

ICEB-2: Emotional Basic Knowledge Interview

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Summary. In the last few decades, there has been an increased interest in the implementation of projects geared toward affective education in schools, aimed at improving social and emotional skills in children of different ages. The lack of measuring instruments in this area had stimulated the development of the Emotional Basic Knowledge Interview (Russo et al., 2009). In this study we present a new version of the same tool, ICEB-2, that includes the assessment of coping strategies, both cognitive and behavioral, spontaneously used by the child to manage his/her emotions. As in the first version, the purpose was to have an easy administration tool, less invasive as possible, free from clinical meaning, aimed at qualitative and quantitative measurement of spontaneous knowledge of children in regard to their emotional experience.

Keywords: ICEB-2, Rational-emotive Education, coping strategies, emotional regulation, affective competence.

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Received: 25/11/2015 – Revision: 15/12/2015 – Accepted: 31/12/2015

Introduction

In the last several years there has been an increased interest about the concept of *emotive competence*, such as the set of skills necessary for an individual's self-efficacy in social transactions aroused by emotion, allowing one to express, recognize, understand and regulate the emotional state of self and others (Denham, 1998; Saarni, 1999). This competence is inferred from the ability to be aware of one's own emotions, to express them through verbal or nonverbal communication channels, to use an increasingly vast emotional vocabulary, to recognizing others' expressions, to respond empathetically and appropriately to other people's emotions, and adopt appropriate strategies to regulate mental states that characterize daily life.

During cognitive development, through personal experiences and relationship with peers, a child learns to understand the causes and nature of emotions, increasing his/her ability to cope with them. Thompson (1994) defines this process as *emotional regulation*, the set of intrinsic and extrinsic processes involved in monitoring, evaluating and modifying emotional reactions, focusing on the intensity and duration.

From an evolutionary view, *emotional regulation*, in the first phases, involves both the child and the caregiver, providing a subsequent basis for processes based on mutual regulation, but especially on the self-regulation of the child's emotions. In this way, s/he plays an active role in his/her life experience and in the construction of his reality.

The child's processes of socialization and personal characteristics work together in the development of emotional regulation: infant temperament can influence practices adopted by parents and these influence the modes of the child's self-regulation. Both dimensions play a role in the social skills that the child acquires which have an impact on the adaptation processes derived (Eisenberg, 2004). For example, some studies identify different educational parenting styles correlated to the emotional characteristics of their children (Gottman & De Claire, 1997), they outline a profile of the emotional coach parent, who stimulates children in their ability to concentrate and calm down more quickly overcoming crisis more easily in difficult situations.

Another important environment for education and socialization in early childhood is school. This also plays an essential function in the emotional and cognitive growth of the child. In this regard paths of emotional training based on the theory of Rational-Emotive Education have been developed (Di Pietro, 1992; Knaus, 1974). They include psycho-educational procedures finalized to promote the emotional wellbeing of a

child and/or adolescent directing him/her toward the development of balanced and functional emotions.

This methodology includes strategies aimed to:

- Increase pleasant emotional states in frequency and intensity,
- Facilitate acceptance of self and others,
- Overcome unpleasant moods,
- Increase tolerance of frustration,
- Facilitate ability to self-regulate behavior,
- Stimulate cooperation instead of competition.

This program can be realized through structured lesson, including simulation games, group discussions and role-playing, integrating practical contents of Rational-Emotive Education in an articulated curriculum. The availability of assessment tools aimed to evaluate the impact in the medium and long-term of emotional, education interventions is however still lacking. The need of measuring tools stimulated the development of ICEB (Emotional Basic Knowledge Interview) (Russo et al., 2009).

The ICEB was developed from the need to have an easy tool, less invasive as possible, free from clinical meaning, aimed at qualitative and quantitative measurement of the children's spontaneous knowledge of their emotional experience. Since the first version of ICEB did not include an analysis of coping strategies implemented by the child to manage emotions, a new version of the interview has been developed, ICEB-2 (Emotional Basic Knowledge Interview-2), accompanied by this section, in order to identify coping strategies spontaneously adopted by the child to manage his/her emotions.

