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COVIDCALM: 10 EXERCISES OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION FOR BOYS AND GIRLS: A TOOL FOR THE SCHOOL.

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March 2020 brought the Spanish state, including the Basque Autonomous Community, into a state of alarm due to the global pandemic situation. For two months, the population, including children, was asked to stay at home under confinement. Under these conditions, children suffered from a violent state of isolation, which affected their emotions and raised their anxiety levels. This situation revealed the need to create tools to deal with the psychological repercussions of confinement.

Thusly, the LASAI-COVID project was created through a collaboration between various members of the University of the Basque Country and Osakidetza. The project follows the EMDR protocol (Artigas, Jarero, Alcalá & López, 2014), with the collaboration of psychiatrist Juan Moro. He has authorized an adaptation of his ten exercises for emotional regulation, validated for use with adults.

Literary interventions have shown the potential to improve children's well-being and trigger behavioral changes (Andreucci & Mayo, 1993; Rodari, 1996; Rojas, 2009, Martorell, 2014). To this end, a multidisciplinary group has been created to adapt Juan Moro's emotional regulation exercises into stories tailored to children's needs, with an illustrated guide in Spanish, Basque, and English, and audio versions in Basque and Spanish.

Keywords: Covid-19, emotions, children, tales, anxiety

Introduction

The year 2020 will go down in history as a collective experience of health alarm without a definite end. It will be remembered as the era of the COVID 19 pandemic.

“This is an amazing accomplishment from the neuroscientist most responsible for the contemporary revolution in mental health toward the recognition that so many mental problems are the product of trauma” - Richard Schwartz, originator, Internal Family Systems Therapy” (Van der Kolk, 2015; p.1).

The situation that society is immersed in due to COVID-19 has had significant repercussions on mental health. Anxiety and depression are on the rise, as relationships and routines that are necessary for resilience have been severely limited (Cañarte, Matute, Macias & Pin, 2020). It is worth remembering, that students have experienced a halt in their schooling process due to the state of alarm (Royal Decree 463/2020, 14th of March 2020). This is expected to have serious repercussions on children and adolescents, who are among the groups who will remain at home for longer periods, which can impact their health and physical and psychological wellbeing (Espada, Orgilés, Piqueras & Morales, 2020; Zarzuelo, 2020). These effects are especially worrying considering that evidence suggests that children are at low risk for experiencing serious COVID-19 symptoms (Linhares & Enumo, 2020).

Throughout history we have records of various pandemics such as the plague in the XIVth century, AIDS in the 1980s, Ebola, Zika, MERS-CoV, with consistently devastating socio-economic and political effects (Ruiz, Arcaño & Pérez, 2020). These effects can occur as a result of the epidemic itself or due to the aggravation of pre-existing pathologies (Chacón-Fuertes, Fernández-Hermida & García-Vera, 2020). During the ongoing pandemic, the WHO has emphasized the psychological risk of COVID-19. We find the case of Spain to be especially worrisome, given that the measures instated are among the strictest in Europe (Inchausti, MacBeth, Hasson-Ohayon & Dimaggio, 2020; Ruiz, Arcaño & Pérez, 2020).

Due to the pandemic, society is living in the shadow of fear, giving way to paranoid attitudes (Ruiz, Arcaño & Pérez, 2020) as a reaction to a shared lack clarity regarding the future. This scenario can be a source of trauma for children, who are developing their personality (Van der Kolk, 2015). For this reason many professionals are highlighting the negative effects of confinement on children's health and wellbeing (González-Rábago, 2020), as they are especially vulnerable during this pandemic (Cañarte, Matute, Macias & Pin, 2020). Throughout the world, 1.38 million children and adolescents have been unable to attend their educational centers, which facilitate their academic, psychomotor, interpersonal and social development (Laure & Mangin, 2011; Van den Bos, Crone, Meuwese & Güroglu, 2018; del Castillo & Velasco, 2020).

In line with current evidence from the field of emergency and disaster psychology, the socio-psychological needs of children and adolescents require special attention during the pandemic (Lorenzo-Ruiz, Arcaño & Pérez, 2020). Human beings are social animals, with a sense of purpose, who learn throughout their growth process, and have the need to find their place in society (Van den Bos, Crone, Meuwese & Güroglu, 2018).

People's attachment needs don't diminish throughout their lifespan. Most human beings cannot stand being deprived of interaction with others for an extended period of time. Anything is preferable to feeling irrelevant and isolated. Children will also do almost anything to feel seen and connected (Van den Bos, Crone, Meuwese & Güroglu, 2018; p.85).

Natural disasters, among which epidemics are classified, often entail high levels of risk and fear, leading to psychosocial stress, psychological problems and post-traumatic stress (Van den Bos, Crone, Meuwese & Güroglu, 2018; Castillo & Velasco, 2020). During these events, fear and anxiety levels are raised, which give way to transversal problems that exacerbate the main issue. These problems can include excessive fear, damaging or threatening attitudes, panic, the collapse of healthcare systems, and a general lack of equipment and supplies (Chacón, Fernández & García, 2020). Warring against an invisible enemy and constantly searching for the source of danger can be exhausting -much like searching for those who don't wear their facemask, regardless of context (Van der Kolk, 2015).

As mentioned in Lorenzo et al.'s study (2020) the psychological symptoms that may arise during this pandemic are varied and can also entail physical effects, along with conative issues that can impair social relationships. It is worth emphasizing that children are often asymptomatic when it comes to COVID-19 and that the more serious threat to their wellbeing is psychological, experiencing loneliness, a lack of friends and feelings of responsibility for their at risk loved ones (del Castillo & Velasco 2020).

