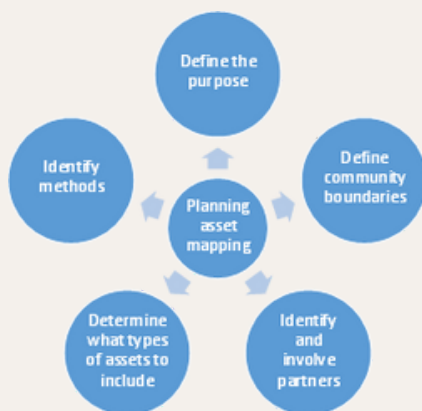


FIGURE 9. HOW TO PLAN A COMMUNITY ASSET MAP (BURNS, PAUL & PAZ, 2012)

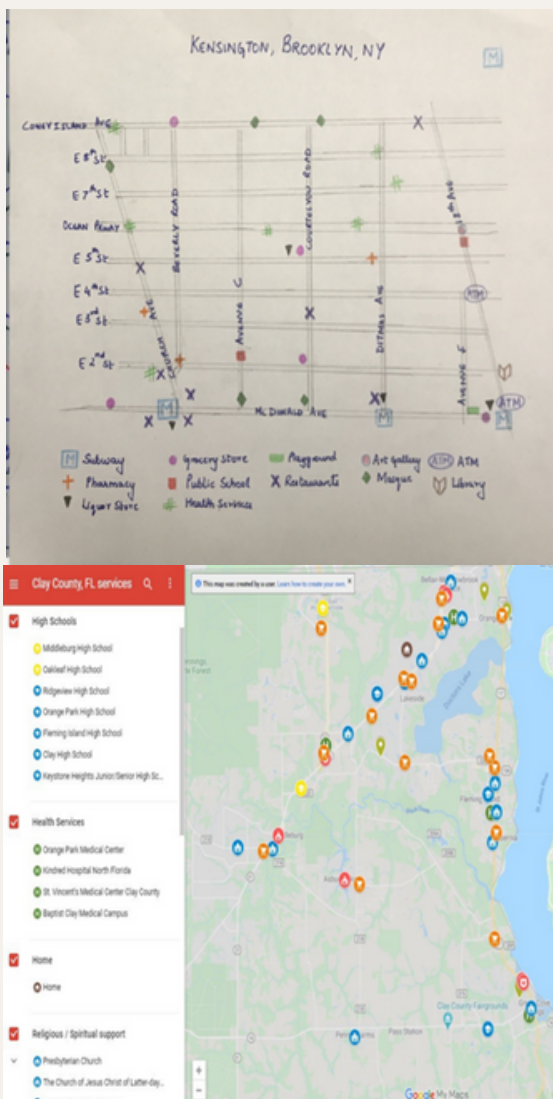


FIGURE 10: EXAMPLE OF COMMUNITY ASSET MAP (BURNS, PAUL & PAZ, 2012)

Dos and Don'ts Of A Community-Led Approach

Dos and Don'ts Of A Community-Led Approach

General aim: The aim of this activity is to help professionals better prepare for their work by encouraging them to think practically what they should do (Dos) and what they shouldn't do (Don'ts). Professionals can deepen their understanding of community-led approaches if they engage themselves in meaningful discussions and practical implementation (Child Resilience Alliance, 2018).

Participants: Professionals

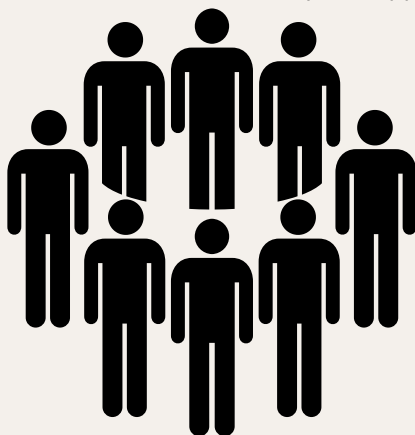
How to use it:

Ø Divide the professionals into small groups and ask them to create a list of 'Dos and Don'ts' regarding their role. Then, they can discuss what they have written, focusing on the things that are common and more importantly on the things which are different.

Ø Ask the professionals to "vote" for the top five Dos and top five Don'ts. This will help them better understand the rationale of the Community-Led Approach.

Ø Make sure that any misunderstandings and misconceptions are corrected. This process will make it easier for professionals to create their own list of Dos and Don'ts (Child Resilience Alliance, 2018).

For more see <https://communityledcp.org/toolkit/section-2-training-tools/trn-5-dos-and-don-ts-of-a-community-led-approach>



Eco-Map Tool

GENERAL AIM: This tool aims at facilitating professionals and members of the family to acknowledge and celebrate the unique strengths and resources of the family, while working together. To achieve this, it is important to find new and groundbreaking ways to present and discuss the characteristics of the family. This will help to show how the family functions in relation to other people and institutions that the family interacts with (McCormick, Stricklin, Nowak & Rous, 2008).

There are also specific objectives to achieve with the use of this tool:

Ø to help families identify the resources that are currently available according to their needs.

Ø to gather their own perceptions of how their family operates and is organized around their children, as well as their worries, priorities, and resources.

Ø to provide valuable information to family members and early intervention professionals that may not be included in formal family assessment instruments (McCormick, Stricklin, Nowak & Rous, 2008).

PARTICIPANTS: Families and professionals work together to create Eco-map.

How to create an Eco-Map: watch this [video](#)

Circle Of Support

GENERAL AIM: The main goal of "Circles" is to emphasize the importance of caring for one another within families and communities. It serves as a reminder to always try to prioritize and nurture our relationships.

As subobjectives, it encourages us to recognize the persons who are significant to us and to actively foster and maintain these connections. It also urges us to reflect on the people who hold importance in our lives.

(<https://inclusion.com/path-maps-and-person-centered-planning/circles-friends-2/>)

PARTICIPANTS: Families and professionals

This exercise allows you to take a moment and reflect on the important persons in your life. This way, you may recall those you want to show gratitude to, reconnect with, or reach out to for assistance. Picture yourself in the center of the circles on the page. As you complete the circles, keep in mind that there are no correct or incorrect ways to proceed (Circles of Support. How to.cd (inclusion.com)).



FIGURE 11. EXAMPLE OF A CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

Community Awareness Activities

GENERAL AIM: Professionals' knowledge of community awareness activities will help them guide parents through the process of being active members of their community and use effective tools to communicate their own needs and concerns.

The general aim of community awareness is to make members of the specific community realize and understand a problem or an issue by shading light on a specific topic of concern within this community.

It provides the members of the community with the means needed to address an issue and make other people understand its importance.

Furthermore, it fosters change within a community by educating its members on new topics.

(<https://www.youthdoit.org/themes/awareness-raising/>)

Participants: Professionals and families



FIGURE 12. EXAMPLE OF A CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

Assessment tools



2.A HEALTHY ORGANISATIONS

1. Formula for Healthy Workplace by Hassard et al., 2017. is:

- a) employee health **and** organizational health
- b) employee health **or** organizational health
- c) employee health **and** building construction

**2. What kind of working conditions are highly correlated to burnout syndrome according to Eurofound (2018)?
More possible answers.**

- a) kind relationships
- b) stressful working conditions
- c) many holidays
- d) emotional working conditions
- e) tiring working conditions
- f) pleasant working conditions

3. Choose one of two “Team building activities” and explain how you would use it in your organisation.

Assessment tools



2.B. RESILIENT FAMILIES

1. Choose Truth or False for the statement below

Personal or family resilience is the capacity to face and deal with difficult life situations, using personal or family resources that help us or our family system to face changes and challenges in a healthy and powerful way.

T / F

2. Connect

Consistency	Focus the child's attention on something else
Positive communication	Set appropriate limits and rules and clearly explain them to a child by telling and showing the example
Positive reinforcement	Actively listen, be open and respect the child's opinion and feelings. Reflect what the child is communicating and explain the child's feelings
Redirection	Praise and acknowledge good behaviours and actions. Focus on strengths and positive behaviours.
Time in	Remove child from the situation for pre-set time after the previous warning.
Time out	Spend quality time with the child.

3. Put the steps of creating the resilient plan in correct order by putting the numbers in front of the step name

- _Identify supportive people around you
- _Execute your resilience plan
- _Identify different strategies
- _Identify sagacity
- _Describe your current difficulty
- _Identify solution-oriented behaviours
- _Evaluate your resilience plan

Assessment tools



2.C. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

1. Chose Truth or False for the statement below

The ecological approach neglects the importance of the environments that surround the family as they have no impact on the way the family and the individual function nor they affect the child's development.

T / F

2. Fill the line with the correct answer:

RAISING AWARENESS

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM THEORY

According to Network, T. A. P. (2019), _____ is the process of transferring knowledge and information on a specific topic, to educate people aiming to guide them towards specific attitudes, behaviours and beliefs.

3. Draw and explain how the Circle of Support can be used in increasing the wellbeing of the person.

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Dotmocracy | SessionLab

Leadership Pizza | SessionLab

<https://inclusion.com/path-maps-and-person-centered-planning/circles-friends-2/>

<https://www.youthdoit.org/themes/awareness-raising/> Circles of
Support.How to.cd (inclusion.com)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTjrkFneXr8>

Module 3.

Techniques for Prevention of Burnout in Early Childhood Intervention

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Balas-Baconschi, Andrea Hathazi



Introduction

Now that we have introduced you to the definition and recognition, as well as the conditions in the person's environment that can prevent burnout, it is time to learn the techniques that any person can use to reduce stress and prevent burnout.

After the completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe the psychological flexibility and understand its role in burnout prevention.
- Use assertive communication skills.
- Use different relaxation techniques of self-care.
- Use burnout prevention techniques.
- Use rational thinking and positive strategies on preventing burnout.

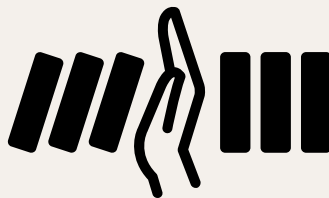
3.1. Burnout prevention techniques

Burnout prevention

Burnout is a result of an individual's unique traits interacting with their particular situational factors (Wiederhold et al., 2018). It has adverse effects on professional performance and social interactions.

Research and practice state that preventing burnout is a more effective strategy than finding an intervention strategy after an individual is already facing all the problems involved by this condition. As reflected by Maslach (2011) the personal, social, and organizational costs of burnout can be significant in terms of physical health, psychological well-being, and work performance. Therefore, taking certain actions to minimize the risk of burnout before it occurs is a more effective and logical strategy. Of course, that doesn't mean that treatment is not important when burnout symptoms are already present.

Concerning the approaches proposed by Maslach (2011) for burnout prevention, one of the best could be considered the engagement building. People who are engaged with their work face all challenges that could occur during their working years more easily and they are therefore more likely to overcome stress. Maslach and Leiter (2008) refer to the burnout-engagement continuum in which engagement is seen as one the most important objectives of any intervention used for burnout symptoms. Within this perspective strategies are based on considering which elements can increase employees' energy, resilience and working potential.



