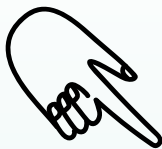
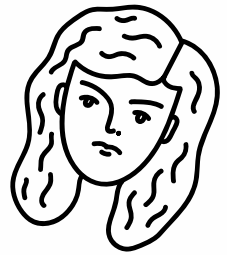


# ~~Bullying~~ On the Road to Understanding

...when it's not safe in class



**‘Over the years, I’ve found  
that seemingly senseless  
behaviour makes sense once  
you look at what’s behind it.’**

— B. D. Perry

## Introduction

We would all like schools to be a safe place where people – big and small – can develop and fulfil their potential. Children want it, parents want it, teachers want it, school managers and founders want it. We have already written about various ways to help with this in our bulletins. But what do we do when we find out that the opposite of what we all wish from the heart, and in which we invest considerable effort, appears in our school? What to do if there are conflicts, verbal or physical attacks, violence? What to do if someone doesn’t feel safe in the classroom or in the staffroom, is outside the collective, is afraid to go to the bathroom?

In this bulletin, we would like to draw inspiration from non-violent communication according to which **every act of violence is only an unfortunate expression of unmet needs**. We are moving away from the standard victim/aggressor, guilt/punishment approach, as it doesn’t bring understanding and support to everyone. We will explain the principles and try to show a different way. The situations described above are present in every school. Interactions that have the potential to escalate into violence take place in all schools. Competitiveness, performance and comparison have long been present in our culture and bring us inequality and alienation.

The feeling of threat or exclusion doesn’t only occur among children or students, but often also in a group of adults, in the staffroom, between parents and teachers or in interactions between children and adults. They are actually communicating vessels. If respectful and accepting behaviour is absent in some relationships of children or adults, it usually doesn’t last long and will affect safety throughout the school. The good news is that it also works the other way around – respectful behaviour attracts and transforms others as well.

Sometimes there are injuries to the soul and sometimes to the body. It is important to be aware of these situations, appropriately name, process and control your own emotions, and then treat the situation as an opportunity to learn. We teach ourselves and children to function in the real world and the disruption of safety and cooperation is thus an opportunity to acquire new competences that will be priceless for life. We draw on the experience of building a safe environment, peer support, conflict resolution using non-violent communication, facilitation and reflection in the school environment.

Zuzana Krnáčová, Jana Randa and Viktor Križo

## The good and the bad

‘Sticks and stones may break our bones,  
but words will break our hearts.’

— Robert Fulghum

A common approach is to rob Peter to pay Paul, trying to make things ‘right’ by force and power. We put ourselves in the role of judges, we mark the culprit and victim, we investigate, solve, punish, and when it doesn’t help, we expel to other classes or schools. It is one of the ways to help us navigate the world and fulfil the need for control and order. At the same time, if we apply it to people, it leads us into a trap of alienation and violence. It is a construct in our mind that contributes to conflicts and exclusion, building the image of the enemy in others. *What would the world be like if we didn’t divide it into good and bad?*

One day, my 5-year-old daughter came home from kindergarten saying that she had a ‘wedding’ with one of her classmates. The next day, on the way home, she told me how the same boy hit someone and that he often takes things from other children: *‘But Aneta, I thought you liked him when you married him yesterday,’* I responded confusedly, functioning in images of the good – the bad, not knowing where to put that classmate. My daughter’s surprised eyes looked at me: *‘But mom, I like him, I just don’t like what he did.’*

And at that moment I realized – it is possible to separate a person from their actions. My daughter lives it naturally. It’s not a lesson for her, but it’s inside her. It would often help children who are mean if we could say it that way. If we were able to look at them with love, to try to understand what needs they were meeting and to devise together with them a different way to meet their own needs and calm down.

## Safety and regulation

‘Whatever is leading a person to bullying would not be attended to by being told it’s wrong and bad to bully.’

— Miki Kashtan



A girl in the second grade goes through the classroom and she throws the pen cases of some of her classmates down from their tables. The kids tell her not to do it and she shoves them and stabs one kid with a pencil because he decides to get close to her. Many of the children in the class will call it bullying. Teachers try to deal with this and a cycle of alerts and conversations with the child and parents begins. After a few months, a new teacher comes into the class and the threatening behaviour of the little girl disappears. **WHAT HAPPENED? ...**

Neuropsychology brings a significant shift in looking at the behaviour of all of us into education. It shows us that the experience of safety – physical, psychological and relational – is a prerequisite for our development from birth to the end of life. When we feel safe, we are perceptive, receptive, funny, grateful, creative, reflective, we can learn and we feel hopeful that things will get better. If we don’t feel safe, we are gradually losing these characteristics.