Feelings of security around other people are crucial for mental health. But what happens when being around others becomes a risk? Not having a figure to turn to feel secure can have serious repercussions regardless of age, but children are especially vulnerable to suffer in this scenario, as they are in the developmental stage of searching for their place in society. These issues can extend to their school life, where children can be victims or perpetrators with respect to their peers, creating future problems for emotional expression when they reach adulthood (Van der Kolk, 2015).

Children are also afraid of the virus, especially when it comes to putting their elderly grandparents at risk, and may experience guilt as a result. This fear is a known source of stress (Berasategi, Idoiaga, Dosil, Eiguren, Pikatza & Ozamiz, 2020). It is imperative to show children that the streets they play in and their schools are safe places -to enact precaution but not fear. Early experiences can affect us on a biological level, having a similar weight to inherited traits (Van der Kolk, 2015). Problems can arise when fear and anxiety go unchecked (Chacon, Fernandez & García, 2020) as they blur the lines between safety and danger (Van den Bos, Crone, Meuwese & Güroglu, 2018). Quarantine is also a disruptor of children's routines, with additional negative effects. Without feelings of security it is difficult to differentiate safety from danger (Van den Bos, Crone, Meuwese & Güroglu, 2018; p.89).

Children's needs and their emotional repercussions.

The brain has an enormous influence on the state of our body, on both an internal and external level. This influence relates to the need to find a source of security, which if unmet can result in alexithymia (as a reaction of the emotional centers of the brain). This condition is defined as problems to identify and recognize emotions and can result in issues when relating to others (Van der Kolk, 2015). Alexithymia is also related to OCD symptoms such as emotional contamination (Bartholomew & Pérez, 2018).

Children are constantly exposed to discourse that singles them out as sources of contagion, eliciting feelings of guilt in them when any family member contracts COVID-19 (Berasategi, Idoiada, Dosil Eiguren, Pikatza & Ozamiz, 2020). When this occurs, children often experience sadness and fear, making them lose their emotional rudder -if the emotional brain activates a state of alarm few things can de-activate it. In these situations a child's emotional reactions can become uncontrollable and irrational, as they feel like they're losing their place within the group, which becomes an added burden for the child (Van der Kolk, 2015).

"To the depersonalized individual the world appears strange, peculiar, foreign, dreamlike" (Van der Kolk, 2015; p.114).

Children who have become used to hiding their fears from their close relatives are now experiencing a heightened threat to their emotional regulation. Some children may act like nothing is going on; this behavior is known as adherence avoidance (Van der Kolk, 2015).

The loss of routines and psychosocial stress are two of the most prominent factors affecting the child population, for this reason a significant portion of international research is emphasizing the damaging nature of confinement measures (Berasategui, Idoiaga, Dosil, Eiguren, Pikatza & Ozamiz, 2020; Espada, Orgilés, Piqueras & Morales, 2020; González-Rábago, 2020). Boys and girls need movement, playtime and interaction, and it is imperative to preserve these activities within contexts such as extra-curricular activities and recess. These alterations in routine activate children's biological responses to danger, which when present during sustained periods of time can generate physical complaints (Van der Kolk, 2015).

Play is essential for a child's holistic development, as it helps them to internalize norms and values. It also strengthens their peer relationships, which are vital for their psychosocial development (Russ, 2016). Playing also helps to normalize emotions and place them in the context of one's own life, which also helps children to develop their capacity to reflect. Relationships established through play are also essential for a child's interpersonal development, teaching them important lessons in maintaining ties with other and creating effective strategies to do this (Alonso, Barbero & Luciano, 2020).

Taking into account scientific evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youths we have perceived a need to develop strategies to minimize potential damages (del Castillo & Velasco, 2020; Wang, Zhang, Zhao, Zhang & Yiang, 2020). Children's mental health is dynamic and complex, as it arises as a response to a variety of contextual and social variables (Cañarte, Matute, Macias & Pin, 2020). Most educational systems do not respond adequately to children's mental health needs (del Castillo & Velasco, 2020), which highlights the importance of specialized psychological attention in these trying times. It is also crucial to reinforce schools' orientation services as they can effectively respond to the needs of both students and teachers (Chacón, Fernández & García, 2020). As Van der Kolk (2015) stated, boys and girls need to feel loved, and deficiencies in this regard during this essential stage in their personality development can bring forth severe psychological problems in the future.

The impact of confinement and the trauma

Living in a state of alarm results in internal changes due to how the nervous system is configured. To be able to respond to physical and psychological problems generated in these situations, one's internal context must be re-organized (Van der Kolk, 2015). Around 30% of boy and girls who suffer traumatic situations develop post-traumatic stress symptoms, which increase suicidal risk and create difficulties in feeling integrated in society (del Castillo & Velasco, 2020).

Receiving help from other people is one of the most natural and intuitive ways to face stressful situations. For this reason, social distancing poses additional difficulties when managing stress (Van der Kolk, 2015).

The problems elicited by social distancing can be conceptualized through quotes from George Orwell's seminal novel, *1984* (1948), which explores how human beings are capable of surviving deprived from any sources of happiness and even their own sense of self as long as they can experience a sense of love and belonging within their social system.