Practical Skills: Tools and Practices for individuals

Exercise 1. Brainstorming

In groups of 4 persons, identify aspects of the early intervention profession that could be used as motivators for investing energy and increasing the work potential of the professional. Write down the list you developed and present it in a creative manner in front of the group. You can find a symbol that will reflect the resources of the practitioner in early intervention in front of the burnout phenomenon.

Teacher Burnout

Wood and McCarthy (2002) have studied teacher burnout and some of the practices that can prevent this condition. These practices offer the opportunity to control some of their daily challenges. Greenberg (1999) identified self-efficacy and the capacity to maintain perspective regarding everyday events as effective ways to combat anxiety at the individual level. On the other hand, Kyriacou (2001) offered some advice that could be applied in schools in order to prevent some of the problems that occur within burnout condition:

- Views are sought from teachers regarding curriculum development or educational planning, which have a direct effect on their classrooms.
- Sufficient resources and facilities are provided to help teachers in their work.
- Clear job descriptions are provided to ensure better understanding.
- Opening communication networks between teachers and members of the administration department
- Encouraging for teachers opportunities of further professional development, raising their self-esteem and their motivation within work tasks.

Exercise 2.

In pairs, reflect upon the adaptation of each of the suggestions given for the teachers in general, to professionals working in the field of early intervention. What are the challenges you found and how can they be overcome?

Assertive Communication Techniques

Teacher stress can be defined as the imbalance between the demands a teacher must meet in the school environment and the resources available to meet these demands (Esteve, 2000; Troman & Woods, 2001). Indications of stress among teachers could involve feelings of anxiety, disappointment, irritation, decreased performance, and tense relationships both in the workplace and at one's home (Kyriacou, 2001). It has been observed by researchers (Lecompte & Dworkin, 1991; Farber, 1998; Troman & Woods, 2001) that extensive exposure to stress can lead to burnout.

In order to cope with these problems, different strategies have been proposed helping individuals to achieve better communication skills. The development of communication skills will have an impact on self-efficacy, empathy and compassion, emotional intelligence, mental well-being, assertiveness.

Communication competence means that a person has a deep understanding of suitable communication practices and the ability to adapt effectively to the surroundings in any communication situation" (Steele and Plenty, 2015). Many studies focus on the significance of assertive communication in order to improve performance and to reduce stress within working places. Assertiveness refers to the capacity to express worries regarding issues that have the potential to affect someone's safety or psychological well-being in a respectful way and share opinions with other colleagues, including those in authority (Omura et al., 2017). "Speaking up," is one of the major assertive communication techniques. This technique involves communicating specific observations, asking for clarification, or questioning the decision made by a person who has the power or the authority (Kolbe et al., 2012).

Furthermore, research has shown that assertive skills can enhance the effectiveness of communication among people (Leroy, 2020). Assertive behavior is widely addressed in diverse domains of life such as personal, social, academic, and professional ones and affects them in a positive way. Professionals may be supported in developing assertive skills by applying various techniques, such as the structured learning approach (SLA). The SLA model is classified as a learning theory and behavior modification approach. Through this technique the development and improvement of specific skills is achieved through implementation of behavior change techniques and personal reactions. (Sprafkin, Gershaw, & Goldstein, 1993). The SLA model uses four components to improve skills and behaviors. These components are to be applied in the following hierarchical order: 1. modeling, 2. role-playing, 3. performance and feedback, and 4. transfer of training and maintenance (Sprafkin et al., 1993).

Recent research suggests that the SLA offers precise standards within assertive behavior and persons who were trained showed assertiveness and a greater efficiency in their communication with others. On the other hand, the same studies reveal that individuals who have a low ability of expressing their desires will encounter more problems in their relationships at work as well as in their personal life (Alberti & Emmons, 2017).

Delivery training on Assertive communication was linked to enhanced satisfaction, increased self-esteem and minimizing stress, hence affecting positively the well-being of the person trained. In addition, mastering assertive communication skills were proven to have positive effect on conflict resolution (Meng, Sullivan, 2011).

Exercise 3. Role play.

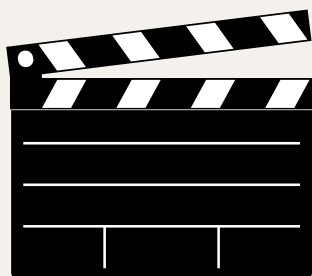
Form triads and give a role to each member of the triad: 1. professional in early intervention who has a job-related issue (ex., feels tired from home visiting activities, has a difficulty with a parent, is unhappy with the schedule etc.), 2. the head of the early intervention department, 3. observer of the interaction.

Play the role of the professional who assertively discusses with his/her superior the issue encountered at work. The observer notes the statements of the professional that reflect assertive communication of attempts to phrase in an assertive manner the issue.

After 15–20 minutes of role play, exit your roles and discuss in the triad:

1. how assertive was the communication between the professional and his/her authority figure?
2. what aspects could be improved in the communication?
3. what were the most difficult moments of the interaction?

Summarize your conclusions and bring them into the group after the role play ends.



Body awareness and relaxation techniques

Burnout is associated with physical health problems, including muscle pain, headache, sleep disorders, respiratory and gastrointestinal issues. The symptoms of burnout differ from person to person, but there are common characteristics which include negative emotions, emotional exhaustion, feeling of powerlessness, lack of motivation and reduced work performance, sleep deprivation or difficulty, lack of focus, excessive worrying, frequent feelings of anger, sadness or guilt, constant tiredness and fluctuations in appetite (Brooks et al., 2010).

Professionals experiencing burnout need to reflect on how they fit in their work environment, assess their current condition and develop a self-care plan that responds to their assumptions and needs.

Self-care can be viewed as a process of energy renewal and rebalancing in healthy ways (Coaston, 2017). It is a highly promoted concept focused on general health practices which can be implemented by a professional as preventive actions towards burnout: relaxation techniques, focused breathing, self-awareness training, physical exercise, body care and a healthy diet. Other approaches underline the importance of empowering the persons themselves to undertake control of their own well-being, by learning practices that will help them cope with their life challenges (Korhonen & Komulainen, 2021). The focus rests on supporting the person to change their state of mind and behaviors, their attitudes at work and to improve their self awareness through self-support, realistic self-assessment, positive self-talk or rational thinking (Maslach & Leiter, 2017).



Physical exercise

Physical exercise can improve health, personal mood and sleep and can give a sense of well-being. Regular exercise can have a positive impact on muscle relaxation, on relieving the tension in the body and on cutting off continuous worries and discomfort. It boosts physical and mental energy and increases well-being through the release of endorphins. By focusing on the body and how it feels while exercising, an individual can move past a stressful situation in which they feel stuck or overwhelmed. Some studies present positive results after the use of Qigong, a meditative physical exercise on posture, breathing and mind focus (Stenlund et al., 2009). Together with physical exercise, a healthy diet can be very important for keeping a positive mood and high energy levels during the day.

Deep breathing

This technique requires participants to contract the diaphragm and breathe in and out slowly (it is also known as diaphragmatic breathing). Its benefits reside in the increase of blood oxygen levels, massaging the inner organs in proximity of the abdomen and stimulation of the vagus nerve (Toussaint et al., 2021). It has been shown to increase the focus span and to decrease negative affect and cortisol levels (Ma et. al., 2017), but also to reduce anxiety (Pardede et al., 2020; Warsono, 2020).

Conscious breathing is an effective burnout prevention technique, and it helps the nervous system calm down in stressful moments, by activating the parasympathetic nervous system. The breathing exercises work well if the person is using the normal breath, without modifying it.

Exercise 4.

There are several techniques to use breathing for the purpose of relaxation. Practice individually some techniques of conscious breathing and decide which one you find most appropriate for you.

1. a slow deep breath (counting, hand on stomach to check),
2. three conscious breaths (with counting, saying In/Out while inhaling/ exhaling),
3. five count breathing (breathe in – hold – breathe out).

Guided imagery

An effective technique in stress, anxiety and burnout prevention is the Guided Imagery technique (Nguyen & Brymer, 2018; Felix et al., 2018; Sanadgol et al., 2020; Eaton & Ferrari, 2020).

When a person is guided appropriately to positive mental imagery, various sensory physical and behavioral experiences are invoked. Utilizing imagery can be incredibly beneficial in finding inner calm and connect with the inner-self. It is crucial for an individual to discover the personal imagery technique that can improve his/her emotional regulation. In a Brooks et al. (2010) study, the impact of lifestyle and mind-body-self on managing work-related stress and burnout was explored. The researchers applied the Guided Imagery and Music theory to explain how participants experienced stress and how this has been affected, when exposed to imagery, music, and art. The research concluded that music-imagery sessions have elicited positive emotions to participants and triggered memories, and associations that alleviated stress and created a sense of well-being for all participants. As a result, the participants enhanced their body awareness, improved their physical condition, minimized symptoms of anxiety and were more effective in facing their problems.

Grounding exercises are aimed at connecting individuals with the environment through perception of their body (WHO, 2020). The technique requires to slow down the breathing and other movements and connect with one's own body. By being aware of the surroundings, of one's own body and how it feels in the current position, an individual is being present in the here and now.

Grounding implies connecting to a specific place or stimuli in the surrounding environment. This can be done in several ways, using normal daily activities: conscious walking, stretching, muscle relaxation, feeling different experiences (e.g., the touch of your feet on the floor, the air on your face etc.), the 5(sight) – 4(touch) – 3(hearing) – 2(smell) – 1(taste) technique. These grounding exercises are meant to pull the attention away from a stressful situation which can become overwhelming, worrying or helpless and to focus it on body awareness and present perceptions, to the world around the person, a space which can be fully acknowledged.

Self-regulation with mindfulness

Mindful awareness (full participation to experiences lived in the present moment) leads to better physiological functioning, mental functions and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, mindfulness is a powerful instrument for burnout prevention, leading to better well-being. Cultural backgrounds offer a large variety of tools to help people be present at each moment, more focused, such as praying, mediation, yoga, Tai Chi. Mindful attention means focusing on the present moment, however Siegel (2016) views this special way of being aware as a special way of relating to oneself in a healthy way.

The practice of mindfulness can be related to everyday life (eg., mindful walking, mindful talking with somebody etc.) or it can be done in a more special way (eg., mindful meditation, praying). Thoughts, feelings, sensations, and impulses can be the focus of mindfulness, anything that happens in the present moment, inside or outside (Rothschild, 2017). There is solid evidence that mindfulness can be helpful in stress reduction and management, as well as better psychological health (less anxiety, depression, hostility).

In relationships, mindfulness represents a way towards the inner world of the other person and a good way to feel the other person (feeling felt, Siegel, 2016), which creates syntonik relationships, based on resilience.

Mindful awareness represents an intentional process of connecting to a mental state or an entity, in a different way from the one that the person regularly practises. A pause in order to become aware with the present moment can bring an inner feeling of belonging, as well as a deep way to attenuate the suffering.