There are times in our lives when we don’t feel safe. And so we naturally try to re-establish safety in ways that may seem strange or inadequate.

This happens automatically in three basic ways – either we **run, attack or freeze**. Which of the three responses we implement depends on the intensity of the signals, but also on our previous experience. What does it look like in different life situations?

### ESCAPE can take different forms – from the subtlest escapes to actually leaving a difficult situation:

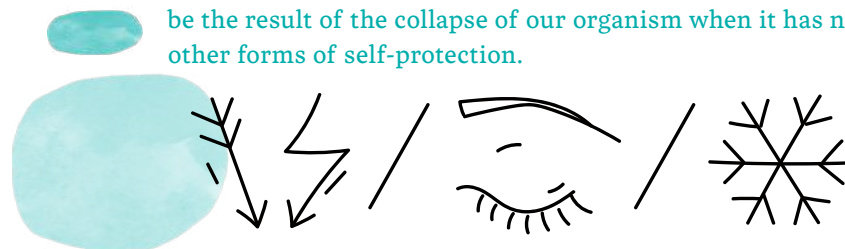
- **We strive for inconspicuousness.** If we catch subtle signals from other people that something is wrong with us, we avoid looking eye to eye, we look for an excuse not to be in close proximity with them, we just try to be as discreet as possible.
- **We avoid.** If we have heard that someone has reservations about us, we try not to meet them to avoid an unpleasant confrontation. We hope that it will be forgotten.
- **We escape.** If it's too 'tense' at work, it's less threatening to quit. If we have a long conflict in the family or in relationships, it is safer to break contacts.

### The ATTACK is also of varying intensity:

- **We resist.** If we feel pushed into a corner and feel like we aren't being heard, we say no and disagree with others. We can also experience strong inner anger and frustration that we turn toward ourselves.
- **We fight with words.** If we feel that others don't respect our opinion, don't appreciate us or disagree with us, we can raise our voices, use vicious expressions or irony.
- **We attack.** If we feel that we have nothing to lose, we fight (sometimes physically) – with our superior, students, with our partner, because we believe that nothing else is left for us to protect our need for security and safety.

### FREEZING on a scale of:

- **We close up.** If the situation is unpleasant and burdensome for us, we try to find refuge in our own world of ideas, we are often caught dreaming with our eyes open.
- **We turn off.** If we feel overwhelmed by the demands of our surroundings or life situation, we may feel resignation or apathy. We feel powerless and inadequate to do something. Although we know we should act, we have no strength left.
- **We collapse.** If we don't feel like fighting but still don't see a way out, the last option we have is collapse (dissociation) – mental, physical, social... We completely disconnect from everything that weighs us down – depression and other severe psychiatric disorders, seriously impaired health can be the result of the collapse of our organism when it has no other forms of self-protection.



### People, as social creatures, still have the opportunity to connect with others when threatened:

- **We cluster together.** If we feel insecure, we go to a friend and seek reassurance – we look for people who are 'on our side'. That's what a lot of coffees/beers with friends or discussions in staffrooms are about... but also groupings in the class.
- **We submit.** Even if we disagree with the manager, the fear of losing our jobs leads us to submit to their wishes. We adopt opinions uncritically in a group.
- **We try to appeal.** Sometimes we see that our only option is to actively join the person who is bothering us or to become part of the group we fear. We flatter them and cooperate.



## SO WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LITTLE GIRL?

The girl's favourite class teacher left the class. Different teachers began to take turns in the class. The situation was chaotic and unpredictable for the girl, the new teachers were not always respectful, kind and considerate, as the girl was used to. The situation became a threat to the child. This gradually created tension in her, accumulating stress, which began to be toxic and which she naturally wanted to get rid of.