Anger that hasn't been externalized can turn against oneself in the form of depression and self-destruction, and this contributes to professionals' concerns about the damages children are facing due to confinement. They especially emphasize the potential for psychological issues to arise (Berasategui, Idoiaga, Dosil, Eiguren, Pikatza & Ozamiz, 2020; González-Rábago, 2020; Ruiz, Arcaño & Pérez, 2020; Van der Kolk, 2015).

Cañarte, Matute, Macias & Pin (2020) have outlined the following damages that can be caused by confinement in their study:

- Physical problems.
- Anxiety and related issues.
- Excessive or low energy, often accompanied by apathy.
- The impoverishment of children's diets due to the loss of school lunches, with an expected impact in performance, physical and mental health
- Academic damage due to the growing gap between available resources and the need to develop skills and concepts

In summation, the measures embarked on will likely have negative and potentially traumatic effects on society (del Castillo & Velasco, 2020). Sprang and Silman's (2013) research on children who have suffered quarantines suggests that experiencing a quarantine can lead to increases in post-traumatic stress scores in children. For this reason there is a need to reflect on the current quarantine measures and their potential repercussions and to develop strategies to remedy the damage that has been caused.

Context and figures of reference.

Adolescents and children are heavily conditioned by their context, perhaps more than those in other age ranges (del Castillo & Velasco, 2020). The context's impact is conditioned by a series of variables, among which age plays an especially important role (Espada, Orgilés, Piqueras & Morales, 2020).

The term infodemic, with its roots in information and epidemic, comprises excessive information or toxic information that is put out and reflects the media situation in the current pandemic. The media can feed into pre-existing stress, fears, anxiety and lack of security and feelings of impending danger, influencing people's attitudes. Excess information can generate insecurity, confusion and helplessness (Ruiz, Arcaño & Pérez, 2020).

Media coverage of COVID-19 has an undeniable impact on children, adolescents and adults. For this reason it may be helpful to limit time spent watching televised coverage, or to be more selective with media consumption, as excess information can lead to anxiety symptoms, stress and fear (Alonso Sanz, Barbero Rubio & Luciano, 2020; del Castillo & Velasco, 2020).

It's worth mentioning that in stressful situations children often follow in the steps of their figures of reference (during the confinement period they are limited to their progenitors and other members of the household). Through modeling, when these figures remain calm children do as well, helping them remain resilient. Separation from figures of reference is a source of suffering for boys and girls and this has an additional impact on their learning process, as children often learn through imitation (Van der Kolk, 2015).

"The reactions of children to painful events are largely determined by how calm or stressed their parents are" (Van der Kolk, 2015; p.133).

Children who grow up in a context of danger and threats to their safety can develop chronic ailments such as difficulties emotionally regulating, attention deficit symptoms, rejecting interpersonal relationships and a weakened self-concept and sense of identity. These concerns can have a lasting negative impact on a child's future prospects (Van der Kolk, 2015; Cañarte, Matute, Macias & Pin, 2020).

"Self-concept is a person's perception of himself. These perceptions are formed through his experience with his environment, perhaps in the manner suggested by Kelly (1973), and are influenced especially by environmental reinforcements and significant others" (Shavelson et al., 1976, pp. 414).

The need for projects

The pandemic has generated a new set of needs and has brought forth a variety of initiatives to address them. Relaxation techniques are becoming increasingly more established, especially those that include conscious breathing practices. However most interventions have been created for adults and are not aimed at the specific needs of children (Van der Kolk, 2015).

The confinement enacted on the 14th of March has heightened the need to design interventions aimed at children to respond to the problems that this situation can generate. Danger is part of life, and must be faced in a sensible and forward thinking way.

Although the long-term repercussions of the pandemic are still unknown, we can take the psychological impact of past pandemics such as 2009's Swine Flu and 2002-2003's into account, where 22,6% of students suffered from symptoms of depression and 18,9% suffered from anxiety, with many of these symptoms persisting long-term (del Castillo & Velasco, 2020). Many scientific studies have measured and confirmed the harm that the pandemic is causing children, with negative impacts in mental health (Xie, Xue, Zhou & Zhu, 2020). This highlights the need to create a greater array of programs aimed at children, which is the main objective of the COVIDCALM project.

“Prior to the advent of brain, there was no color and no sound in the universe, nor was there any flavor or aroma and probably little sense and no feeling or emotion. Before brains the universe was also free of pain and anxiety” (Van der Kolk, 2015; p.60).

Methodology

Spanish Society has been experiencing a complete or partial lockdown from the 14th of March. Throughout the lockdown educational and healthcare professionals have been exploring the potential impact of the lockdown on children. The present multidisciplinary team comprised of researchers, medical professionals, nurses, students and dubbing professionals is continuing this trend.

The first step in this project has been to assess the situation of the target group, comparing data with research carried out in prior pandemics. Much of this research highlights the damage that is inflicted on children in these scenarios, which makes evident the need to respond. With this objective, this multidisciplinary group has come together to create the COVIDCALM project. First, the theoretical foundations for the project were developed along with the protocol that would be followed (The EMDR Integrative Group Treatment Protocol for Children; IGTP), and finally the activities that would be implemented (Artigas, Jarero, Alcalá & López, 2014).

The 10 activities for emotional regulation created by psychiatrist Dr. Juan Moro, which have been tested and validated for adult populations, have been examined and adapted for a target group of children. The format of audiobooks was preferred for this target group.