Exercise 5. Reflection Exercise with imagery and body awareness

First of all, please find a quiet place for you to relax on a comfortable chair or on a couch. Allow yourself to find a sitting position that best fits your needs right now, with your body comfortably seated, and your head supported on a wall or the back of the chair. You may close your eyes for some minutes or you may remain with your eyes open if this is more appropriate for you right now.

While sitting there, in this position that your body found, allow yourself to pay attention for only a few moments to yourself, to your body. And just notice how you are at this moment. How is your body feeling? Are there any physical sensations that draw your attention? Allow yourself to feel your bodily sensations from inside out. And you can allow yourself to just pay attention to how you are at the moment, comfortably seated, how your body touches the chair, how it is positioned.

And just as you are freely floating with your attention to your bodily felt feelings, you can guide your attention towards your face, feeling it from the inside out. Caress with your attention your eyes, your nose, your mouth, your ears, your cheeks and the back of your head, your hair. Then allow your attention to flow down to your neck, chest, shoulders, paying attention to the subtle or more intense reactions and feelings that you can find there.

Your attention flows towards your arms, feeling the movements, shivers, tiny changes that your body makes to adjust to the sensation of relaxation that comes into your body as you pay attention to its needs and just notice how it feels from the inside out.

Then your attention can go to the sitting part, notice how your body touches the chair or the couch on which you sit, to the legs and feet and you notice how they are positioned and how they feel in your shoes or on the ground.

And you can be amazed by the multitude of feelings that your body feels as life pulses inside it and as you notice life pulsing inside your body your attention can slowly move to your breathing.

And you do not need to modify it, just notice how the air enters and exits your body with each inhale and exhale, with each breath in and breath out.

As you stay there, noticing, thoughts can come and go, feelings can appear and disappear and a full inner experience, rich and unique unravels as you just breathe.

As you sit there, relaxed, or just attentive, allow yourself to become curious about what comes next.

And I will invite you to bring a professional experience into your inner awareness. It can be an experience you had in the past, a more recent one, or it can be an experience you are still doing, you are in the middle of it. Maybe you will choose a challenging experience, maybe a more relaxing one, or it may be an experience of success in your professional life, whichever is most appropriate for you at the moment.

And as this experience comes into your awareness, you can ask yourself the question: How was it for you? What is the general inner feeling about this experience?

Were there any joys? Any disappointments? Any fears? Was it a fulfilling experience for you? Was it hard to do? Please just allow the feeling to come from the inside, without any effort to find it, just let these questions sit inside yourself and without any effort to answer any of them, allow yourself to reflect upon the effect that they have on you.

You can connect with the intrapersonal level of the experience, the level of your emotions, knowledge, experiences, skills in relation to the experience.

What did you learn about yourself? What was most difficult, challenging? What was easiest? What new things did you learn about yourself?

And just let these questions wander inside, without effort to paying attention to answer them, just letting them be there with you as you pass to the reflection at the interpersonal level, the group in which the experience took place, the group in which it was immersed.

What did you learn about others in the group? What about yourself in relation to others? What were the skills of your group? How did the experience change your perspective on human beings? On cooperation and group work?

And just let these questions sit there with the others, there is no need to make any effort to answer them, just let them be there as you move to the reflection on the practical level, the lessons you learned, to the applications within the experience.

How can you use what you learned in this experience for your professional life? What about your personal life? In what situation can you use what you learned? What would you recommend to others?

And now that so many reflection questions are going through your mind and are flooding your inner space, maybe some sort of discomforting feeling appeared and it is welcomed, it is just a feeling that arises naturally from the confrontation with questioning, wondering and reflecting on experiences.

It is the natural feature of our mind to select the relevant and leave out the unnecessary information and it is just what your mind will do.



But for now, I will invite you to thank your mind and body for all these rich experiences, and to leave behind you all these questions and memories about experiences and move back to your breathing, feeling how it moves your abdomen area and with each inhale and exhale you become more and more aware of what is happening around you, of the sounds in the room, of my voice, of the feelings in your body, sensations, movements and you are more and more connected to the chair you are sitting on, to the room you are in, and slowly, at their own unique pace, your eyes may open. You are fully aware, present, and ready to come back to the room we are in.



As a professional, you can choose only a part of the reflection exercise, or you can choose to focus on only one aspect: body work, guided imagery etc. Also, you can enrich the exercise with other components useful for the practice of breathing, body work, and mindful awareness.

Rational thinking and positive strategies

Constructive thinking

Evers, Tomic & Brouwers (2005) discuss constructive thinking as a concept which helps reduce stressful perceived situations, by promoting an organised and efficient behaviour. Constructive thinking can lead a person to cope with a potentially stressful situation as a challenge instead of a threat. One component of constructive thinking is to focus on trying to comprehend one-self in a positive way – which translates in an optimistic attitude in life. This further promotes self-confidence and an positive view of one's abilities. Thinking logically and considering alternatives is an approach which can prevent stressful and negative circumstances possibly leading to burnout.

Positive self-talk

This term is used to describe the individual's thoughts about oneself. The self-talk should focus on the positive aspects, on being constructive and thinking of mistakes as part of a learning process and an opportunity to learn and do better next time, acknowledging the effort that has been done (Gazelle, 2015).

Self-talk can help tolerate the daily hassles and discomfort, as well as the emotional control. Several verbal constructions that can be addressed to oneself can help the calming, the emotional regulation (e.g., breathe deeply, continue to listen, it is not an emergency etc.). In thinking and acting more positively about oneself it is important and helpful to take into account the following: finding humour in difficult situations, be open to learning new skills, develop schedules that are more feasible and realistic, thus productive, experiment with new communication approaches and styles in challenging situations to better communicate with others.

Practice of gratitude

Looking at the things that have gone well during the day, so that the person can have an optimistic outlook is an important tool in stress management. Naming three things the person is grateful for (counting one's blessings) during one day can become an effective strategy in the face of burnout.

Practice of compassion and self-compassion

Helping others can help the stress reduction, as well as the increase of the quality of relationships with others.

Self-compassion (Neff, Self-Compassion) represents the ability to acknowledge the presence of a stressful moment in a mindful way, with acceptance, acknowledging that suffering is part of life, is a shared human experience, and offering kindness, gentleness to oneself, as well as encouraging messages.

Exercise 6.

Choose one exercise of self-compassion from Neff's website: Self-Compassion Exercises by Dr. Kristin Neff: <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/>
Practice in pairs the exercise and share how you felt.

Psychological flexibility

In the heart of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy lies psychological flexibility (ACT, Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, & Roche, 2001, Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999), a form of evidence-based therapy, supported by research on the functioning of the human mind within the relational framework. ACT proved to be effective in behavioral change, a variety of psychological difficulties, including occupational distress (Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, Lillis, 2006). Psychological flexibility predicts a number of characteristics related to job efficacy and healthy functioning in the workplace (Ruiz & Odriozola-Gonzalez, 2017).

Six basic processes converge to explain psychological flexibility in ACT:

- (1) **acceptance;**
- (2) **cognitive defusion;**
- (3) **self as context** (Hayes & Lillis, 2012, McHugh & Stapleton, 2021) and more than a sum of behaviors;

(4) **values**, that are understood in many ways, on multiple perspectives, and are central in ACT. Values give direction, meaning, add purpose, are freely chosen consequences, verbally constructed, of some activity patterns. They are intrinsic to behaviors and when they impregnate behaviors they lead to positive results (Hayes, 2005). Values imply responsibility, the ability to resist temptations, while the life lived according to one's values is an important target.

(5) **committed action** referring to the engagement in actions in agreement to one's goals and directions in life, actions that can contribute to the fulfilment of one's goals, based on values (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999); and

(6) **present moment**, referring to the process of deliberately, yet flexibly, focusing on the lived experience in the here-and-now (Kabat-Zinn & Salzberg, 2004), a natural, accessible and available way to focus on the experience (Kabat-Zinn & Salzberg, 2004), leading to a special state of awareness, acceptance of everything that the person lives, as the events occur, without assessment, with kindness, curiosity and availability towards vulnerability.

Exercise 7.

In pairs, explore the components of psychological flexibility, according to the ACT model. Which of the components do you find most useful in burnout prevention? What about parental well-being? How do you find the components interacting in the case of parents of children with disabilities?

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Discussions using video case study analysis.
2. Role play using assertive communication techniques.
3. Self-assessment and reflection –based activities.
4. Exercising body relaxation techniques.
5. Practising techniques on mindfulness.
6. Planning activities to improve psychological flexibility through acceptance and commitment therapy.



Assessment tools



3. TECHNIQUES FOR PREVENTION OF BURNOUT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

1. Choose True or False for the following statements:

One of the best techniques for burnout prevention is considered the engagement building.

T - F

Within burnout, prevention strategies do not concern professionals, only parents.

T - F

People who are strongly engaged in the working tasks face more easily different challenges that may occur.

T - F

2. Put the components of the SLA (Structured Learning Approach) Model in the correct hierarchical order (from 1 to 4):

_Identify supportive people around you

_Execute your resilience plan

_Identify different strategies

_Identify sagacity

3. Fill in the missing concepts.

Within Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) psychological flexibility means: acceptance, cognitive diffusion, self as context, values, _____ and _____.

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Module 4.

Implementation of Burnout Free Techniques in Early Childhood Intervention

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Introduction

After learning about the preventive factors and techniques to prevent burnout, we need to look at how to implement these in early childhood intervention services. This is exactly what this module is about. This module will assist you in implementation of techniques in early childhood intervention services with individual parents and with parent support groups.

After the completion of this module, you will be able to:

- make assessment of family risks, resources and needs of family members
- apply person-centered practices
- recognize the first signs of burnout in daily routines and in groupwork
- implement burnout prevention strategies in daily routines and the groupwork
- respond to crises

4.A.1. Identification of Individuals' Needs, Resources and Risks & Burnout Prevention Techniques in ECI

Mirjana Marojević, Marija Naglić

The most basic division of human needs is into primary and secondary needs. Primary needs are biologically and physiologically conditioned, they are necessary for survival, and include the need for food and water, air (oxygen), constant body temperature and, in most people, to satisfy the sexual urge. Although these needs are present in all people, the ways in which they are satisfied differ from person to person and vary greatly depending on the culture in which the person grew up.

These variations, differences and ways of fulfillment, both cultural and especially individual, come to the fore even more in so-called secondary needs. Secondary needs are acquired through experience, include various psychological and social needs, are often unconscious and strongly influence the behavior of all human beings.

Four psychological needs

American psychiatrist William Glasser, in addition to the basic need for survival, lists four psychological needs:

- 1) the need for belonging, connection, love.
- 2) the need for power, importance, competence.
- 3) the need for freedom, autonomy.
- 4) the need for entertainment, learning.



Each of the listed four psychological needs is important because they are needs that everyone has, and they are not desires that people often confuse them with.

Dissatisfaction and feeling "bad" ("I'm not good") is very often the result of long-term neglect of one or more of them.

1. Belonging, connection, love

Relationships are an important part of our existence. Even before birth, in our mother's womb we were in a relationship with our mother, and later we learned about the world through relationships. What we needed most was the feeling of connection and belonging, the feeling that we represent an important part of the whole called family. This need for belonging, connection and love lasts a lifetime, and getting used to a bad relationship or alienation from people significantly impoverishes our inner life and limits us in expressing and living ourselves.