At first, she tried to stop going to school (avoiding) – which her parents did not allow to happen. Thus, she began to protect her personal space in the class so that at least some things were under control. She made it clear to everyone who entered it not to do it again. She would throw the pen cases on the floor of those children who had leaned against her desk before or accidentally nudged her. When some children dared to face her personally, she decided to attack. She couldn't imagine how else she could protect her space. Her nervous system was hypersensitive.

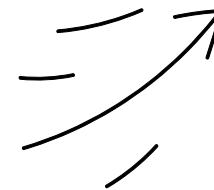
With the arrival of a new teacher, predictability was re-established in the class. The teacher's personal involvement helped to rebuild trust and safety in the girl. The child did not have to build safety by herself with threatening behaviour. She also stopped being hypersensitive to signals from the environment that posed a threat to her in a chaotic situation.

**The girl's behaviour could have been avoided** if they had not covered the long absence of the class teacher by various teachers standing in. **If children lack predictability and security in an adult, their sense of safety is undermined, which is often reflected in their behaviour.** The girl tried to create safety by behaviour that for a while ensured peace from others, but ultimately worsened the situation both for herself and for others. However, a small child cannot evaluate the situation in such a comprehensive way, and their immature nervous system offered them only limited possibilities.

## We help create safety through regulation and co-regulation

- **REGULATION** – a process by which we get to a state of safety, we experience wellbeing and stability.
- **CO-REGULATION** – a process by which we try to calm and regulate others by ourselves.
- **DYSREGULATION** – a process in which the balance is disturbed, our brain perceives threat signals, prepares for attack, escape or freezing. This state is natural if it is a reaction to real threats.

Many children and adults have experienced so much stress or threats in their lives that their brains are 'stuck' in a dysregulated state. This means that even an incentive that others assess as safe can be assessed as a threat and cause an inappropriate response.



'Children are constantly searching for an answer to a single question – Am I safe?'  
— C. Wilson



## Teacher as a person

If we expect a teacher to be able to perceive the needs of students, help them regulate their experience and be a motivating adult also in learning, it is necessary that the teacher understands their experience and has the resources to regulate themselves.

'Children are educated by what the grown-up is and not by his talk.'  
— C. Jung

## TEACHERS CAN CONNECT WITH THEMSELVES:

*Do I feel tension in my body?*

*Can I smile now?*

*Can I fully understand what is going on around me?*

*How do I feel now? (relaxed, angry, helpless, etc.)*

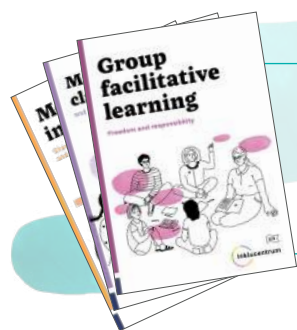
*Am I empathetic now or do I need empathy?*

*Do I need to go away for a while and calm down?*

*With what purpose do I do what I do? – What do I need?*

A teacher needs to experience understanding and safety in the workplace, that is, at school. Therefore, supportive relationships and a safe environment should be built throughout the school, not just in the classroom:

- among students in the entire school (intergenerational friendships, group learning);
- between students and teachers (morning meetings, facilitative learning, reflection on teaching, self-assessment);
- among all adults in the school (democratic school environment, support for the teacher as a person in the workplace, top-down support from the ministry through the founder to the headteacher);
- between teachers and parents (partnership approach, mutual trust, listening, joint solutions).



More information on the topics of **morning circles, facilitative learning and mixed-grade learning** can also be found in our bulletins: [inklucentrum.sk/publikacie/](http://inklucentrum.sk/publikacie/)

‘The feeling of one’s own safety and connection to oneself and the child determines to what extent we can help the child. So the level of our stress determines how we can (or can’t) help the child to calm down and feel safe again.’

— C. Wilson

## WHAT DO ALL PEOPLE – TEACHERS, STUDENTS, PARENTS – NEED TO FEEL SAFE?

- **Predictability** (I can plan my day, I have access to changes in the schedule, I’m not afraid of crisis situations, I don’t have a person who has unpredictable behaviour nearby)
- **Acceptance** (I can have a different opinion, I can be myself, express my feelings)
- **Non-judging attitude** (I don’t feel rejected, criticized)
- **Control** (I can make decisions about some things, I can avoid participating in activities that make me uncomfortable, my opinion matters)

In order to meet these needs of all of us, it is of great help to manifest ourselves to others:

- **Interest** (we address the other person by name, offer coffee to a colleague, we are interested in how they are doing and let them answer without interruption, we look for ways to solve problems together)
- **Humour** (laughing together releases tension and gives us a sense of safety, a joke should be kind, not ridiculing or insulting)
- **Openness** (desire to get to know yourself, others and the world better, to learn, to be transparent in communication)



## EXAMPLES OF TEACHER SUPPORT

- Limit supervision and achieve safety at school with a camera system or with the help of non-teaching staff and involve students in creating safety during breaks..
- Create suitable quiet and relaxation areas for staff – e.g. allow teachers to take lunch breaks in quiet and calm environments..
- Create a working environment for teachers by mutual agreement, meet their priorities and needs – staffrooms, offices, flexible working hours, change of interior, purchase of a coffee machine, small refreshments, etc.

Investments in the mental health of teachers will lead to a reduction in their stress and to employees' satisfaction, which will automatically translate into the co-regulation of children by teachers.

## Facilitating the relationship – when the class has common roots

### *How does the forest relate to the classroom?*

Older trees can help young trees only in a mixed forest where there are different kinds of trees of different ages. This is due to the extremely deep and intricate root system. During bad weather and pest infestation, they support young trees by supplying sugars and nutrients. There is not the same mutual support in a forest made up of trees that grew separately in forest tree nurseries. These trees don't have sufficiently intertwined roots, many die because they are too weak alone.

Does this reflect the kids in your class?

A new child in a group doesn't share a common history with others and often becomes a target for others. A class where changes take place often, where mutual relationships are not deliberately encouraged is often attacked by misunderstandings, exclusion from the collective, violence. However, we can help build relationships in schools and thus enable children to 'intertwine their roots' with each other.

### *Is a positive classroom climate always healthy?*

A positive climate evokes happy and carefree children. A healthy climate means that one is allowed to experience all feelings (anger, sadness, joy, enthusiasm, annoyance and fatigue, etc.), but they must be made aware and reflected. Genuine safety is often enhanced by discovering and resolving conflict, by reflecting that we have limits, that we can and want to learn from others. Even adults from children. That we have hope to improve together, even though we don't know it yet.

'What's most important may not be what you do, but what you do after what you did.'

— G. Landreth



The quality and depth of relationships in the class build a nourishing and safe environment for everyone – students, teachers and parents.

#### WHAT IS NOURISHING FOR THE CLASS:

- stability of the class teacher;
- actively seeking talent and communicating success to all children (optimal number of children in the class not more than 21-24 students);
- targeted support for new students coming into the class;
- sharing in the class when someone says goodbye, celebrates, mourns;
- educational approaches that support students' strengths and accept their limits;
- rules, consistency, reflection of errors, safety;
- open approach to conflict resolution and error handling;
- relationships – the closer the people are to each other (they know each other better), the less the tension or space for harm.

#### WHAT DISINTEGRATES AND DESTROYS THE CLASS:

- assessment without feedback and opportunities for improvement for the student;
- competition, comparing students in the class;
- collective guilt – punishments for the whole class, when we don't know how to solve a problem at the individual level, it provokes anger in the whole class, which often turns it against individuals;
- splitting children into the good and the bad – the search for culprits and victims;
- presentation of favourite students in the class;
- fluctuation of teachers and class teachers;
- performance-oriented educational approaches regardless of students' potential and limits;
- ignoring conflicts;
- disparagement, ridicule, arrogance, inappropriate jokes.

## Restorative vs punitive justice

The concept of punitive justice forms almost the DNA of the entire system – our families, schools, hospitals or prisons. We are convinced that if we punish the other one, our need for correction will be fulfilled and the other person will become 'aware' and change their behaviour. Certainly, this is one of the strategies to **meet the need for correction**. But this strategy of punishment essentially produces violence. In most cases, punishment alone will not meet the needs of the punished person, it will cause a feeling of guilt, shame (and possible **violence against oneself**) or anger and waiting for an opportunity to achieve revenge – correction for oneself (**violence against others**).

Correction is also possible in another way – the concept of **restorative justice**. Restorative or healing justice is one in which the needs of both sides are named, while the need for correction on the other side is achieved by nonviolence – by going through the pain of the unmet needs of both sides together. This can also be accompanied by a kind expression of sadness or forgiveness.