These materials have been developed with a healthcare context in mind, with the collaboration of education professionals and participants' legal guardians. The project's adaptation is an ongoing iterative process of adjusting activities and developing an illustrated guide can be implemented in homes and schools.

This guide has been developed in Basque, Spanish and now English and includes a written version and an audio-book adaptation for the Basque and Spanish versions. The audiobook versions have been developed with the objective facilitating individual and group activities for parents and educators who may not be skilled in storytelling.

The completed Basque and Spanish versions of the guide have been submitted to the Basque Department of Education's Berritzegune and are available on their website (<https://www.b06berritzegunea.com/koronabirusa>). In addition, this project has been developed as part of an international collaboration with Costa Rican institutions, where it has also been validated and made available.

Results

The details of the intervention and its activities, in the Spanish and Basque versions, are available through the following link:

<https://www.b06berritzegunea.com/koronabirusa>

The intervention has also been adapted into English (see Appendix)

Discussion

Various studies highlight the potential for literary materials to enrich experience and help build one's personality (Andreucci & Mayo, 1993; Rodari 1996). Literature helps to develop an understanding of abstract concepts such as emotions, giving these concepts meaning and turning them into tools to support one's self-discovery. It can also offer protection from threatening situations that the brain may construct (Delgado, 2009).

The COVID-19 pandemic has given way to a huge volume of research publications, many of which are emphasizing the importance of mental health (Chacón-Fuertes, Fernández-Hermida & García-Vera, 2020). However, their findings seem to have not influence social and governmental measures, which are mainly focused on physical health (stopping the virus and avoiding contagion through confinement, social distancing, etc.) (Van der Kolk, 2015; Cañarte, Matute, Macias & Pin, 2020).

Research on previous pandemics has emphasized the need to create and implement projects to address the fears and psychological problems that isolation may have created (Van den Bos, Crone, Meuwese & Güroglu, 2018; Castillo & Velasco, 2020). The particular characteristics of the pandemic demand targeted interventions.

Fear can subside with calming influences, and being social animals we often find socializing calming. However, this is difficult to achieve in a social climate in which stopping social interaction has been required. How can a child hug when they are instructed to reject them? As an answer to this question we have created the "butterfly hug", which is a guided exercise of self-care and self-hugging.

The pandemic has increased symptoms of anxiety, depression caused by fear and insecurity in children (Berasategi, Idoiaga, Dosil, Eiguren, Pikatza & Ozamiz, 2020; del Castillo & Velasco, 2020; Van den Bos, Crone, Meuwese & Güroglu; Xie, Xue, Zhou & Zhu, 2020). Many have had to abandon their place in society to adapt to a more restrictive guideline (Van der Kolk, 2015). For this reason we suggest that participants find a safe place to perform exercises such as "I am a tree" where children establish their limits through physical movement, and other exercises such as "I am a mime", "The magic hand" and "The balancing act".

Confinement has reduced children's context of reference, limiting their interactions to the people they reside with and generating a host of other problems. Fear and the inability to go outside have increased anxiety, which we address through a conscious breathing exercise. Exercises such as "The blowfish" and "The magic glasses" will help our breathing fuse with the context, providing much needed tranquility.

We must consider that emotions are related to personality and understanding them is essential to understand oneself. It is also essential to understand emotions and how to externalize them, given that when they aren't expressed they may turn against oneself (Berasategi, Idoiaga, Dosil, Eiguren, Pikatza & Ozamiz, 2020; González-Rábago, 2020; Ruiz, Arcaño & Pérez, 2020; Van der Kolk, 2015). Personality and emotions are the foundations of who we are and how we express ourselves, this is why activities such as "I see myself in the mirror" and "Giving our emotions rhythm" are important to help children develop their personalities in a healthy way. The aim of COVID-CALM is to address psychological problems in the present, avoiding future aggravations and lasting traumas.

Conclusions

Although globalization entails many benefits, it has recently turned against us, as our modern ease of travel has facilitated COVID-19's expansion.

A lockdown was instated in Spain on the 14th of March, making most of the population have to remain in their homes, including children. Measures were especially drastic for children, given that they couldn't leave their homes for a period two months of strict lockdown, unlike many adults who could leave under specific exceptions.

This situation caught the attention of healthcare providers, psychologists, educators, children's legal guardians and other collaborators. This increased attention has resulted in the creation of a project aimed at children, whose needs seem to have been forgotten in this pandemic. The COVID-CALM project attempts to address the indirect problems derived from the COVID-19 lockdown.

Although past events cannot be solved, it is important to study them to avoid making the same mistakes. The present can be improved by searching for ways to address the immediate effects of COVID-19. Being mindful of the past and present will help us to build a better future.

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Appendix

COVIDCALM: 10EMOTIONAL REGULATION EXERSICES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS: A TOOL FOR USE IN SCHOOLS

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1.- Taking root and verticality (I am a tree)

How to do this at home: We're going to draw a small circle on the floor. This is going to be the flowerpot for our little tree. Once we've finished drawing it, we will ask the child to stand inside the circle. If we're doing this exercise at home, we can draw a larger circle to follow the exercise with the child. Play some relaxing music if possible. It is important to create a space where the child can understand how roots enter the ground and connect us with the earth.

If we are doing this exercise in class, we can ask the children to place their chair on top of their desk, like when they're tidying up after the end of class. Ask the children to stand where their chair is usually placed (given that many classrooms don't offer much free space). Circles can be drawn on the floor in colored masking tape or materials we might have on hand.