Coping strategies were classified based on the model outlined by Parkinson and Totterdell (1999), revised later in the Italian version by Del Giudice and Colle (2007). This model has two different levels of analysis: on one side it differentiates specifically individual strategies, on the other it allows us to group them according to global dimensions. The authors suggest that people use a wide variety of consciously accessible and spontaneous strategies to reduce unpleasant emotions, distinguishing different dimensions and levels: first of all, two basic dimensions, *means of implementation* (cognitive vs. behavioral) and *strategic plans* (engagement vs. diversion), followed by other sublevels.

Coping strategies employing the engagement dimension can be realized at the cognitive level, through reevaluation and/or problem solving, or at the behavioral level, through seeking help and emotional comfort in the other.

The dimension of the cognitive level is achieved through the avoidance of negative thinking and through the shift towards pleasant and relaxing thoughts, while at the behavioral level it is achieved through the avoidance of problematic situations and the performance of demanding activities.

The version used in the model is shown table 1 and includes four clusters in which different strategies of emotional self-regulation are grouped.

TABLE 1
Simplified and modified scheme of Parkinson and Totterdell model (1999)

STRATEGIES	COGNITIVE	BEHAVIOURAL
<u>Diversion</u>	Avoiding thinking about the problem Thinking about something pleasant Thinking relaxing thoughts Thinking about something that requires attention	Avoiding problematic situation Doing something pleasant Doing something relaxing Performing a demanding activity
<u>Engagement</u>	Reappraising Problem-solving	Venting feelings Seeking help or comfort from other Taking action to solve problem

Emotional Basic Knowledge Interview-2: Structure of the Interview

ICEB-2 consists of 32 questions, structured in two sections, section A and section B, derived from a series of scientifically elaborated reflections on the configuration of emotional states.

In particular:

- a) A set of fundamental emotions considered innate and universal were examined (Ekman, 1973; Fehr & Russel, 1984; Izard, 1977; Plutchick, 1980), selected on the basis of a sharing among different cultures and considered the most known among social-

communicative level development reference range, such as: fear, anger, sadness and happiness.

- b) Answers related to knowledge about the emotional structure are categorized according to considered fundamental aspects of cognitive theories of emotions (Arnold, 1960; Lazarus 1982), such as:
 - a. Physiological aspects (answers related to reactions of the Sympathetic Nervous System);
 - b. Expressive aspects (facial mimic, gestures and posture);
 - c. Cognitive aspects (verbalization of thoughts).
- c) Both knowledge on recognition of self and others and relative expressions were considered.
- d) Different coping strategies, spontaneously implemented, have been explored to manage emotional state.

The interview structure is the following:

- A. General questions (examples)
 - *“What is for you an emotion?”*
 - *“What emotions do you know?”*
 - *“Please describe an emotional episode”.*
- B. Specific questions (examples)
 - *“Please describe a fearful moment you had”*
 - *“How do you recognize fear in you?”*
 - *“In what part of your body do you feel afraid?”*
 - *“Can you make for me the face of someone experiencing fear?”*
 - *“How do you react when you are afraid?”.*

For each fundamental emotion examined, the following parameters are assessed: spontaneous narrative ability to detect signals, expression skills in mimic level and recognition skills.

According to the pedagogical model focused on the ability to access the individual’s knowledge system through narration and language (Bruner, 1996; Dettori, 2007; Shank, 2000), the ICEB-2 focuses on narratives of emotional events, trying to use non-invasive methods of assessing, which allows:

- the child to speak freely of himself/herself, using his/her ability to talk about a specific theme such as the own emotions;
- the interviewer to grab elements on which the child “builds” his/her emotional events, and to study how the narration of emotion events changes due to the Rational-Emotive Education program, integrating new meanings and information in the emotional sphere.

Emotional Basic Knowledge Interview-2: Interview Decoding

It is possible to decode the interview in two modes:

- a. Quantitative: giving a score for any element relating to emotional processes. For this assessment a scoring sheet was structured with a relative legend for compilation, followed by a graphic summary. The aim of this process is to get accessible information about spontaneous knowledge learned by the child, such as: emotional denomination, emotional site body, expressive ability and emotional recognition of self and others.
- b. Qualitative: assessing various examined parameters, such as narrative and creative skills, ecc. This interview offers teachers various educational ideas, such as: the accuracy of information, narrative skills, the structure of speech, ecc.