## Use of protective force

Sometimes a threat to the life of another or an exceptional situation may also require the use of protective force, when we use our own force only for a short time to stop immediate action, when it is necessary to immediately protect the life of a person or when there is an acute threat. But this must always be accompanied by a retrospective reflection of everyone's needs.



## Transforming the enemy image

‘The most difficult thing is to get rid of the idea of the enemy. As soon as both sides overcome this image and become aware of the needs of the other one, they begin to perceive themselves from a human point of view.’

— M. Rosenberg

A set of ratings and ideas, such as an aggressor, an attacker, a thief, evoke an image of the enemy in us. We don’t imagine a man, we don’t imagine their inner beauty or pain, that they failed to fulfil their or our needs by an inappropriate strategy, but we imagine an evil thug. **At that point, we lose touch with others.** Are they still a person to us? There is only a short way to violence from that. And *‘violence is really anything that is motivated by something other than love.’* (M. Rosenberg)



You can find more information on the topic of **‘nonviolent communication’** in our bulletin: [inklucentrum.sk/publikacie/](http://inklucentrum.sk/publikacie/)

### EXAMPLE:

The school psychologist comes to the class teacher, wants to explain to her the problems of the student, what he is experiencing, what he needs and that the reprimand is not justified. The teacher spews anger at all that the student and his parents cause, what about the class, the others if the thing will not be punished. The teacher feels hurt because she is repeatedly attacked by the student’s parents.

After a while, the psychologist gives the teacher empathy instead of persuasion: *‘Milka, you are right to be angry that no one noticed how much energy and interest you devote to the class. Perhaps you’d like more gratitude. The emails you get have angered you and you feel injustice toward yourself.’*

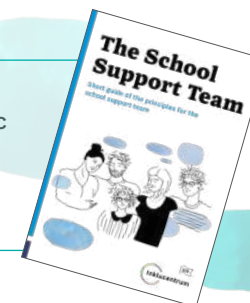
After 30 minutes of pure understanding, the teacher leaves the psychologist’s office. They then arranged a meeting with the parents facilitated by nonviolent communication. The teacher and the parents discussed the matter in peace. The next day, the teacher herself sought out the psychologist, saying, *‘I’m not going to give him the reprimand, I don’t think it’s necessary anymore.’* What was actually resolved was that everyone’s needs and experience were clarified and fulfilled and that was enough.

The language of criticism, of judgments, of labels is the language of the jackal. On the contrary, the language of the giraffe sees unmet needs behind every behaviour, action. Instead of the enemy, it sees sadness, pain or courage. We prepared a short vocabulary for you, which you can expand daily, learning to translate what we have learned to quickly name with criticism and labels.

‘Every time I judge other people, it means I have unmet needs.’

— M. Rosenberg

You can find more information on the topic of **‘school support team’** in our bulletin: [inklucentrum.sk/publikacie/](http://inklucentrum.sk/publikacie/)



## Giraffe bilingual dictionary

Words coloured by tone of voice and facial expressions enter our minds and activate a range of reactions inside our brains because they connect with something we know to be threatening or, conversely, safe. Sometimes, however, we hear something different from what the other person says or thinks. What is important in communication is not only what the first one said, but also what the second one heard.

**[Aggressive]** – the use of tragic strategies in order to fulfil the need for safety, security, connection with others (helplessness, loneliness).

**[Primitive]** – such a name reflects our fears and prejudices when we don't understand the behaviour of another person and we feel that they threaten us in some way.

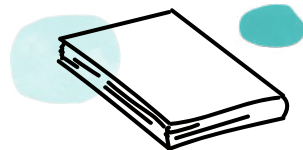
**[Aggressor]** – a child/teacher/parent with pain, sadness, insecurity who has just used an attack (criticism, assessment, judgment, violence) to fulfil their needs.

**[Slacker]** – a child/teacher/parent who is tired, demotivated or who currently pays attention to something else, who doesn't experience fulfilment in what is expected of them.

**[Victim]** – a child/teacher/parent who experiences fear and frustration from losing connection with others.

**[Provocation]** – an inappropriate way to connect with other people, it usually worries others, but it can also stabilize the 'provocateur' because this state of restlessness is familiar to them because they have often experienced it.