The exercise can be introduced following these steps. The adult who is supervising the child will be the guide for this exercise, using the script below.

- Today, we're going to turn into trees!
- Trees need a lot of fresh air to grow healthy and strong, so now that you're a tree, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.
- A very strong wind is making us lean to the right; let's take in that wind that's moving us with a deep breath... now a second breath... and... the wind has calmed down and we are safe again.
- Now, a strong wind is making us lean to the left. Let's do the same thing as last time!... take two deep breaths, and we're safe again.
- Now the wind is moving us forwards and backwards, but careful! We cannot get out of our flowerpots! So, let's lean backwards and forwards without falling and let's count to ten... Once we're done counting let's breathe all that air in deeply, twice to be able to take it all in.
- Now that we've breathed in all that fresh air, we're going to grow a whole lot! See how we can stretch from our feet to our belly button? Stretching will make us big and strong!
- But don't stop at your belly button... If we start growing from a string that we have at the top of our heads, we can grow even more!
- And now... let's make our arms reach the ceiling. We can extend our branches if we stretch a lot. Then we can become as strong as the trees in the mountains.
- But even trees need time to rest, so now, let's breathe in a calm breeze that's helped us grow... twice is better than once... lower your arms and relax, and next time we'll try again and see how big we can become.

2.- Sitting. Drawing healthy limits (I am a mime)

In this exercise, my aim is to introduce the feeling of confinement, using the metaphor of a mime in his invisible box...

A chair will be enough to carry out this exercise. If we're trying it at home, make sure to find a pleasant place without too many visual distractions and enough space for the child to fully extend their arms in every direction without any obstacles or barriers. If we're doing this exercise in the classroom, make sure that there is enough space for children to extend their arms without touching their classmates.

- You know what? I think there are people who live in invisible boxes and walk down the street without us ever knowing. And you'll tell me... No way! No one can live in an invisible box! People don't live in boxes! And invisible boxes aren't even real! And how can you walk down the street if you're in a box?
- Well, no, that isn't right and I'm going to tell you why... For many years I walked down the same street to go home from school, and on that street there was a statue, or what I thought was a statue, because one day the statue looked at me and winked his eye and statues don't know how to wink! The next day, I walked down that same street and there stood the same statue. I looked it straight in the eye while I kept walking and nothing happened. I kept on walking thinking that I had imagined the previous day... but no, a sudden sound made me look back, and in that moment that statue waved and smiled at me. Now I was sure I had seen it! But this time I had to hurry, I was late for school!
- I got up early the next day to take some time to look at the statue and see if there was some special mechanism making it wink and wave. Maybe there was someone moving it with a remote control... Who knows. I picked up my backpack and left determined to see the statue. I reached statue's usual spot... after all, where is a statue going to go?
- I stopped in front of it and looked into its eyes. We stayed like that for a long time and nothing happened... I decided that I wanted to touch that statue to see what it was made of... and when I reached towards it the statue extended its hand and rested it on an invisible wall! I looked like I had seen a ghost! After that, it rested its other hand on the wall and moved its head and smiled...

•I started out a bit scared... But, I had an invisible wall keeping me safe, so I felt brave enough to ask the statue who he was and what he was doing there. He seemed to be a shy statue though, or maybe mute because he just moved and made signs and marked the limits of the walls that surrounded him on all sides. He lived in an invisible box! But, all of a sudden, he stopped to look at me and smile. And just like that he was suddenly still, like any other statue.

•Curiosity has always gotten the better of me. I couldn't stop thinking about how can you live in an invisible box? (This can be a small metaphor for confinement) Let's figure it out together by trying it.

•We all know that boxes come in all of shapes and sizes, with all kinds of things inside of them. I'm choosing a box with a chair in it. I'll sit and rest against the back of the chair. Let's take some deep breaths. Who knows if the box will have enough air in it!

•Let's see how high up the lid of the box is... So raise your hands up as high as they will go! We're almost there... Let's stretch and stretch like a piece of bubble gum... Stretch your neck like a long-necked dinosaur and when you feel like you're as high as you could be... Take a deep breath so you can grow a little bit more! Now you've found the lid! It's really high up, this is a tall box. Now that we've found the lid lets un-stretch and go back to our normal shape.

•One of the most surprising things about the statue was that one of his hands was always over his heart, as if he was trying to hear the beat. Have you ever listened to your heart? Would you like to try it?

•The heart speaks in the language of beats, and the best way to speak with it is through breathing... Take some deep breaths to start a conversation before we go back to looking around our box.

(Leave around a minute to breathe and relax, although the time can be vary according to the needs of the moment)

•Was it an interesting chat? I'm sure it was! But remember, we still have some work to do...

•Now that we have a hand on our heart, how about we try to touch the front of the box? Have you ever tried to grab something that was just out of your reach? You need to stretch and stretch your arms out to touch the front. Take a deep breath to grow a bit more...and there! You've found the front of the box! The most important part too, the wall between me and the statue I told you about... This wall connects us with other people and keeps us safe behind it. In the end living inside an invisible box might not be that bad. I've realized that if I want to get up, I can take my box with me! If I stand up the lid is even higher up! Now I get it. The invisible wall wasn't stopping us from moving, it was protecting us. It's not just a box, it's our suit of armor. I need to hurry and tell the statue that I get what he was trying to tell me! But my feet are stuck to the ground...Did I accidentally step on a piece of gum? Now I know why the statue wasn't moving...