By applying the interview before and after the implementation of emotional education program it will be possible to assess the impact that this learning program has had on the child in terms of increased knowledge of essential aspects of emotional structure (Russo et al., 2009).

Method

The aim of this study was to investigate the spontaneous coping strategies and emotional regulation used by a sample of school-aged children. Particularly, fundamental emotions such as fear, anger, sadness and happiness were examined, with the aim of assessing how the child understands what they mean, the body site where emotions are perceived, the recognition of those emotions in himself/herself and others as they occur, but above all the modes used to react to these emotions.

Sample and Procedures

The present research was conducted on a total sample of 232 children, males and females, attending elementary school in the south of Italy, shared as follows:

- n.28 of kindergarten;
- n.43 first class of elementary school;
- n.30 second class of elementary school;
- n.42 third class of elementary school;
- n.40 fourth class of elementary school;
- n.49 fifth class of elementary school.

The interview was administered in each class during a collective session. Each child completed the interview sitting at the own school desk. There were no time limits and no other explanations except of those required by the interview questions.

All participants were speakers of Italian, selected so that the sample was balanced in reference to demographic variables (gender, age, and schooling). All subjects participated voluntarily, unaware of the research hypothesis.

Data Analysis

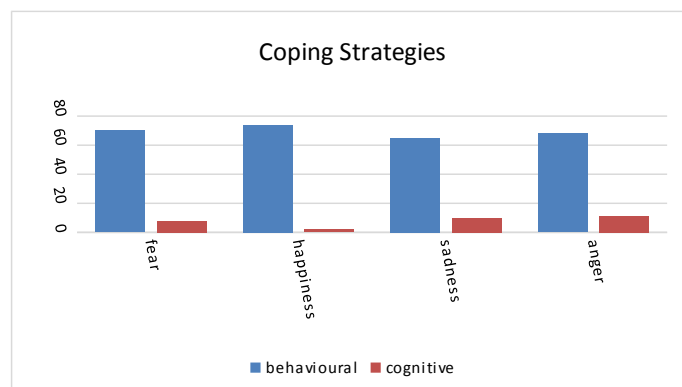
The data analysis was conducted in the descriptive mode, noting medium distribution and frequency of answers given in different categories examined. For each emotion (fear, sadness, happiness and anger) the answers analyzed were related to coping strategies and emotional regulation reported by the sample, in reference to Parkinson and Totterdell model (1999).

Results

Data showed that behavioral coping strategies are the most frequently used by the child. In general, emerging evidence shows that children above four years old are able to use strategies to change the situation mitigating a negative emotion through a next positive event, providing a direct relationship between activity and change in emotion. This may be due to a naivety of cognitive and mentalistic strategies (Harris, 1989; Matarazzo & Zammuner, 2009; Pons, Harris & De Rosnay, 2004).

With the increase of age, the child will learn to adopt cognitive strategies, also due to a greater development of the mentalizing ability (Matarazzo & Zammuner, 2009; Zammuner & Cigala, 2001).

PICTURE 1
Coping strategies about emotions



Going into detail on each emotion, in relation to coping strategies used by individual, the following trends are evident:

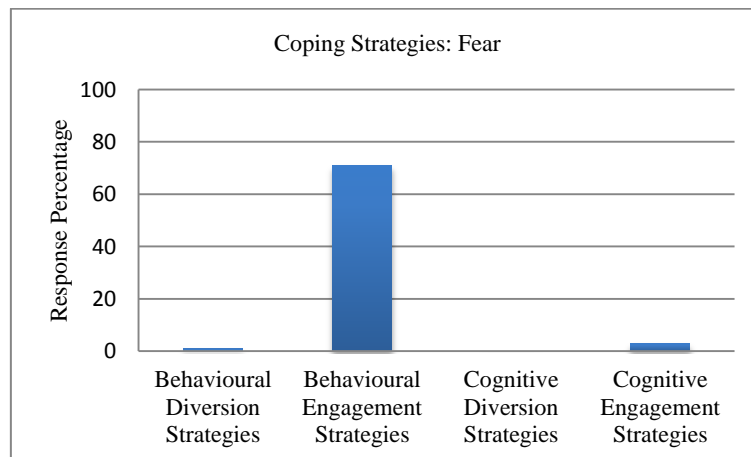
Fear

The question asked children “*How do you react when you are afraid?*” and it shows:

- Prevalence in using behavioral engagement strategies (“*I cry*”, “*I shiver*”, “*I scream*”) and seeking help or emotional comfort (“*I go to my mum*”);
- It follows the use of behavioral diversion strategies, such as avoidance or distraction (“*I run away*”, “*I go to bed*”, “*I hide myself*”);
- The answers related to the cognitive strategies are in the minority, including engagement (“*I think*”) and diversion (“*I think of anything else*”, “*I don’t think about it*”) strategies.

PICTURE 2

Coping strategies about fear



Happiness

The question asked children “*How do you react when you are happy?*” and it shows:

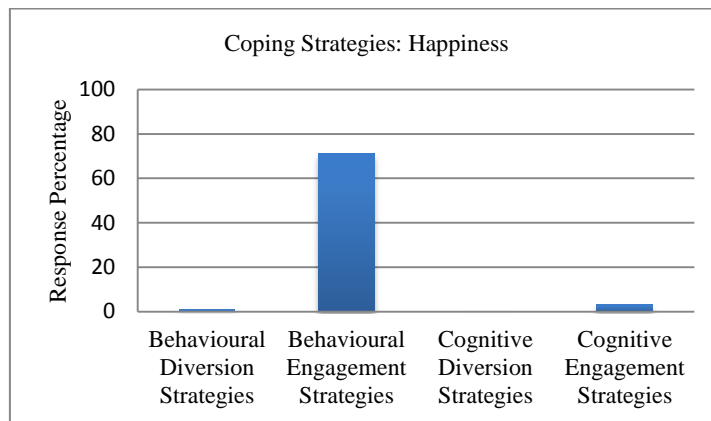
- The most frequent answer is almost exclusively inherent in behavioral engagement strategies, such as vent feelings (“*I*

laugh”, “*I scream*”, “*I jump*”) and seeking help or emotional comfort in other people (“*I hug my mum*”, “*I go to my friend’s house*”);

- Later it is possible to observe a reduced percentage of cognitive engagement strategies;
- The almost total absence of cognitive and behavioral diversion strategies.

PICTURE 3

Coping strategies about happiness



Sadness

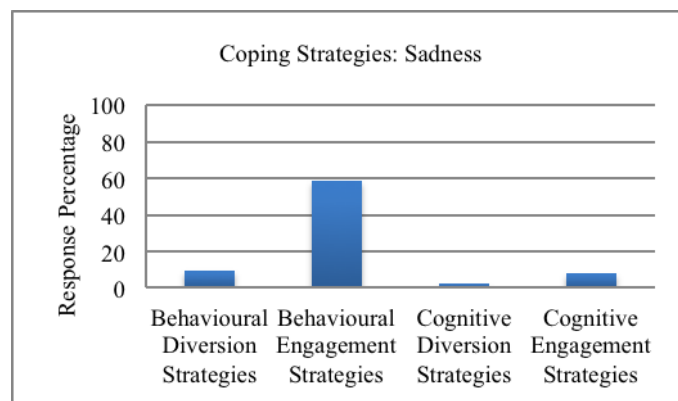
The proposed question “How do you react when you are sad?” and it shows:

- The prevailing answers were relating to behavioral engagement strategies, such as vent feelings (“*I cry*”, “*I punch*”) and seeking help or emotional comfort (“*my mum comforts me*”, “*I ask my parents’ help*”, “*I speak with my friends*”);

- It is possible to observe then a reduced percentage of behavioral diversion strategies, where there is distraction (“*I watch TV*”) or avoidance (“*I want to stay alone*”, “*I don’t want to speak*”, “*I go to my room*”).
- Finally, it is possible to observe how children rarely use cognitive strategies, when experiencing this emotion, more precisely they rely on engagement and on diversion strategies.