**[Bullying]** – meeting one's needs through inappropriate strategies, trying to protect oneself by using attack responses when we have a very high level of feeling threatened.



### TRANSLATION OF PHRASES:

~~[You're bullying the whole class!]~~ – It makes me angry when that ball hits my head three times. I would like more space in this class and respect.

~~[I'm always the bad guy!]~~ – You get angry when someone is angry with you and you want more understanding from others.

~~[They're just trying to see how much they can dare.]~~ – It makes me angry when I hear repeated noise in class, I guess I'm already tired today. Maybe you are tired too and need a break?

'Words are the source of misunderstandings.'  
— A. de Saint-Exupéry

'Words are windows or they're walls.  
They sentence us or set us free.'  
— M. Rosenberg

## How to communicate in difficult Situations

If a child's nervous system is dysregulated, the cerebral cortex is disconnected and we all waste our time on questions and explanations. We unnecessarily ask the child to 'explain what happened' to us while they are still upset and angry after a fight on the playground. Unnecessarily, we ask a child who is frightened and on the verge of panic what exactly they are afraid of. And we needlessly ask children to do, say or explain something when they only want one thing – to feel safe again.

### 3 STEPS IN COMMUNICATION THAT WILL BRING SAFETY AND UNDERSTANDING:

#### 1. REGULATE

Adults need to explore their own sense of safety or use self-regulatory techniques. Calm themselves to help calm the child. The child's breathing slows down, the heartbeat changes and the brain stem restores a sense of 'safety' in the body.

#### 2. CONNECT

Now we can try to connect with the child, we give them understanding, empathy, and stabilize their **limbic system**.

#### 3. UNDERSTAND

Only when the child calms down and when they accept our relationship (interest and understanding) can we search for what happened and try to understand it. Only then can we ask questions and think together, involve the **prefrontal cortex**.

### SO THE TEACHER SHOULD JUST BE CONSTANTLY KIND, NICE, NON-VIOLENT AND LET THE STUDENTS DO WHAT THEY WANT?

The needs of the teacher are as important as the needs of others. Certainly not less. If the teacher is experiencing helplessness, fear, concern, anger, sadness, it is very important that they first receive empathy or give it to themselves and express it in front of the students.

This **self-expression** can be a step towards self-regulation and self-empathy: *'I've had enough of it today! I've been in a hurry since this morning, I haven't had a break, I haven't even had a drink. I need two minutes of silence right now and open the window. Would anyone be willing to bring me water to calm me down?'* and after a while, for example, they add: *'Wow, that was really hard for me, anyone want to tell me how you are?'* What is important is that self-expression is formulated by the teacher on their side of the field, they don't use criticism towards others or towards themselves, they express their experience and later they listen to the experience of others.