•Our suit of armor doesn't stop us from moving or doing what we want to do. It's clever enough to know when to let us move freely and when to keep us safe. But did you know? All we need to do to make everything go back to normal is to take a deep breath and let the air out very slowly...Open your eyes. See how everything is the same as it was when we began?

•I'm waiting for the day when I can walk down that street again so I can tell the statue that I finally understood what he was trying to tell me.

3.- Conscious breathing in 3 steps

(I am a puffer fish)

How to do this at home: All you need is a chair and a calm place. You can play relaxing music in the background. It's important to act relaxed while guiding a child through the exercise. You can place your and the child's chair in front of each other and join hands, as physical contact can be relaxing.

In the classroom each child can sit in their own chair, slightly apart from their desk. Children will be asked to sit and place their hands on their knees.

We must take into account that some children have trouble sitting still. In these cases their guide can place their hands on their knees as a sign of safety and tranquility.

•Today we are going to become an animal, we are going to be puffer fish. Have you ever seen a real puffer fish? Maybe on TV or some drawing of a puffer fish? It is a magic fish, since it can change its size whenever it wishes ... Can you imagine being able to become bigger or smaller whenever you wish? It would be cool ... So, for a few minutes, we are going to try to feel how it feels to be a puffer fish.

•So, we are going to sit down, with our back supported by the chair, because if we aren't being supported by the chair, when the puffer fish puffs itself up, it gets rounder and rounder, and we can slip out of our chair. But, if our back is supported by the chair, we will, stick to our chair as if it were a coral reef.

- So, sitting like that, close your eyes, put your hands on top of your knees, bend your elbows, and relax ... Because changing your size is an exhausting job!
- Let's try! We take in air, lots of air ... and we get bigger and bigger. Aren't we big? We are going to let a bit of air out, little by little, to recover our original size; although it would be better if we can repeat the exercise in order to really feel how we grow.
- But, wait a minute, we also can make bigger some parts of our body! Let us take in all the air by inflating only our belly ... as if we were a globe fish that has eaten its fill. But, of course, nobody likes to have only one part all blown up ... so, let go of all the air and return to your own shape.
- And we try now with our lungs? Let us see how we can grow in this other part of our body! We take in air ... and ... Look at me, more than a globe fish I look like a dove!

At this point, we can add more parts of the body, if we like to do so. The guide can decide that.

- But, I don't know if you are aware that the puffer fish are very vain, and they like to look pretty in pictures ... but, of course, they never know if they look better all puffed up or deflated ... So, we are going to have to try and see. We breathe in lots and lots of air, and when you cannot breath in any more, hold it, there goes the picture! And we let out the air Little by Little, so we can take a picture at each moment, so our puffer fish can choose how he looks better.
- Even like this, the puffer fish is very very vain ... so he doesn't just want a single picture. He is going to need a few more, so we are going to keep trying (the idea is to make them hold several breathing movements -how many can be decided by the guide).
- First of all, puff yourselves up a lot and hold it for the picture ... (When they have taken in all the air) Yes, that is it! ... and little by little deflate yourselves.
- Now, just like before, think that all your air goes into the belly; and just the same, hold it for the picture.
- And, if we try now with the puffer fish-dove? Let us puff our lungs all we can, and now to wait for the picture to be taken!

At this point, we can take as many breaths as we like. We can vary the retention time about 3 seconds or 5 seconds.

- Well, before saying leaving, today is the our puffer fish's birthday, so we cannot leave without blowing out the candles ... but, of course, these are magic candles, and they need a lot of air, but we must let is our very softly ... so we take in one last puff of air, and little by little we blow them out ... until we are left with no more air and we have blown out the candle. Happy birthday puffer fish!

We recommend to go through about 5 to 10 rounds, depending on how we see the child is doing. And before opening their eyes, ask them to breath normally for 30 seconds ... We open our eyes and peacefully we return to our the real world: our school desk, our safe place at home.

4.- To trace our bodily sensations and balance (The sea ...)

A chair would be enough to do the next exercise. If it is done at home, look for a nice place, without many visual inputs, and with enough space to extend the arms in all directions without touching anything. If it is done in class, we have to make sure there is enough space for everyone to have their own space without touching each other. It is advisable to look for a quiet corner to do it.

- Summer is my favorite season of the year. Why? Because I can have a lot of time with my family, my friends ... but, above all, because it the perfect moment to go to the beach! You can feel that the summer is coming because at home the beach buckets, shovels and showup all these things I love to play with on the sand ... and, well, I must say that one of my favorite games is to become a croquette; to get out of the water and roll on the sand until I look ready to be put on the frying pan ... I don't understand how grown-ups don't like sand!
- But there is something else which makes the beach such a special place; the beach is the only place in which you can talk with the water ... Would you like to know how?
- You only need to sit in front of the water ... water likes to talk to you face to face, although it is shy, so you have to close your eyes. Don't you thing that it is going to start talking to you as soon as you seat down, no ... you have to call it. The best way to do that is to breath in lots and lots of air, until you lungs are full, and then blow it out as is you were to whistle to it ... Try it! And you will see how after trying three times you start to hear it ...
- Hi! I have felt you calling me, I am glad to see you. Many people come all the way here, but few of them want to get to know me. That is why I give a present to everyone who listens to me, as a way to greet them. You would be surprised to know how much we have in common, even thought at first sight it doesn't look so.

We both are made of water, mostly. Even so, you should know something important ... only those who listen to me will know how to help themselves with my secret, and that is because I know how to make magic, and how to help you relax with my magic.