2. Power, importance, competence

Although for many the word "power" is repulsive or associated with something negative, the feeling that we can do something and have self-confidence is important to everyone. Many people tend to characterize the need for importance as something selfish and bad, however, the desire to be important to our relatives and friends and the desire to leave some important mark in life – either through ambition or through offspring – is quite natural.

Investing effort in developing one or more of your abilities also contributes to a good feeling in the long term. This is not in accordance with the "short-term view" of achieving pleasure because, "short-term", we can associate a good feeling with immediate pleasure – sleeping, walking, or watching TV. Whether it refers to developing a job or, say, learning to play the guitar, the feeling of competence is irreplaceable and is directly related to the belief that we are unique, and that self-realization is possible in the world as it is.

3. Freedom, autonomy

This need implies that we choose our own behavior, that we have a sense of freedom of thought and choice, and that we are not controlled by anyone.

While people enjoy the freedom to decide how to allocate their time, organize their life based on personal preferences, and make their own choices, this autonomy is often compromised in the workplace. Professionals often find themselves obliged to conform to the desires of their colleagues and employer, as well as obligated to fulfill the responsibilities associated with their role.

4. Fun, learning

Many of us easily forget about this need, and in fact it is essential for creating and maintaining a good feeling in experiencing ourselves and our own life. Fun is too often equated with frivolity, and learning is perceived as an obligation that ends with the end of schooling. Few would agree that the need for entertainment is one of the basic psychological needs, and it refreshes us, relieves us and gives us the energy to face serious life tasks. That's why it's important that fun (to a certain extent, of course) is always a part of life. As well as learning. Exploring the world and acquiring new knowledge keeps us curious, which in this context can also be understood as a synonym for liveliness.

The importance of the whole

To create and maintain a good feeling in the experience of oneself and one's own life, it is important to take care of all four psychological needs because they are interconnected.

By fulfilling the need for power, we stop feeling dependent or weak, which automatically helps us express our need for freedom and autonomy more easily.

Fulfilling the need for freedom and autonomy, on the other hand, opens us to fun and new experiences, and fulfilling the need for fun and learning leads us to socialize and share our new knowledge with others.

This is one way these psychological needs are related. They influence each other on many levels, intertwine and depend on each other. When one part of the whole is neglected, it affects other areas.

Examining one's own relationship to these four psychological needs helps to discover whether we have neglected some of the parts of this whole, and thus prevents the burnout of professionals and parents, and at the same time strengthens psychological resistance.



4.A.2. Tools and Practices

Today, there are various therapeutic schools and directions within which you can find simple, practical exercises and techniques that help in recognizing and meeting the stated human needs, strengthening psychological resistance and preventing parental burnout. Briefly explain this to the parents you work with.

Emphasize that the key is knowing and discussing the relationship between the physiological reactions and body sensations we feel at a certain moment with the pleasant or unpleasant emotions we feel, the thought processes that automatically take place at the moment and our reactions in a certain situation. Awareness of all aspects of ourselves gives us the opportunity to recognize which of our needs are not satisfied or not satisfied to a sufficient extent, and opens up the possibility of consciously choosing our best possible response to a given stressful situation.

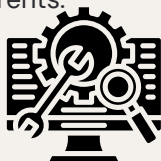
In accordance with all of the above, this is how a home visit by you as an ECI professional could look like as an example of how to actively prevent parental burnout.

STEPS:

1. Checking the mood (presence of pleasant and unpleasant emotions in the parents at a given moment) when you arrive in the family. If the parent has difficulties with this, the professional models the aforementioned behavior.

Example: You can ask the parent the question: "How do you feel today, at this moment?" Name one pleasant and one unpleasant emotion you are feeling right now. To make it easier for you, I will share with you how I feel right now." The professional models the behavior.

2. Filling in the observation list/questionnaire of satisfied psychological needs of parents.



PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED	QUESTIONS	DESCRIPTIVE (examples)	SCALE (presence of behavior 0 – 100%)
ATTACHMENT/LOVE/ BELONGING	What is the parent-child interaction like (description of parent-child relationship; distance/closeness in interaction)		
	How does a parent hold a child?		
	How does the parent talk about the child (tone of voice, words he uses, what he names the child)?		
PARENTAL COMPETENCES/POWER	Spontaneous reactions of parents to changes in the child's behavior (calming/comforting the child)		
	How do parents engage in intensive interaction with the child		
	Keeping the focus in the interaction with the child (directed awareness of parents)		
FREEDOM	The presence or absence of parents taking a spontaneous break/respice during the meeting		
	Self-initiated active involvement of parents in designing therapeutic goals for the child		
	Parents' interest: asking the ECI professional questions about the therapeutic process, activities, goals, progress...		
FUN	Is the parent playing with the child? How does he/she play with the child?		
	Assessment of parents' playfulness		
	Relaxation of parents in the game with the child		

3. Do an ECI professional's interview with the parent and make a comparison of your assessment according to the attached observation list/questionnaire with the parent's self-assessment (made according to the same list).

4. Monitoring of the process in a home visit by an ECI professional and, if necessary, the application of some of the techniques and methods of preventing parental burnout.

Relaxation techniques

Relaxation is a state of mental and physical relaxation in which we feel calm and comfortable. The state of relaxation is completely opposite to the state of psychophysical tension.

The goal of relaxation is to cope with anxiety by developing awareness and control of one's own body reactions. Therefore, it is necessary to learn to recognize physical signs to act on them and alleviate them in time using the appropriate technique. It is important for you as a professional to know that recognizing early the signs of anxiety, before they become highly stressful, further improves the results of relaxation techniques. As there are specific physical symptoms that may be present in these situations, it is advisable to choose an appropriate technique, i.e., one that will affect the change in that physical aspect.

In situations that a person considers threatening, he experiences sensory reactions of fear and anxiety. These emotions represent a strong stimulation of the organism, that is, an "alarm system" is activated in our body. It serves to ensure the protection of the organism by activating additional energy for "flight or fight" in potentially threatening situations. The work of the "alarm system" manifests itself through various physiological changes, such as: narrowing of blood vessels, i.e. an increase in blood pressure, rapid and shallow breathing, irregular or rapid heart rate, narrowing of the field of vision, dizziness, muscle tension, sweating, tremors, dry mouth, cold and numb fingers, etc., and in the long term it also leads to insomnia, pain, fatigue and exhaustion.

It is important that you, as an ECI professional, emphasize to parents that there are many relaxation techniques and that there is no universal technique, but that it is necessary to find a technique that works for that parent as an individual.

- **Relaxation by breathing**

- o **Abdominal breathing:** When you, as a professional, recognize that the parent, who is sitting across from you or next to you, is anxious, you need to know that he/she breathes rapidly and through the upper part of the body (chest), which in the absence of physical activation leads to an imbalance in the level of oxygen and CO_2 ($\text{O} > \text{CO}_2$). Abdominal breathing balances oxygen and CO_2 levels by applying slower and deeper breathing (belly). By slowing down and calmer breathing, we affect the slowing down of the heart and control other physical symptoms of anxiety. Inhaling air through the nose, we push the abdomen outward and draw air into the lower part of the lungs. We keep our hand on the abdomen during inhalation and exhalation. The best approach is that after you name the parent what you noticed at the particular moment of the home visit (his anxiety, agitation or distress), to model abdominal breathing and invite him to join you in it. For example "I notice that you are a little anxious/upset at the moment. Try to take a deep breath in through your nose and slowly exhale through your mouth. Now I will do the same so we can continue together for a few breaths and exhales. After that we will continue where we left off".

- o **Holding the breath** – you can also model the parent to breathe in through the nose for a count of 3 and drawing the air into the lower part of the lungs. The air should be held while counting to 3, and then release the breath through pursed lips as we say to ourselves "relax".

- o **Rhythmic breathing** – in this technique we breathe in through the nose while counting to 3 or 6, depending on what is more comfortable. Exhale through the nose in the same number without holding the breath in between. You should breathe like this for several minutes.



However, to effectively apply relaxation techniques, it is first necessary to properly adopt them, practicing them first in a state of balance or calmness. After practicing them, it is necessary to apply them regularly. For you as professionals, it is important to try the described techniques before trying to model them in a home visit to parents, so that as professionals we have personal experience of how these techniques work on ourselves.

a) Mindfulness techniques – basic noticing of one's own breathing, sensory stimuli coming from outside and one's own bodily sensations.

An example of a mindfulness exercise: Three-minute meditation Space to breathe

In a sitting or standing position, take an upright and dignified posture. You may close your eyes if you want. Direct your attention to your inner experiences. Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?" and accept any disturbing or uncomfortable feeling without judgment or attempt to change them.

Next, observe your thoughts. Ask yourself: "what thoughts are going through my mind?" and try to accept them.

Pay attention to any sensations in your body. Take a moment to scan your body and notice any tension or stiffness. Accept these sensations and feelings without trying to change them.

Moving on to the next step, narrow your focus in your abdomen as you breath. Notice the rising and lowering of the abdomen as the air enters and leaves your body. Focus on each breath to connect with the present moment. If your thoughts tend to wander, gently bring your attention back to your breath.

Now, expand your awareness to your entire body, your posture and facial expression as you breath. If you notice any discomfort or tension, focus your attention on their strength and imagine the breath entering and surrounding them. By accepting these sensations and by not trying to change them, you create space for exploring them more easily. When they no longer demand your attention, return to your meditation, being aware of your whole body, moment by moment.

b) Techniques Time to worry

Step one: Set aside time to worry

One of the ways to prevent parental burnout is to bring worries under control. Explain the parent that he/she can put worries under control by creating Time for Worry. Let's determine the time of the day that will be dedicated only to worries, say "Every day between 6:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. will be my time to worry."

Tell the parent that it is recommended that this time be at the same time every day and that it is always of the same duration. When a certain time of the day comes, it is allowed to think about any concern that arises. Sometimes it is easier for us to think, and sometimes it is good to write down worries (i. e. in the form of keeping a diary), but what is important is to keep the worries within that time. If a worry comes up outside of worry time, you can write it down or remember it, but wait to think about it until it's time to worry. When worry arises outside of worry time, you can say something like: „I'm worried that something bad is going to happen, but there is time to worry, and then I'll think about it, and now I'll focus on the activities I'm currently engaged in."

Step two: How to spend time worrying

When it's time to worry, make the most of it; in that time you look for possible solutions for your concern or if a solution is not possible in that time you dedicate yourself to accepting reality. Pick one concern and ask yourself what you can do about that particular problem and then create a plan of action. If that worry is out of your control, work on accepting it and letting it go.

Step three: Getting out of worry time

The most challenging part of this technique is to stop worrying after the worry time has passed. One of the ways you can make it easier to stop worry time is to reward yourself with a transitional activity after the allotted time is up. Let it be something you like to do so that they are motivated to finish worrying and get out of it: for example, call a close person, go for a walk, watch a good movie, read an article, go to a training session, go out for coffee with a friend, etc. Support the parent by suggesting what transition activities might be for him/her if he/she cannot think of them himself/herself.