## Case study – bullying or unmet needs of all?

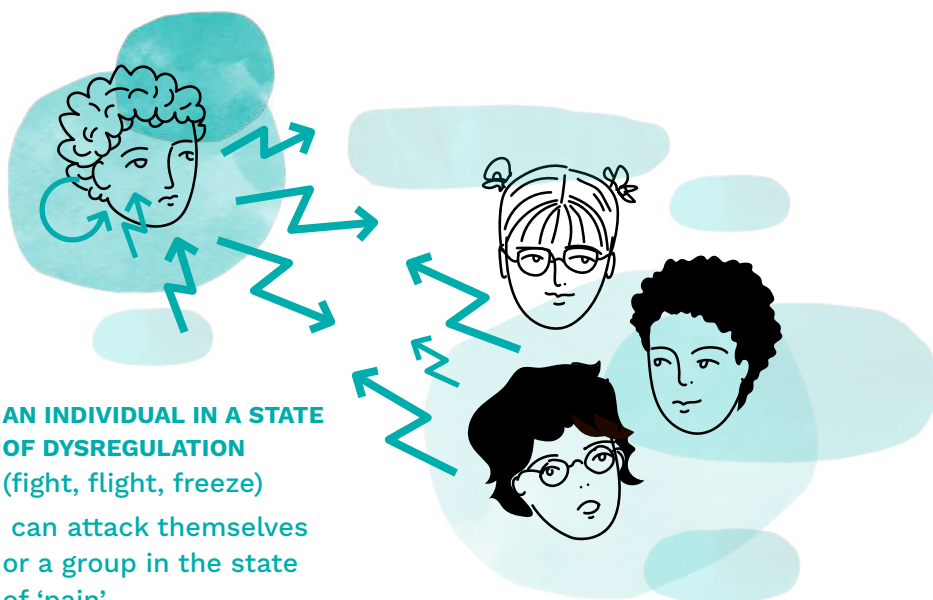
*based on a true story*

David, an eighth-grader, had a brutal fight in the class for the second time in a row. David is otherwise a quiet, inconspicuous boy, but for years he has been out of the group, the pandemic has made it even worse. His parents believe that several kids bully David. David often experiences loneliness, standing aside. He came home with a bitten hand after being bitten by a classmate during a fight. For years, the class teacher has been trying to involve David in the group, but he no longer wants to try because he doesn't understand David. A group of children often tell on David.

David remembers the most powerful experience from the class from the fifth year, when two classmates threw his things in the stream and a large part of the class shouted against David during a fight. He was alone and experienced it over and over again. After a psychologist visited the class, a parent called and accused David of bullying the class and receiving attention again at the expense of other children. He asked for an immediate solution and peace for his child. **So who is the bully, who is the victim, who is the aggressor, where is the truth?**

David is probably a child **with a highly sensitive nervous system**. The usual amount of stimuli exhausts him and even mild signals from the surroundings are perceived as a threat. His brain is moving too fast from safety to defence, escape or freezing.

Most of David's reactions in danger are escaping, freezing, but lately an attack has been added. No one is to blame for this. It is the interaction of the DNA, the brain and the environment. Nevertheless, this condition causes him anxiety, high blood pressure and a constant feeling of threat. The great exhaustion then looks like a loss of interest and an attempt at isolation. Isolation during the pandemic made this situation even worse.



**AN INDIVIDUAL IN A STATE OF DYSREGULATION**

(fight, flight, freeze)

can attack themselves or a group in the state of 'pain'

**INDIVIDUALS IN THE GROUP ARE ALSO (more or less) IN A STATE OF DYSREGULATION**

**WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?**

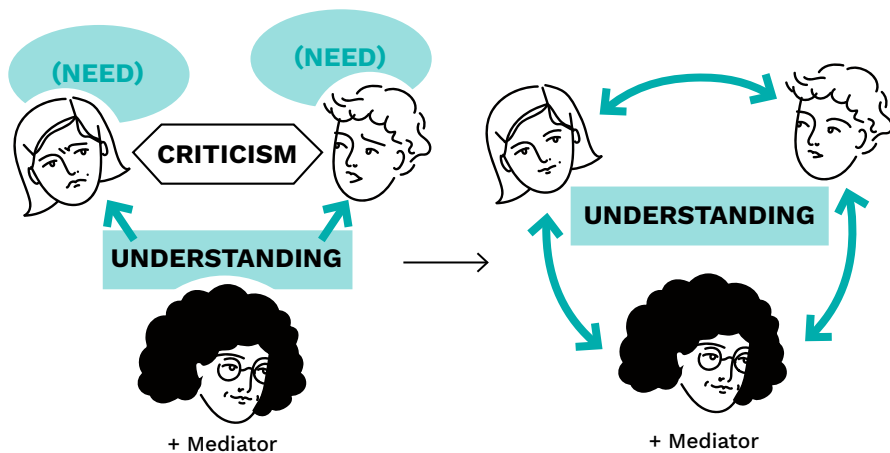
The basic solution tool is **understanding**. Bad relationships, often referred to as bullying, provocation, ignoring, ridicule, slander and others, are not the result of the presence of a 'rotten apple' in the classroom that needs to be thrown away but is just a traffic light showing that the needs of individuals in the group are not met, that it is necessary to heal the climate in the class or at school. In order to regain balance, it is necessary to give everyone understanding (in the language of neuropsychology: to promote regulation and safety in relationships). Sometimes it can take a lot of time and energy, but it's the only way to truly restore trust in relationships.

**DAVID IS ACCEPTED AGAIN**

The school psychologist and the class teacher decided to take a difficult step. To hold dozens of meetings using nonviolent communication.