- Can you feel your feet? When I flow through them, I help to calm you down ... it is as if I were an elevator, I climb up your back without scaring you ... Isn't that amazing?
- Along the way, I share my experience with the air ... if you are able to feel it, there I will be to keep it company ...
- From now on, you will be my guide on the path, choosing parts of your body which you want to take care of as the destination ... I encourage you to do so.

At this point, you can invite them to start saying which parts of their body they are focusing on, and encourage them to move them whatever way their body seems to want. It is better to let the child choose the parts of their body they feel like moving, but if we see that there are blockages, you can also help them: hands, head, arms ... And, as always, stress the importance of breathing).

- Before saying goodbye, I would like to give you advice: while you breathe, be curious, kind, and, above all, never stop loving yourself. Because just like the air and the water move in natural ways, you also are part of them.
- Goodbye, and I hope to see you again. It has been nice to meet you ... and remember that, no matter how many years go by, I won't be able to forget you.

5.- Butterfly hug

Before starting this exercise, we should make or draw a butterfly. Below we have a few links to give you ideas

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwmWXrbgOro>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKrTdmQvTuI>
- <http://www.supercoloring.com/es/dibujos-para- colorear/insectos/mariposa>

The following exercise can be done standing or sitting down, so we leave it to the guide to choose whatever they feel is better at this precise moment. We'll start by introducing the child into the story.

- I have always wanted to learn to fly, I can do many things, but flying is not one of them. I can fly on an airplane, a helicopter, but I can imagine that I fly ... but I cannot fly like a bird ... no matter how many other things I can do.
- Another thing I love is colors ... the more colors I see, more fun the picture seems. I wouldn't know which color to choose, they are all so beautiful!
- Now look! I know something that can fly and has lots of colors: butterflies! And, you know what? Butterflies are the best huggers in the whole world ... and we all have a butterfly close to us ...
- Take a look at the palm of your hands ... if you put your finger close together they could be seen as wings, couldn't they? What happens if we cross them and our thumbs grab each other? Want to try it?

Give them some time to let them join their hands with their thumbs intertwined. Here, it would help to show a picture or to let the guide show them how to do it.

- It is a butterfly! We have found our butterfly! And, do you know what the legends say? They say that each one of us has a magic butterfly which takes care of us and cheer us up when we are sad. So, let us try it, because when we need it, will know how to summon our butterfly to ask it to give us a warm hug.
- Do you know that butterflies love to fly from one place to another, and to land where they feel safe, but they are shy, and they never fly if we are looking at them ... You can guide them!
- Well, how about taking a little break now? Butterflies love to feel the beating of our heart, and to breath at the same rhythm as ourselves; so, one of the places they like more is rest on our breast. So, let us make her fly to our breast, and let her rest there for a while.
- But, butterflies are always so sweet ... that is why they keep moving their wings, even though they are resting: I am here with you ... that is the message they are sending us. Can you fell them moving their wings?
- There is a very magical thing in all this: butterflies and humans can join their rhythm: each batting of their wings is one of our breaths, as if it were the tic-toc of a clock ... Can you feel it? Enjoy the fact that a butterfly hug is one of the best hugs in the world.

At this point, we can ask them to change their rhythm, hold their breath, etc. But we have to remind them that the movement of their hands has to be coordinated with their breathing, that the butterfly wings can not stop, that they are in syntony.

•It has been a wonderful moment, so we are going to say good-bye to our butterfly for today. But this is not just any butterfly, but a butterfly that will remain our friend forever as long as we need it. See you again!

6.- Self regulation: Hands in contact with the body (The magic hand)

This exercise can be done standing up, sitting or lying down. You can adapt it to the mood of the moment.

•Do you know that we all can make magic? Yes, even though you might not believe me, it is true. Long time ago I discovered that my hand is magic: how else could I write such pretty things for other people to read? With magic, of course. The fact is that ... every school is a magicians school! So, today we are going to test the power of our hand, the one we write with (we do not say the left or the right, since we might have left and right handed children).

•But you know that for there to be magic we have to keep our eyes closed; our hand is also shy, and everything in the world of magic is shy. That is the reason why they all show up when we don't see them, but ... aren't the things we can do wonderful? So, let us try ... but I need to tell you before that in order to have magic we have to play also with the wind ... so let us take in a deep breath, and then let it out slowly ... we take another deep breath, and the same ...

Repeat this process as many times as desired (between 5 and 10 times).

•Now it is time to try magic ... Do you dare to? Let us first take put our hand on our heart, because that is where we keep all our feelings. It is like that little diary we keep well locked up. But, don't worry, the magic hand keeps our secret very well, so you don't need to be afraid. Take it to your heart, breath and tell it everything that is worrying you.

•Our magic hand is a great friend that caresses us when we need it, it listens to us, keeps our biggest secrets and fears ... has it ever happened that our magic hand has bumped into the magic hand of another person, and then they have shared their secrets?

•And the best thing is that our magic hand does not need us to speak very loud to listen to us. Only by thinking about something, it understands and helps us ... So we are going to spend a little time talking to it, knowing well that we are well taken care of.

The same exercise with a hand on the breast can be done with other parts of the body, the belly, the head ... following the same instructions. There is no required time, whatever feel good. It is important to pay attention to any emotion that may come up, because it is when we talk to ourselves that our emotions get stronger.