Take some time as a professional to explain to parents why this tool is useful.

c) Circle of psychological needs – As an ECI professional ask parents to what extent each of the four psychological needs listed in the circle is satisfied on a scale of 0 – 100%. Talk to them about what they can do so that one of the four needs does not remain unsatisfied for a long time with one of the parents.

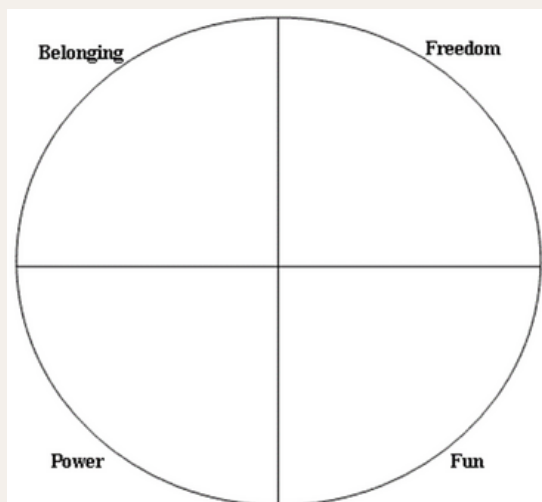


FIGURE 13. CIRCLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

d) Compassion focused therapy (CFT) techniques

Self-compassion break (long version, 13 min):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_80y_CT32c&t=6s

Self-compassion break (short version, 6 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ax8Y741rxA&t=3s>

Loving-Kindness for Ourselves CFT meditation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mILRWPdQPKs>

Softly Soothe Allow CFT meditation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmQi3VQCdCQ>

4.B.1. ECI Practices and Person-centered Practices

Maria Rosário Baetas, Sónia Fontes

1.ECI Practices: Family Centered Approach

ECI to be successful must be a local intervention, family-centered, respecting and promoting individuality, carried out by a transdisciplinary team, which aims to empower parents, considering them as the center of the decisions taken in the context of the intervention, necessary for the good development of their children.

In this context **Family-Centered Approach** is highly recommended. This approach lies in the recognition that family is the main factor for the promotion and development of the child. Respect for the family's choices and decision-making processes are encouraged and emphasis is given on the child and family competencies, and on family/professional partnership. In the family-centered model, the relationship between the family and the professionals is characterized by partnership or "power-with", a relationship that appears when decision-making is shared by the family and professional, taking into account the competencies of both, and when there is a total sharing of information (Simeonsson & Bailey, 1990, Turnbull, Turbiville & Turnbull, 2000). Thus, and according to some authors (Allen & Petr, 1996, McBride, Brotherson, Joanning, Whiddon & Demmitt, 1993, Turnbull, Turbiville & Turnbull, 2000), the family-centered model must respect three fundamental principles:

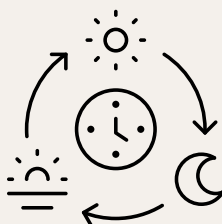
- **Consider the family as the focus of the service:** it presupposes that the concerns of any of the elements of the family can become objectives of intervention, and that the forces of any of the members must be assumed as resources of the intervention;
- **Support the family with regard to decision-making:** it is essential so that a partnership relationship can be established between the family and the professional, the only one that allows the family to feel in control of the situation, subsequently allowing its autonomy from the professional;
- **Strengthen family functioning:** this reinforcement is achieved by providing services that increase the skills and knowledge of the family, so that they can mobilize all their resources.

An ECI intervention practice based on routines is an essential component of a model centered on the family and the community, which necessarily privileges the identification of the routines, activities and events that occur in the various contexts of the child's life. It is important to understand, together with families and professionals, how the child's day-to-day life takes place, but it is equally important that they realize the relevance of using activities, which for them are trivial (bathing, feeding, changing the diaper, going to the bathroom, dressing, bedtime...).

ECI support should be provided, whenever possible, during the daily activities and routines in the natural environments where children spend most of their learning time. McWilliam (2003) developed a work instrument (Interview Based on Routines) that allows to organize and evaluate the needs of families precisely and intervene in routines.

Routines are part of the day-to-day of all of us (McWilliam, 2003). All families have their routines, however, these routines vary from individual to individual, not only with regard to the activities identified, but also with regard to the implementation process. Some follow them in an invariable and systematic way, while others, although maintaining a pattern, are more flexible in their implementation (Almeida, 2009). Hence the need, on a case-by-case basis, to make an individualized and careful assessment of the daily routines related to each child.

Routines, like people's lives, are not static, but dynamic and that, gradually (the birth of a sibling...) or abruptly (an illness, the loss of a job...) can change. A routine-based intervention should be flexible enough to adapt to all circumstances, always with the ultimate goal of providing positive interactions between the child and their caregivers, as children at early ages learn through repeated interactions in a dispersed manner over time and not in the brief periods in which the interventions take place.



Research has shown that a child is limited affected by the professional's direct intervention. In contrary, the child's development is highly affected by his/her parents and the skills, self-confidence and empowerment of these parents and caregivers can in turn be strongly affected by the professional's intervention (McWilliam, 2003).

According to Guralnick (2006), successful early intervention programs are those that identify family stressors (information needs, personal, interpersonal and family difficulties) and then design and implement a coordinated and comprehensive intervention to mitigate these factors.

2. Families as systems involving persons: Person-centered Practice

Person-centered practice constitutes a paradigm shift in the care services sector. It entails a change on focus from the professional to the person that is provided with support, empowering them to undertake responsibility for their own health (Leplege et al., 2007; Slater, 2006). The effectiveness of this approach requires focusing on person's needs and desires, instead of focusing on the institutional standards and procedures (Leplege, 2007; Morgan and Yoder, 2012). Applying a person-centered practice constitutes a shift in the mindset of the professionals, implying changes in the way they think while working together with a person, reflecting their overall attitude rather than their acts or words (2000). Sanderson et al. (2004) refers to this practice as the balance that professionals should keep between empathizing with the emotions and worries of the persons they care for, and empowering them in undertaking responsibility and ownership of their own care.

The following main attributes are characterizing a person-centered practice:

- The practice is organized around the persons cared for and their loved ones are to decide on their life goals.
- Using Person-centered planning tools aims at retrieving information and learning through shared actions. Professionals who apply these tools may produce material such as description of their meetings contracts, and financial resources to document their services, but the essential work is performed jointly with the person cared for.
- This approach can challenge prevailing behaviors and attitudes in a community that lead to exclusion, segregation shaming stereotypes and inequalities for children with disabilities and their families. Instead, it stimulates community hospitality and encourage members of the community to support people to live their lives according to their desires. Using this approach implies evoking clarity, commitment and courage to further assists the persons in defining their aspirations and develop effective ways to deal with challenges and conflicts.
- Respect for the dignity and capacities of the focus person are imperative when applying the person-centered practices.
- Person-centered Planning should also be used by professionals in order to effectively work on their own development and self-support. If treated as a simple technique it will fail to offer the anticipated benefits to the persons cared for.

It has been demonstrated by Marcenko, Herman, and Hazel (1992), Marcenko and Smith (1992), and Trivette, Dunst, and Deal (1997) that intervention programs often alienate families and even have a negative effect on them when they do not promote their full involvement in decision-making related to the services they need and the conditions under which these services will be made available to them. The authors identified three professional competencies that characterize effective helping practices: technical quality, relational practices, and participatory practices (Dunst, 1998).



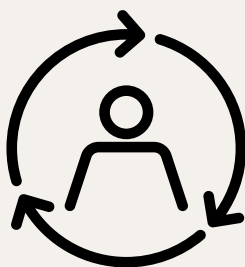
FIGURE 14 – THE THREE COMPONENTES OF EFFECTIVE SUPPORT (DUNST, 1998)

Along with this idea, the Burnout Free ECI project 'Report on the Parent's and Professionals' Needs Assessment Survey Related to Burnout', concludes that the effective approach in early childhood intervention requires more than technical skills. It implies empathic rapport, healthy relationships between family and professionals, and a deep understanding of both child and family functioning.

As already stated, in ECI the focus of the family-centered approach should be on empowering and supporting the members of a family to actively get involved in processes in order to obtain the desired resources and achieve the goals they identify. How the intervention is carried out has a great influence on the degree to which the objectives of the intervention are achieved, such as family involvement, feelings of competence, and family empowerment.

The professional should be familiar with various models of support in order to choose the one that best fits working environments. Person -Centered Planning tools, although found in various styles they all share common foundation of values or beliefs that give emphasis on training and applying personal competencies such as self-reflection, communication, and ongoing supervision, which is very useful in addressing the demanding and complex challenges ECI poses as it's one of the most complex bio-psycho-social services (Pretis, 2016 in Burnout Free ECI 'Report on the Parent's and Professionals' Needs Assessment Survey Related to Burnout'). ECI professionals should enhance relational practices, such as active listening, empathy, honesty, understanding, interest, beliefs in family competence/capabilities and participatory practices, among them: responsibility/flexibility, family involvement, collaboration, discussion of intervention options, information sharing, decisions made by the family.

As an ECI professional adopting person-centered planning practices you must develop specific traits to facilitate the use of person-centered tools and the process to collect relevant pieces of information.



According to Amado and Mc Bride (2001) a good facilitator applying person-centered planning tools should:

1. Be committed to the Person-Centered Planning Philosophy.
2. Have a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of the characteristics and values underlying Person-Centered Planning.
3. Be devoted and supportive to the Person-Centered Planning process.
4. Have a thorough understanding and knowledge of the techniques of Person-Centered Planning, including:
 - Effectively supporting the focus person.
 - Appropriately involving relevant group members.
 - Cultivating an environment that encourages creativity.
 - Possessing graphics skills.
 - Demonstrating group facilitation skills.
5. Encourage persons identified in the support circle to follow consistently the action plan resulted from the Person-Centered Planning process.

A good facilitator is:



FIGURE 15. BEING A GOOD FACILITATOR

This section sheds light to the concepts, values and practices that are common and form an integral part of all person-centered approaches, since they constitute the foundation of the process.

4.B.2. Person-centered Tools and Practices

Person-centered thinking tools are user-friendly templates that the professional can use for collecting – in a practical and effective way – information concerning a parent, a family member or even himself. This information helps understanding, self-awareness, improves communication and enhances relationship.

Person-centered thinking practices and tools will help you as professionals to support families in a more appropriate way:

- Making sure that the experiences and views of the person concerned and of the persons in his/her environment – that provide support – are taken into consideration;
- Creating conditions that allow free expression, open communication and personal exposure in a safe environment;
- Creating a constantly improved supporting relationship in which actions are decided based on previous experiences and learning.

There is a range of person-centered thinking tools that enable people to share what is important to them, how they want to be supported, what they want to change about their life, and how they communicate and make decisions. The following ones are commonly used by organizations as part of creating a person-centered culture.

One-Page Profile

The One-Page Profile incorporates all the essential information about a person onto a single page, divided into three easy-to-understand sections: what others value about me, what matters most to me, and what are the best ways to offer me support.