PICTURE 4

Coping strategies about sadness

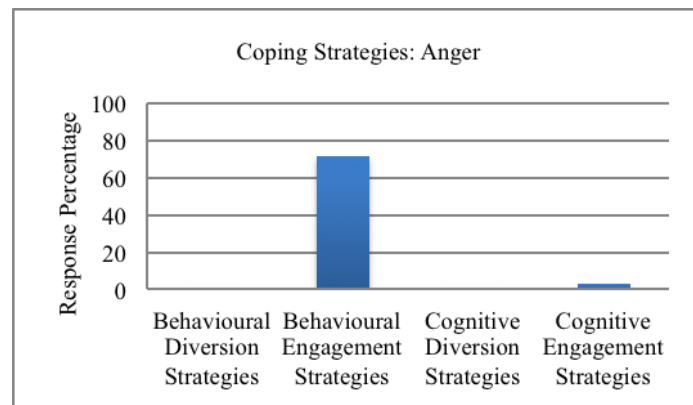


Anger

To the question asked “How do you react when you are angry?”:

- Children respond using more behavioral engagement strategies, such as venting feeling (“*I scream*”, “*I cry*”, “*I slam the door*”, “*I throw everything on the floor*”) and requiring emotional comfort (“*I speak with my mum about what happened*”, “*I speak with my dad about what happened*”);
- It follows the use of cognitive engagement (“*I’m nervous*”), doing something pleasant (“*I ride my bike*”, “*I play*”), or avoiding problematic situation (“*I go in my room*”, “*I want to stay alone*”, “*I don’t want to speak*”).

PICTURE 5
Coping strategies about anger



From this analysis of response categories for each emotion examined, there was a clear trend to behavioral engagement, oriented to problem-solving and emotional supportive search mode. As a second preferred strategy, behavioral diversion emerged, that instead includes strategies allowing to avoid problematic situation (avoidance) or shift attention away from felt emotion (distraction).

Conclusion

Lately there has been an increase of interest in emotional education curricula in schools and other educational settings.

The aim of these programs is to stimulate learning experiences on the recognition and identification of emotions through the expansion of emotional vocabulary, helping to understand which emotions emerge in front of an uncomfortable situation and what kind of a response may result more functional. Finally, affective education aims to help the child take action on those mental mechanisms that underlie dysfunctional emotions, by operating a transformation in his/her own mind, changing something about his/her own internal dialogue through a cognitive restructuring of

negative content of thoughts, replacing them with a reading of the situation more consistent with reality (Tuffanelli, 1999).

Educating the child to change his irrational thoughts, it will enhance that aspect of intelligence that enable to maximizing of positive emotions, while minimizing the impact of unpleasant emotions on the child's life (Di Pietro, 2014b).

In regard to spontaneous coping skills used by children, the data relating to administration confirm:

- The prevalence of actions rather than cognitive strategies. The use of cognitive strategies develops with the increase of meta-emotive ability, including self-regulation processes as children, becoming aware that there is an emotion, interrogate themselves about its nature, causes and how to express it (Pons & Doudin, 2000). These are meta-cognitive functions that allow one to understand mental phenomena and operate on them (Carcione, Falcone, Magnolfi, & Manaresi, 1997), such as self-reflection, understanding other minds, decentralization and mastery ability (Ganucci et al., 2013).
- The need of emotional education programs that stimulate a child to access his/her internal speech, that is the mechanism by which the individual process his/her personal view of events, commenting internally every experience and considering internal and external reality. Allowing the child to become more and more aware of the specific content of his/her internal dialogue, is the first step to achieve a change in the way s/he reacts to events (Di Pietro, 2014a).

A further development of this instrument will be a statistical validation that will provide normative data for individual assessment and comparison between groups.

The criterion of “integrated narrative”, that is the narrative analysis of an emotional event that will appear more integrated with emotional and behavioral cognitive elements, suggests that emotional learning programs will allow a child to learn a more functional way of coping as a guarantee of his/her personal and social well-being. “The experience is made up entirely when it is told” (Jedlowski, 2009).

Notes

Paper presented at the CIRF Conference “Le emozioni in adolescenza. Un mondo di colori, chiaroscuri e ombre.” [Emotions in adolescence. A world of colors, chiaroscuro and shadows.], Padua, November 21th 2015.