- The psychologist first offered David two or three meetings to listen to him and give him understanding: *'I can still see now, when you talk about it, how it makes you sad. When you stood by that stream, you needed someone to stand up for you, to support you.'* Many such statements where the psychologist doesn't comment, doesn't ask, doesn't discuss, but only offers an understanding of David's unmet needs. At the third meeting, she arranged a series of meetings with the children with whom David had a conflict. In pairs.
- Meetings were held two weeks successively during school from 30 to 90 minutes as needed. The purpose of the meeting was only for each classmate to receive understanding in the presence of David. Most of the meetings were almost the same – at the beginning, the tension, critical words, the gradual melting, the first aid of empathy first to the classmate, then to David: *'Jacob, you were worried about your phone getting wet at first, so you warned David to be careful and then you came into conflict.'* The second half of each meeting was all about understanding each other. Mostly it was accompanied by emotion, tears, pleasant silence. When defensive reactions subside, when no one needs to explain anymore, then understanding has occurred..

## Understanding scenario:



### EXPERIENCE:

At the end of one such meeting, which was long and demanding in terms of criticism and giving understanding, Jacob, who had the biggest conflict with David, said: *'As I still feel injustice, I feel that David doesn't want to understand me.'* The psychologist responds (in the context of everything that Jacob said): *'Jacob, you would like for people to notice how much good you have done, how much effort it has often cost you not to react when something bothered you, but also how many times you have helped someone... Maybe you need more gratitude for how you contribute to the lives of others...'*

Jacob, whom many saw as the aggressor, fell silent for the first time, with tears in his eyes. The psychologist saw a beautiful person in him, not an aggressor. That's when David saw it too. When the tall eighth-grader left after almost two hours, he couldn't speak out of emotion. It felt like he wanted to hug someone because someone had finally noticed his experience and needs. After he left, he came back and added: *'You made my day great today.'*

- The psychologist offered a meeting with David to anyone in the class who wanted to. Two classmates wanted to do so proactively. They wanted to give David support and understanding on their own when they learned how the meetings were going.
- Meanwhile, the psychologist made a meeting with David's parents in his presence, but also a separate meeting of the class teacher and David. Finally, there was a meeting of the whole class, which was focused on nothing else but understanding each individually. The series of activities focused on relationships in the class, projection techniques always with joint reflection. Without moralizing, without lecturing, only to understand and to express understanding to everyone.
- David was offered a temporary adjustment of the schedule so that his 'head' would be less overloaded and he could handle the regulation. As David slowed down, his parents had more time to talk to him, to catch his pressures and sensitive perception of stimuli in time.
- The parents of all students received an email from the psychologist about the course of the meeting asking them to talk to their children more often, not to find the culprits, but to seek understanding. A brief evaluation of class interventions took place on the nearest parents' evening.
- The school psychologist was there for all students if there was any pressure in the class so that she could talk about it with anyone and give them understanding.

After a series of micro- and macro-meetings, the class 'recovered'. Safety and confidence returned to the class and small conflicts gradually died down because the students were suddenly able to agree. No one was left to blame, no one was punished, but everyone was understood. Gradually, the children were able to pass this experience on to each other.



Good, that's how the week was. The classmates argued, but later reconciled. Yesterday I had a good day and so I put up my hand when asked by the class teacher and I explained something PC-related to the whole class and then she normally appreciated me, so it was like she probably wanted to look at me from the other side. I got a note sent home in the next lesson :) Today was a pretty good day, nothing important happened. I'm just on the train and going to the cabin with my parents, so I'm gonna get some rest. There's going to be a lot of pressure next week, but whatever. I hope I don't explode when I'm stressed out about my exams.



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## Our Publications:

We create the bulletins in cooperation with a team of experts on inclusive education. Employ them as a useful guide in your work or for explaining the principles of inclusive education to the general public.

We also create useful videos for you on Inklucentrum's YouTube channel, some of which are available in English or German. For deeper understanding of the topics, we recommend signing up for the training courses we organize.



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## We cover Inclusive education

Inklucentrum – The Centre for Inclusive Education is an advocacy, educational, consulting expert organization on a national level, working in the field of support to inclusive education. It is dedicated to supporting quality and humanistic education in the school environment for the benefit of development of potential for all children, families and the school staff. It provides support, consulting and education in accredited programs and workshops, especially for pedagogical and professional employees.

We are preparing a project of establishing a primary school with an inclusive center, which will be using humanistic and inclusive principles described in our bulletins.

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