My One Page Profile	Your Name	
What others value about me	What matters most to me	What support I need

FIGURE 16. ONE PAGE PROFILE

This tool may be used by professionals that support the family and child allowing them to quickly grasp what truly matters to someone in order to ensure that planning of support services is appropriately structured to respond to what really matters to the person supported.

What's Working/Not working Tool

This tool allows a first a mapping of the current condition of a person's life, and most particularly what works well and what needs to be improved or changed.

It also takes into account the persons' own perspective as well as the perspectives of other persons involved in their lives.

This tool allows reflection on the current condition and starts to develop outcomes and actions to ensure that the desired changes actually occur.

What's working?	What's not working?
What needs to happen next to bring about the changes that are needed?	

FIGURE 17. WHAT'S WORKING/NOT WORKING TOOL

By incorporating the perspectives of various persons involved in one's life, this tool helps both the professional and the person involved to identify the areas of agreement and disagreement. This way the tool reveals the areas of common ground in order to plan and provide the support needed in a way that makes sense to the person of focus.

The Doughnut

This tool allows a person to reflect on the diverse roles and responsibilities and identify areas where they can be creative and take decisions. It allows also to specify the areas that go beyond their control or responsibility.



FIGURE 18. THE DOUGHNUT

By applying the Doughnut tool in particular situations, people can specify the opportunities they can be creative and innovative, while recognizing the limitations to experimenting and the things that should be done in a predefined way. Most importantly, using this tool can help persons realise what exceeds their role and falls under the responsibility of someone else, allowing best use of resources in order to create a burnout free environment.

The Circle of Friends and Ecomap Tool

This tool whether it is used by professionals to identify their own supportive environment or the circle of support of the person in focus, provides information to be used for developing a plan for improving their life conditions. Information for applying this tool is gathered by having conversations and using the relationship circle. Through this tool one can map the important people in one's life, who they know, how they know them, what the relationships are among different people in one's life and how this network of relationships can support one to achieve one's aspirations and live a meaningful life. Proper use of this tool provides insight into who is important to a person, and improves planning by helping to identify the people that should be involved in the planning process revealing the relationships that need reinforcement and support.

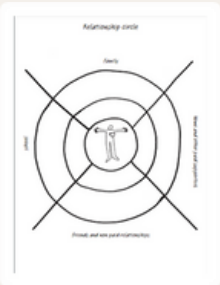


FIGURE 19. THE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS TOOL

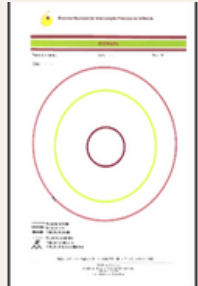


FIGURE 20. THE ECOMAP TOOL

The Parenting Index

The Parenting Index is based on worldwide research and constitutes a framework for better understanding the parenting experience.

It identifies 8 universal factors that affect positively parenting. These factors may refer to challenging financial or societal conditions, work-life imbalance, and various things that are often outside a parent's control. The Parenting Index has revealed factors that according to parents' perceptions have great impact on parenting – regardless of where the parents live in the world – by analyzing answers to three key questions:

1. All in all, would you agree that being a parent today is easy?
2. Is Parenting today full of challenges that exceed your control?.
3. All things considered, do you feel supported in your role as a parent?

Combination of data received and statistical analysis followed, explained the ranking of countries in the Parenting Index, which illustrated eight universal factors that affect the parental experience today.



They are:



FIGURE 21. THE PARENTING INDEX

- 1. Absence of pressure (internal and external),**
- 2. Financial resilience,**
- 3. Supports for working life,**
- 4. An easy baby,**
- 5. Health and wellbeing resources,**
- 6. Supportive environment,**
- 7. Shared parenting,**
- 8. Parenting Confidence.**

The above mentioned eight factors give reasons for 85% of the variance in the Index. Further research took place in order to identify more factors contributing to the variability. Examining global data from the previous five years, regarding economic, education, health, demographic variables, and household structure, specified three more factors that account for an additional 9%.

These factors are:

- a) The duration of paid maternity leave,
- b) GDP PPP per capita,
- c) The Gini coefficient, which gauges income inequality in a country.

Totally, the survey accounts for 94% of the variability in the Index around the globe. Therefore, it is obvious that the Parenting Index is a rigorous and well-grounded measure of the "ease" of parenting. To find more information about the Parenting Index, you can visit www.theparentingindex.com.

4.C.1. Implementation Practices in Working in Groups in ECI

Nikoleta Yoncheva, Virginia Vasileva, Veselina Tincheva

Understanding the parents

Working with parents is one of the greatest challenges in the social professions. High rates of burnout in social workers and parents are on the rise. Early intervention specialists trying to follow a family-centered approach can quickly and easily notice the signs of burnout and motivate parents to take care not only of children, but also of themselves. We must not forget that no one is taught to be a parent, and our task is to help parents cope with the challenges in their daily lives and to think about improving the quality of life of these families. This training material will allow you to help parents get to know themselves, take care of themselves, and not only their children, and find motivation to move forward, dealing with difficult thoughts and emotions.

Symptoms of parental burnout are more often experienced by mothers rather than fathers, while the levels of experiencing parental burnout show no correlation to the level of education of the parents (Sorkkila & Aunola, 2020).



Understanding the needs of parents

The occurrence of depressive symptoms and cases of major depressive disorder among parents of children with developmental disabilities has long been documented in science (McKinney & Peterson, 1987). Factors influencing the stress that parents experience are related to:

- child characteristics such as age, sex, type of the disability and severity of its condition.
- socio-demographic variables such as: social class, financial, and living condition and place of residence
- Resources and coping strategies, degree of acceptance of the child's diagnosis, and personal perception of stigma related to the child's condition.

Along with the weight of the responsibilities of caring for a disabled child, parents also face questions about the future when they are no longer around (Beresford, 1994). A survey of 353 UK families reported that 60% of parents who rated their own physical health as poor and 70% of parents who rated their mental health as poor attributed this directly to caring for their child with a developmental disability (Mencap, 2006). Some authors have reported changes that positively affected parents' caring for a child with disability lives in three main areas: personal growth, improved relationships with others, and changes in spiritual values (Scorgie & Sobsey, 2000). A study of parents of children with Asperger syndrome also found that these parents also experienced many positive changes in personality, realignment of life priorities and goals, more fulfilling interpersonal relationships, and spiritual growth (Pakenham et al., 2004). The lives of families raising children with developmental disabilities contain a mixture of frustrations and great satisfactions, and it is important to teach them to celebrate the high points and satisfactions. A good practice that ensures the prevention of burnout is to encourage families to keep a so-called Progress Diary. In a notebook or folder, note the small progress in the child's development, as well as their personal progress, by date. In days of despair and despondency, they can open this journal and use it as a source of recharging their strength.

Understanding the Professionals' Approach within the Early Intervention Context

Along with the right of every child to a family environment that supports his/her well-being and provides an opportunity for the full and harmonious development of his/her potential, professionals who support parents in early childhood intervention services need to treat them as active partners, as individuals who make responsible decisions about their lives and deal with their circumstances, who are 'professionals' by experience and bearers of social rights, including the right to support, because they are parents. The creation of such a partnership is a prerequisite for recognizing the experience of parents and their knowledge about themselves and their own child. The specialist does not approach from the position of the authority who knows the right way to raise the child, but admits the presence of imperfections in them and acknowledges that the parents experience constitute an important source of knowledge.

Parents of children with disabilities are much more concerned about their child's behavior and development than those of typically developing children. It turns out that these parents do everything possible to compensate for their child's difficulties. Therefore, the parenting role is more difficult for them and they are significantly more likely to indicate that they sometimes or often cannot cope with its demands. They rate the level of stress they live under as higher and their health is more affected than that of parents of typically developing children. The situation becomes particularly difficult when they are not in a good financial condition, and this becomes a circumstance that greatly threatens the child's development.



4.C.2. Tools and Practices

In what follows, we will describe guidelines for preventing and effectively dealing with parental burnout that any early childhood intervention professionals can teach the parents they work with. We also describe techniques that are suitable for application in a parent sharing group. They can be applied within group for parents.

Gymnastic breathing

Deeper breathing is activated, feeling your body in space:

1. Inhale – palms together on the chest, elbows raised;
2. Exhale – hands stretched forward, as if pushing something with the palms;
3. Inhale – arms open to the sides, as if we are about to hug someone;
4. Exhale – the hands are raised up and the palms are gathered above the head;
5. Inhale – arms open to the sides, as if we are about to hug someone;
6. Exhale – bending at the waist, the upper part of the body is relaxed, the arms hang freely;
7. Inhale – hands open to the sides, as if we are about to hug someone;
8. Exhale – palms together on the chest, elbows raised.

Technique Connecting to Resources #1

Resources are the strengths of the personality, these are the qualities, people, events, environment, nature, sports, pets, etc. which give parents security, a sense of safety, a sense of coping.

Art Therapeutic Technique **Creating a “Safe Space”** from clay.

This technique is preferably conducted by a psychologist, social worker or psychotherapist.

Material needed: Clay or play dough

Clay takes away some of the tension, clay is the earth, it can be a resource, relieves tension. The clay has a pleasant texture, plastic, pleasant to the touch, amenable to processing. It allows the expression of spontaneity and the transformation of created emotions.

Pieces of clay or play dough are distributed. Instruction is given: Draw your safe place out of the clay. After 10 minutes, the leader invites someone from the group to present their symbol, their safe place.

Questions from the facilitator:

Where is this place?

What's in this place?

How do you feel in this place?

Who can go inside? How?

Who would you let in?

Is there someone who can't come in, you don't let them in?

What are the sounds of this place?

What are the aromas of this place?

Where does it resonate in your body, in which part of the body do you feel your protected place?

What helps you feel secure?

The goal is for the person to name and find the resources within himself, around him, the person is guided to connect with this place, to find the source, the "anchor" in his body. These anchors mean that every day a person can use them, and when they have anxiety, they find that place and connect with it, it stays installed, nurtured in the person. To guide a person to what is available here and now so that they feel security and safety. From this place to have interaction in the world and so when communicating with different people and problems to feel protected. The symbol made of clay can be kept and everyone can put it in a place at home or where they can look at it and draw the sense of security from it.

Technique Connection to resources #2

Materials needed: paper, colored pencils, colored markers

Parents are given the materials and given instructions to draw a picture in which there are three elements: Ship, storm, lighthouse.

They are given 10 minutes to work. The presenter invites someone to present their drawing and asks questions:

Describe what you depicted in the drawing?

Who is on this ship?

What happens in the ship?

Which of the travelers reacts?

What helps the people on the ship to keep calm?

What happens in this storm, in your story?

Does this drawing have a title?

What is the end of the story?

What does it mean?

Where does the ship reach?

The goal is again for the parent to seek and name available resources, salvation, direction.

"Imagination is our vital and creative energy



Following you can find some techniques you can use within your ECI team so that the professionals can relieve emotional distress, be encouraged to express their thoughts, worries and feelings and avoid burnout.