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Appendix

Emotional Base Knowledge Interview-2- ICEB-2

Useful Information

My name is _____

I'm _____ grade.

I'm _____ years old.

_____ is the name of the person interviewing me and he/she is a _____.

It's _____ on _____ the _____ of _____ at _____.

A- General Section

What is for you an emotion?

What emotions do you know?

Fear		Happiness		Sadness		Anger		TOT Yes (D)
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	

Please describe an emotional episode.

In what part of your body do you feel an emotion?

B- Emotions

Fear

Please describe a fearful moment you had.

How do you recognize fear in you?

Thoughts (P)	Sensation (S)	Behavior (Co)

In what part of your body do you feel afraid?

Referred Site (Se)	Unreferred Site

Can you make for me the face of someone experiencing fear?

Realized (A)	Emerging	Not realized
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How do you recognize fear in a person?

Physical Element (EF)	Behavior (Com)
--------------------------	-------------------

Can you draw for me the face of someone experiencing fear?

Yes

No



How do you react when you are afraid?

Positive Cognitive Strategies	Negative Cognitive Strategies	Positive Behavioral Strategies	Negative Behavioral Strategies
(StCog+)	(StCog-)	(StCom+)	(StCom-)

Happiness

Please describe a happy moment you had.

How do you recognize happiness in you?

Thoughts (P)	Sensations (S)	Behavior (Co)

In what part of your body do you feel happy?

Referred Site (Se)	Unreferred Site
--------------------	-----------------

Can you make for me the face of someone experiencing happiness?

Realized (A)	Emerging	Not Realized
-----------------	----------	--------------

How do you recognize happiness in a person?

Physical Element (EF)	Behavior (Com)
--------------------------	-------------------

Can you draw for me the face of someone experiencing happiness? (Di)

Yes

No

How do you react when you are happy?

Positive Cognitive Strategies	Negative Cognitive Strategies	Positive Behavioral Strategies	Negative Behavioral Strategies
(StCog+)	(StCog-)	(StCom+)	(StCom-)

Sadness

Please describe a sad moment you had.

How do you recognize sadness in you?

Thoughts (P)	Sensation (S)	Behavior (Co)

In what part of your body do you feel sad?

Referred Site (Se)	Unreferred Site
--------------------	-----------------

Can you make for me the face of someone experiencing sadness?

Realized (A)	Emerging	Not realized
-----------------	----------	--------------

How do you recognize sadness in a person?

Physical Element (EF)	Behavior (Com)
--------------------------	-------------------

Can you draw for me the face of someone experiencing sadness? (Di)

Yes

No



How do you react when you are sad?

Positive Cognitive Strategies	Negative Cognitive Strategies	Positive Behavioral Strategies	Negative Behavioral Strategies
(StCog+)	(StCog-)	(StCom+)	(StCom-)

Anger

Please describe an angry moment you had.

How do you recognize anger in you?

Thoughts (P)	Sensations (S)	Behavior (Co)

In what part of your body do you feel angry?

Referred Site (Se)	Unreferred Site
-----------------------	-----------------

Can you make for me the face of someone experiencing anger?

Realized (A)	Emerging	Not Realized
-----------------	----------	--------------

How do you recognize anger in a person?

Physical Element (EF)	Behavior (Com)
--------------------------	-------------------

Can you draw for me the face of someone experiencing anger? (Di)

Yes

No



How do you react when you are angry?

Positive Cognitive Strategies	Negative Cognitive Strategies	Positive Behavioral Strategies	Negative Behavioral Strategies
(StCog+)	(StCog-)	(StCom+)	(StCom-)

Score Sheet

Emotions	Denomination	Seat	Self-Recognition			Recognition of others		Expression		Coping Strategies			
			Thoughts	Sensation	Behavior	Physical Elements	Behavior	Self	Drawing	Positive Cognitive Strategies	Negative Cognitive Strategies	Positive Behavioral Strategies	Negative Behavioral Strategies
Happiness													
Sadness													
Anger													
Fear													
	D	Se	P	S	C o	E F	C o m	A	Di	StC og+	StC og-	StC om+	StC om-
Tot	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$	$\frac{\quad}{4}$

Summary

4													
3													
2													
1													
0													
Emotions	D	S	P	S	C	EF	Co	A	Di	StCog	StCo	StCom	StCo
			e	o	m			+	g-	+	m-		
			Self- Recognitio n	Recognitio n of others		Expressio n		Coping Strategies					

Legend – Scoring Sheet

Denomination - Mark with a cross all the spontaneously emotions expressed by the child when asked “What emotions do you know?”