In the model of groups for mutual help and prevention of professional burnout among specialists developed in the Karin Dom Foundation – Bulgaria, we have settled on an optimal model, which is described below:

The group consists of a minimum of 5, a maximum of 15 participants. The facilitator is a psychologist with additional qualifications in psychotherapy, but after an introduction any other psychologist or social worker can conduct the group. The leader relies on a colleague, a co-leader, who can be a psychologist or a social worker. The participants in the group are early childhood intervention consultants (mobile team), therapists with different profiles (psychologists, speech therapists, special educators, occupational therapists, kinesitherapists, music therapists, adaptive swimming coaches, etc.), as well as social workers. All of you work with children with special needs at an early age and with their families on a 7-hour work day (this can vary from country to country), in conditions of low pay and additional environmental stressors. The group meets once and works within 3 hours with a short break of 15 minutes. If there is an identified need or request from the participants, the group can repeat this or in another composition of participants. The purpose of the group is to relieve emotional tension from the work process, to identify personal feelings, emotions, experiences from those of our clients through distancing and release, to learn coping techniques in situations of personal and professional burnout. In this line of thought, participation in more than 1 group can have a cumulative effect and enhance the bottom line for each participant, but the individual groups are self-contained and do not follow a dynamic development plan. This leaves you with the freedom to attend or be absent from the next group session according to your personal feelings, professional commitments and momentary moods.

Whenever you decide, you are welcome to the next session and can join without feeling that you have missed something within a passed group meeting which you did not join. Participation in the group is voluntary. By joining the group, you agree to abide by the following rules: be present from the beginning to the end of the group without delays and without leaving the room for phone calls or chat, respect complete confidentiality of what is shared by other participants within the group, share their thoughts, feelings and experiences without harsh language, direct accusations and respecting the personality of all other participants, the host and the co-host.

Technique 1

We offer two puzzles (wooden boards for embedding "Segen" type) to the participants. One of the items does not fit. We tell you to find a way to nest it like all the other elements and give you 10 minutes to do it. With more participants, the game can be in groups. If necessary, we give more time so that the tension can rise.

We then ask you *how you think you are doing. Does the task have a solution? How does this task feel? Do you want to continue?* After the answers, we point out that often in our daily life, with a series of events/situations, we feel tired, desperate, we don't see a way out, we are overwhelmed, or sometimes something just doesn't happen the way we planned it or want it to happen. This brings serious tension, dissatisfaction, feeling overwhelmed, just like in the initial situations of the burnout syndrome. Can you share about everyday situations in which you felt such tension (PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY) What do you think could change our attitude to the situation?

This first technique could have a duration of 1 hour, up to 1 hour and 15 minutes. In case the group is small and the discussion / sharing starts earlier, it can be supplemented with the following bonus technique. In the event that the time is filled by technique 1, a short 15-minute break is given, after which it is switched to technique 2.

Bonus Technique: Measuring Emotions. It is a technique that allows us to discover the exact physical place of discomfort, tension, naming the emotion so that we can work with it. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bPzVaxSIQ4> Discovering our discomfort, we remember that we can only influence our perception of the situation, to set boundaries so as not to let external behavior influence us. I.e. We learn how to change our attitude towards situations. We debate on this.

Technique 2

The presenter holds 2 large jars in his hands, the co-presenter hands out 30 small colorful pieces of paper to all participants (it is important that they are not self-adhesive). The host says: "Every day we work with people who have difficulties and try to help them. Write on the slips what you gave to the users you work with as a specific activity, also write the feelings that came over you while doing it. Think about your positive feelings as well as your negative ones, your satisfaction as well as your tiredness. Also write down what you missed doing for yourself during this period because you were tired or overwhelmed (disrupted sleep, postponed meetings with friends, postponed training due to fatigue or work after hours, overslept on the weekend walk, or whatever you report such as an omission due to extreme fatigue or excessive work engagement. Let each thing be on a separate sheet." Work time – around 15 min. After each participant puts the slips in the jar, the facilitator closes the lid and shakes the jar vigorously so that the slips are mixed up. Place this jar closed on a small table in the center of the circle. Then ask you to think of all the things they are doing or have done for themselves in the past to make themselves feel better. Have everyone write down their strategies and techniques for rest and relaxation: walks, training, talking with friends, music, meditation, yoga, reading books, beauty treatments and spa, etc. "Describe also a moment when you succeeded and prioritize things so that in your work schedule there is enough time for a breath of air between meetings, and in your personal time there is a special place and time for self-care".

Everyone writes down their methods and ways and puts them in the jar. Work time – 15 min. The leader closes the jar, stirs it and places it next to the other. The two jars are a different color (glass or plastic to be transparent) or at least a different color lid – one is light, the other dark (according to the stuff it's filled with). Think of all the things they are doing or have done for themselves in the past to make themselves feel better. Have everyone write down their strategies and techniques for rest and relaxation: walks, training, talking with friends, music, meditation, yoga, reading books, beauty treatments and spa, etc. "Describe also a moment when you succeeded and prioritize things so that in your work schedule there is enough time for a breath of air between meetings, and in your personal time there is a special place and time for self-care".



The presenter comments on the total amount of slips in the two jars – where there seems to be more slips. Involves the participants in a free discussion on the topic "how much I give to others and what/how much I give to myself". Time for group discussion – around 30 min. Then he opens the first jar and reads aloud all the slips, asks you if they you each other's slips. Here, you answer only by raising their hand. More time is spent on the second jar – the presenter opens it and goes around the circle with it, so that each participant reaches into the jar and takes as many leaves as he has left, trying to make sure that these are leaves of a different color (not his own).

Participants are encouraged to read the slip and share whether or not they themselves have tried a similar technique, and if so, whether or not it worked for them. This discussion can last around 30 minutes. The goal is for the participants to leave the group with new ideas for self-help in their busy personal and professional daily lives.

Links to videos and podcasts

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1GGRV_enBG753BG753&tbm=vid&q=burnout+strategies+for+special+needs+therapists&spell=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi6i9CduMT8AhU5SfEDHdOkB00QBSgAegQIEBA&biw=1366&bih=600&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:f542e4e6,vid:ZFeZJ2hC-Rg)

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1GGRV_enBG753BG753&tbm=vid&q=burnout+strategies+for+special+needs+therapists&spell=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi6i9CduMT8AhU5SfEDHdOkB00QBSgAegQIEBA&biw=1366&bih=600&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:f542e4e6,vid:ZFeZJ2hC-Rg)

<https://www.mindtools.com/apt37nj/avoiding-burnout?from=shared-link>

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1GGRV_enBG753BG753&tbm=vid&q=burnout+strategies+for+special+needs+therapists&spell=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi6i9CduMT8AhU5SfEDHdOkB00QBSgAegQIEBA&biw=1366&bih=600&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:a4f1456d,vid:djl3LEs4giY)

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1GGRV_enBG753BG753&tbm=vid&q=burnout+strategies+for+special+needs+therapists&spell=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi6i9CduMT8AhU5SfEDHdOkB00QBSgAegQIEBA&biw=1366&bih=600&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:a4f1456d,vid:djl3LEs4giY)

<https://youtu.be/G9h5DhKkol8>

<https://youtu.be/GmJTvsBRR88>

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?q=burnout+strategies+for+special+needs+therapists&rlz=1C1GGRV_enBG753BG753&tbm=vid&ei=UUDBY7CXEYWUxc8PhPOOOA&start=10&sa=N&ved=2ahUKEwjwg6G9uMT8AhUFSvEDHYQ5DQcQ8tMDegQIDhAE&biw=1366&bih=600&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:30274d45,vid:s2loqLHt-s8)

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?q=burnout+strategies+for+special+needs+therapists&rlz=1C1GGRV_enBG753BG753&tbm=vid&ei=UUDBY7CXEYWUxc8PhPOOOA&start=10&sa=N&ved=2ahUKEwjwg6G9uMT8AhUFSvEDHYQ5DQcQ8tMDegQIDhAE&biw=1366&bih=600&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:30274d45,vid:s2loqLHt-s8)

<https://michiganvirtual.org/blog/3-strategies-for-coping-with-preventing-educator-burnout/>

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1GGRV_enBG753BG753&tbm=vid&q=burnout+strategies+for+special+needs+therapists&spell=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi6i9CduMT8AhU5SfEDHdOkB00QBSgAegQIEBA&biw=1366&bih=600&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:a6f88f1a,vid:Mlpw3Gjq4C8)

[https://www.google.com/search?](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1GGRV_enBG753BG753&tbm=vid&q=burnout+strategies+for+special+needs+therapists&spell=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi6i9CduMT8AhU5SfEDHdOkB00QBSgAegQIEBA&biw=1366&bih=600&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:a6f88f1a,vid:Mlpw3Gjq4C8)

<https://youtu.be/bG6vOhwV4AE>

Assessment tools



4.A. IDENTIFICATION OF INDIVIDUALS' NEEDS, RESOURCES AND RISK & BURNOUT PREVENTION TECHNIQUES IN ECI

1. Explain at least two out of four psychological needs described by W. Glasser

2. Match the psychological need and questions you can ask yourselves about parents' behaviours while checking how parents satisfy their psychological needs.

PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED	QUESTIONS
ATTACHMENT/LOVE/ BELONGING	Spontaneous reactions of parents to changes in the child's behavior (calming/comforting the child)
PARENTAL COMPETENCES/POWER	Parents' interest: asking the ECI professional questions about the therapeutic process, activities, goals, progress...
FREEDOM	Relaxation of parents in the game with the child
FUN	How does a parent hold a child?

3. Check if this statement is true (T) or false (F) and mark it.

When a person is anxious, he/she breathes rapidly and through the abdomen, which in the absence of physical activation leads to an imbalance in the level of oxygen and CO₂ (O>CO₂).

T / F

Assessment tools



4.B. ECI PRACTICES AND PERSON-CENTERED PRACTICES

1. Check if those statements are true (T) or false (F) and mark them.

Family-Centered Approach consider the child as the focus of the service.

T / F

An ECI intervention practice based on routines is an essential component of a model centered on the family.

T / F

Person-centered practice entails a change on focus from the professional to the person that is provided with support, empowering them to undertake responsibility for their own health.

T / F

2. List at least four traits of good ECI professional/facilitator:

3. The Doughnut is (mark one correct answer):

- a) Breathing exercise.
- b) A small fried cake of sweetened dough.
- c) The person-centered thinking tool.

Assessment tools



4.C. IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES IN WORKING IN GROUPS IN ECI

1. Complete the sentence :

Factors influencing the stress that parents experience are related to _____.

2. Put the number in front to arrange the steps of the gymnastic breathing into correct sequence

__ Inhale – palms together on the chest, elbows raised;

__ Exhale – hands stretched forward, as if pushing something with the palms;

__ Exhale – palms together on the chest, elbows raised

__ Inhale – arms open to the sides, as if we are about to hug someone;

__ Inhale – hands open to the sides, as if we are about to hug someone

__ Exhale – the hands are raised up and the palms are gathered above the head;

__ Exhale – bending at the waist, the upper part of the body is relaxed, the arms hang freely

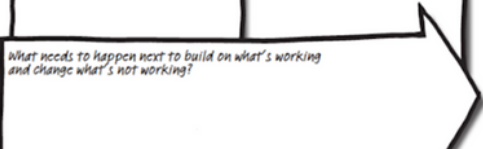
__ Inhale – arms open to the sides, as if we are about to hug someone

3. Describe one more technique that is suitable for application in a parent sharing group

APPENDIX 1: ONE PAGE PROFILE

My One Page Profile	Your Name	
	Age Occupation	
What people appreciate about me	What is important to me	How to support me

APPENDIX 2: 'WHAT'S WORKING AND WHAT'S NOT WORKING' TOOL SHEET

 <i>What's working?</i>	 <i>What's not working?</i>
<i>the person</i>	
<i>family</i>	
<i>staff</i>	
 <i>What needs to happen next to build on what's working and change what's not working?</i>	

APPENDIX 3: THE 'ECI PROFESSIONAL PERSON-CENTERED PRACTICE ASSUMPTIONS SHEET'

1. Have I met with the family?						
2. Do I consider the child in the family context?						
3. Do I maintain regular communication in both directions with the family?						
4. Do I respect and value the child as a person?						
5. Do I respect and value the family?						
6. Do I think the family has the strength to support their child?						
7. Have I identified parenting skills and resources?						
8. Do I always act as honestly as possible?						
9. Do I offer them options regarding what can be done?						
10. Do I hear?						
11. Have I identified family objectives?						
12. Do I arrange common solutions with them?						
13. Do I adapt to the joint conclusions?						
14. I suppose they have some responsibility for what I do for their child?						
15. I suppose I have to earn their respect?						
16. I am assuming that we might disagree about what is important?						
17. I think they can change?						
18. Have I tried to identify parents' ideas about their child?						

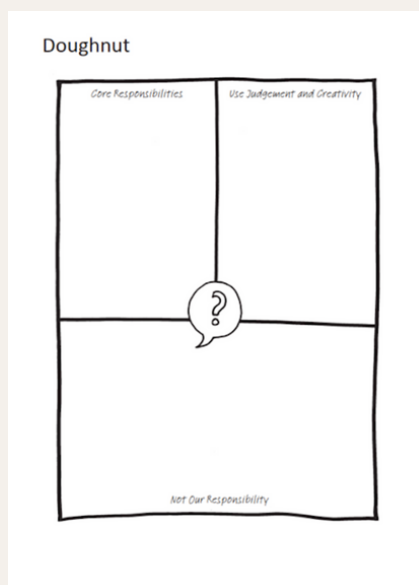
APPENDIX 4: THE 'PARENTING INDEX SHEET' FOR IDENTIFYING OWN'S BURNOUT PERSONAL AND FAMILIAR RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The Parenting Index provides a framework for understanding the experience of parenting in living in various areas of the world. The Parenting Index identifies eight universal factors that mostly affect the ease of parenting today. Parents can use this table to characterize and reflect upon their own familiar contexts in face of burnout protective and risks factors they have and/or need to enable.

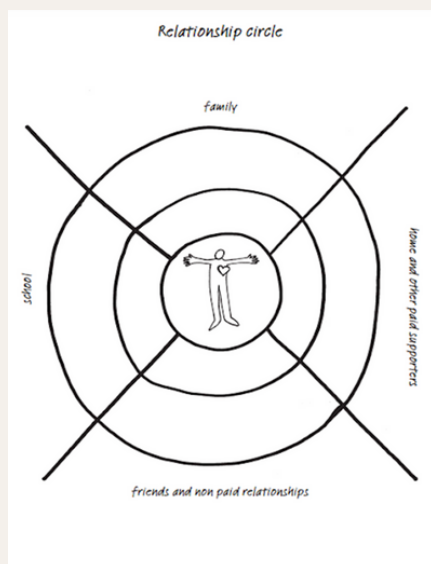
Instructions: In the first line put your name. Start with the first factor in the first column and put a 1 in the corresponding box if your answer is "yes", meaning I have this parenting index factor tackled, and a 0 if your answer is "no", meaning I don't have this parenting index factor tackled yet. Discuss and share, as much as you want, the results.

PARENTING INDEX FACTORS	 Absence of Pressure  Financial Resilience  Supports for Working Life  Easy Baby				 Health and Wellbeing Resources  Supportive Environment  Shared Parenting  Parenting Confidence			
	Absence of Pressure (internal and external)	Financial Resilience	Supports for Working Life	An Easy Baby	Health and Wellbeing Resources	Supportive Environment	Shared Parenting	Parenting Confidence
Comments:								

APPENDIX 5: THE DOUGHNUT



APPENDIX 6: THE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS TOOL SHEET



APPENDIX 7: THE ECOMAP

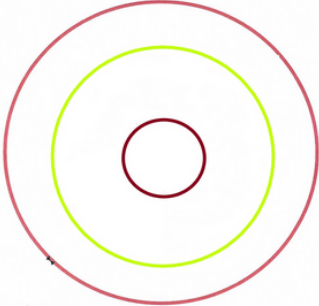


Sistema Nacional de Intervenção Precoce na Infância

ECOMAPA

Nome da criança: _____ D.N.: / / _____ Proc. N.º _____

Data: / / _____



 Rotações normais

 Rotações fortes

 Rotações horizontais

 Rotações stressantes

 Rotações conflituosas

 Rotações bloqueadas ou distantes

Adaptado de Kuvshinov, M. J., Kuvshinov, R. K., 1997 por Teresa Aires Marques 2005

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ANNEX

Assessment tools – answers

1. PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

1. Fill the line with the correct answer:

BURN-OUT

PROFESSIONAL STRESS

According to Montero-Marín et al. (2014) _____ refers to a chronic occupational stress, to a progressive condition resulting from ineffective coping strategies to deal with work-related stress situations.

2. Burnout mostly affects those who (more possible answers):

- a) interact with people such as medical personnel, social workers, therapists, teachers, educators, lawyers and civil servants
- b) working alone in laboratories
- c) have very low responsibilities
- d) help and support people who may also have severe needs

3. Chose Truth or False for the statement below:

Professionals don't have to provide emotional support to families who are going through a difficult and sometimes unexpected journey when they discover that their child has a disability.

T / **F**

Assessment tools – answers

2.A HEALTHY ORGANISATIONS

1. Formula for Healthy Workplace by Hassard et al., 2017. is:

- a) employee health and organizational health**
- b) employee health or organizational health
- c) employee health and building construction

**2. What kind of working conditions are highly correlated to burnout syndrome according to Eurofound (2018)?
More possible answers.**

- a) kind relationships
- b) stressful working conditions**
- c) many holidays
- d) emotional working conditions**
- e) tiring working conditions**
- f) pleasant working conditions

3. Choose one of two “Team building activities” and explain how you would use it in your organisation.

Assessment tools – answers

2.B. RESILIENT FAMILIES

1. Choose Truth or False for the statement below

Personal or family resilience is the capacity to face and deal with difficult life situations, using personal or family resources that help us or our family system to face changes and challenges in a healthy and powerful way.

T ☒ F

2. Connect

Consistency	Focus the child's attention on something else
Positive communication	Set appropriate limits and rules and clearly explain them to a child by telling and showing the example
Positive reinforcement	Actively listen, be open and respect the child's opinion and feelings. Reflect what the child is communicating and explain the child's feelings
Redirection	Praise and acknowledge good behaviours and actions. Focus on strengths and positive behaviours.
Time in	Remove child from the situation for pre-set time after the previous warning.
Time out	Spend quality time with the child.

3. Put the steps of creating the resilient plan in correct order by putting the numbers in front of the step name

- 2 Identify supportive people around you
- 6 Execute your resilience plan
- 3 Identify different strategies
- 4 Identify sagacity
- 1 Describe your current difficulty
- 5 Identify solution-oriented behaviours
- 7 Evaluate your resilience plan

Assessment tools – answers

2.C. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

1. Chose Truth or False for the statement below

The ecological approach neglects the importance of the environments that surround the family as they have no impact on the way the family and the individual function nor they affect the child's development.

T / **F**

2. Fill the line with the correct answer:

RAISING AWARENESS

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM THEORY

According to Network, T. A. P. (2019), _____ is the process of transferring knowledge and information on a specific topic, to educate people aiming to guide them towards specific attitudes, behaviours and beliefs.

3. Draw and explain how the Circle of Support can be used in increasing the wellbeing of the person.

Assessment tools – answers

3. TECHNIQUES FOR PREVENTION OF BURNOUT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

1. Choose True or False for the following statements:

One of the best techniques for burnout prevention is considered the engagement building.

☒ T – ☐ F

Within burnout, prevention strategies do not concern professionals, only parents.

☐ T – ☒ F

People who are strongly engaged in the working tasks face more easily different challenges that may occur.

☒ T – ☐ F

2. Put the components of the SLA (Structured Learning Approach) Model in the correct hierarchical order (from 1 to 4):

2 role-playing

3 performance and feedback

1 modeling

4 transfer of training and maintenance

3. Fill in the missing concepts.

Within Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) psychological flexibility means: acceptance, cognitive diffusion, self as context, values, **committed action** and **present moment**.

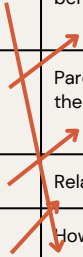
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FREEDOM	Relaxation of parents in the game with the child
FUN	How does a parent hold a child?



3. Check if this statement is true (T) or false (F) and mark it.

When a person is anxious, he/she breathes rapidly and through the abdomen, which in the absence of physical activation leads to an imbalance in the level of oxygen and CO₂ (O>CO₂).

T / **(F)**

Assessment tools – answers

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Family-Centered Approach consider the child as the focus of the service.

T / ☒ F

An ECI intervention practice based on routines is an essential component of a model centered on the family.

☒ T / F

Person-centered practice entails a change on focus from the professional to the person that is provided with support, empowering them to undertake responsibility for their own health.

☒ T / F

2. List at least four traits of good ECI professional/facilitator:

3. The Doughnut is (mark one correct answer):

a) Breathing exercise.

b) A small fried cake of sweetened dough.

c) The person-centered thinking tool.

Assessment tools – answers

4.C. IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES IN WORKING IN GROUPS IN ECI

1. Complete the sentence :

Factors influencing the stress that parents experience are related to **child characteristics, socio-demographic variables, resources and coping strategies, degree of acceptance of the child's diagnosis, and personal perception of stigma related to the child's condition...**

2. Put the number in front to arrange the steps of the gymnastic breathing into correct sequence

- 1 Inhale – palms together on the chest, elbows raised;
- 2 Exhale – hands stretched forward, as if pushing something with the palms;
- 8 Exhale – palms together on the chest, elbows raised
- 3 Inhale – arms open to the sides, as if we are about to hug someone;
- 5 Inhale – hands open to the sides, as if we are about to hug someone
- 4 Exhale – the hands are raised up and the palms are gathered above the head;
- 6 Exhale – bending at the waist, the upper part of the body is relaxed, the arms hang freely
- 7 Inhale – arms open to the sides, as if we are about to hug someone

3. Describe one more technique that is suitable for application in a parent sharing group