Site – Mark with a cross all the emotions spontaneously expressed by the child in any corporeal site

Self-Recognition – For each emotion mark with a cross the elements stated by the child and considered factors of recognition. In this section codify all the answers related to the question “How do you recognize ...?”. For example- at the answer “I recognize fear when I think of...”, please mark with a cross where the fear is in the box of thoughts. Or, when you get an answer like... “I recognize fear when my heart beats fast...”, mark with a cross on the line in the box of fear under the voice of sensations. And more, at the answer “I feel like running away”, mark with a cross under the voice behavior.

Recognition of Others – For each emotion, mark with a cross all the elements stated by the child and considered factors in recognition of others emotions. For example- at the answer “I recognize happiness in others when they smile”, mark with a cross on the line in the box under the voice physical elements. And more, at the answer “I recognize happiness in others when I see someone dancing”, mark with a cross the line in the box under the voice behavior.

Self- Expression – For each emotion, mark with a cross if the child was able to mimic elements of position of lips, eyes and facial muscles.

Draw- Expression – For each emotion, mark with a cross if the child was able to draw a face with the following elements: position of the lips, eyes and facial muscles.

Positive Cognitive Coping Strategies – For each emotion, mark with a cross if the child to the question “how do you react when you feel ...?” has given an answer toward active emotion (thoughts), for example “I’m thinking to a solution”, or “I’m thinking to think of a better way to do it”.

Negative Cognitive Coping Strategies – For each emotion, mark with a cross if the child to the question “How do you react when you feel...?” has

given an answer avoiding the question of emotion in terms of thoughts, for example “I’m not thinking about it”, or “I’m distracted”.

Negative Behavioral Strategies - For each emotion, mark with a cross if the child, to the question “How do you react when you feel ...?” avoids the question by answering simply “I run away”, or “I shut down”.

Positive Behavioral Strategies – For each emotion, mark with a cross if the child, to the question “How do you react when you feel ...?” gives an answer oriented (behavior) toward seeking help “I ask help from other people”.

Legend - Graphic Summary

D – Denomination – Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions spontaneously given by the child

Se- Site – Color the box corresponding to the number of the emotions spontaneously given by the child to the site.

P- Thoughts – Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions given by the child as a factor of recognition upon himself. For example “I’m aware when I think ...”.

S – Sensations – Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions that the child has given as a factor of recognition to a physical sensation, for example “I feel I’m aware when I feel ...”.

Co – Behavior – Color the box corresponding to the emotion for which the child recognized a personal factor of behavior “When I do, I’m aware of ...”.

EF- Physical Elements – Color the box corresponding to the emotions for which the child recognized in others the physical components. “I’m aware of how the person feels... When I see his face...”.

Com – Behavior - Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions for which the child has given as a factor of recognition of others behavior. “I’m aware when a person feels and when he/she does”.

A – Facial Expressions - Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions reproduced.

Di – Draw Expressions – Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions drawn.

StCog+ - Positive Cognitive Coping Strategies - Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions that the child has given oriented toward the management of active emotions (in terms of thoughts). For example “I’m thinking of a solution”, or “I’m trying to think of a better way to do it”.

StCog- - Negative Cognitive Coping Strategies – Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions that the child has given oriented

to avoiding the management of emotions (in terms of thoughts). For example “I’m not thinking of it”, or “I’m distracted”.

StCom- - Negative Behavioral Coping Strategies - Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions by which the child has given answers oriented toward avoidance (behavioral) of emotion. For example “I run away”, “I shut down”.

StCom+ - Positive Behavioral Coping Strategies - Color the box corresponding to the number of emotions by which the child has given answers oriented toward management (behavior) of emotion. For example “I need help”.