7.- External visual reorientation(The magic glasses)

The following exercise can be done standing up or sitting down, even walking, so we leave it to the decision of the guide, whatever they consider most fitting at that time. Let's start getting the child into the story.

•I've always wanted to wear glasses ... many of my friends wear them, and I, even though I keep asking for a pair, never manage to get my parents to buy me one. I have even tried with my piggy-banks savings, but they always tell me that glasses are not toys, and they can only be worn by people who need them to see better. I know that they are not a toy; but who knows if I see well or I don't? Maybe what I think is seeing well turns out not to be so; but, of course, I cannot lend my eyes to anybody else so that they can check them ... it is a bummer ...

•But, that year there was a new teacher at school, and it turns out that I was assigned to their class. At the beginning I got very upset, because the previous class teacher was really cool, and we were assigned to someone whom we did not know. But, you know what?, he was not a teacher, he was a magician!

•One day we were in class learning how our eyes work, and I couldn't help asking the teacher why I could not wear glasses. I was expecting the same answer as usual, but, no, instead of an answer, he taught us a magic spell!

•It turns out that when we are born we have the same magic spell put on us: they say the magic words and, suddenly, we get a pair of glasses on our face. That's how we start to see the world. I have been wearing glasses, and nobody ever told me!

•But, why is it that some people keep them on, and others take them off? ... well, you know what?, we all keep wearing glasses. What happens is that for some people the glasses they were suddenly become invisible.

So, to get us to understand how we all were seeing just as well with our invisible glasses as with the visible ones, he invited us to play a game: would you like to play it

- It is quite easy: the first thing to do is to turn our glasses on, and to do that we are going to have to breath in lots of air, until it feels as if our head becomes a balloon. Now we have turned them on, and we can start using them.

- We have to think now that our eyes are like a camera to take pictures, that is why we need to keep them wide open. Little by little, we are going to start fixing our attention on each detail we see in the room, and when we want to take a picture because we like something, or because we think it is funny ... we have to take in lots of air again, lots and lots, and to start blowing the air out as if you were to blow out a candle.

- They have explained to us that those pictures go into a warehouse that we have in our heads, but I have not understood very well what is that about ... One thing that I have been told is that if the picture is pretty, we keep it there forever.

- So now, what you have to do is to take as many pictures as you want, because you have seen that it also works fine with your invisible glasses ... So, I leave you to it ... so you can play as much as you want ... and when you are done, take in lots and lots of air, so you can turn off the camera and relax.

8.- Active mobilization(The tightrope walker)

For this exercise you need a little more space than in the previous ones, not a special kind of space, but the children need to have room to move. So it is better to try to find an empty space. At school, you might need to go outside the class, since inside with the furniture and the children there won't be enough space. We advise you to go to a quiet area (not the areas outside the classroom, but, instead, go to a classroom used for meetings, extra-curricular activities, etc.)

- Have you ever to the circus? It is unbelievable what those people can do; because there, no matter that people say that is not real, there are magicians making real magic, acrobats who can fly, people made of rubber, and my favorites: the tightrope walkers!

- Some of them can walk on a thread without falling! It is so cool!!! That is why I often like to feel as if I were one of them, without much risk, of course. I am not a professional tightrope walker, and I must be careful with that.

- The most important thing is to keep your balance, and breathing helps you to do that (well, you also need to breath to keep alive, of course!), but I love to feel as if the air I breath in reaches all the way to my feet; it is like a glue that keeps me on top of the rope.

- So now, let's try lifting a foot, but we have to keep sending glue to the other foot, because we are walking on the tightrope. And now, we can try with our other foot ... This way we will find out which foot is the one that keep us straight!! But we should not forget the glue ... Always, when we lift a foot, we have to breath in, and when we put it down, we can let the air go out.

- So, what if we try to do it faster? But, we still have to check that our glue is working well, so that first we lift one foot, and then the other ...

- Well, now we can start walking ... We are tightrope walkers and we are performing in the best show of the year! I breath in, take a step, let the air go ... there is nothing better than to trust your magic glue.

At this point, we can speed up our rhythm, slow it down, make them walk further, nearer ... but always reminding them about the breathing ...

- The show is over, so now we can return to our starting point, to rest ... tomorrow we will put on another great show!

9.- Contralateral exercises: "braingymnastics"(I watch myself in the mirror)

This exercise will be done standing up, and it will require that the guide model the movements that they are explaining, since with only words it would be harder for the children to understand. It might be a bit more difficult to do in the classroom, since we only have one guide, but it is no impossible: the students will form lines and the guide will stay in the middle, just in front of them all.

- We all have mirrors at home. There are mirror also in the garment stores, the beauty parlors, even in the shoe stores they have small mirrors on the floor, and there are mirrors also in the cars and on doors.

- But what you might not know is that sometimes mirrors don't do the same thing we are doing ... even more interesting ... sometimes ... the mirror tells you how you have to move! Would you like to try? Sometimes it is a lot of fun, because you can play tricks.

•Let us try: Hi! (wave your hand to say hello) ... well ... it looks like it is working, but if there is somebody for whom it does not work, let them tell me, so I can raise my hand, and they can raise their hand to ask ... (perhaps now it is a bit confusing ... it is a game designed to have the mirror raise a hand as if to ask a question, and so whoever wants to ask a question can raise their hand imitating the mirror).

•Well, so, before starting, we breath in air to get really awake ... once more ... and, then, ... go!

Now the point is to be a sort of cheerleader ... not so much to tell a story in this case, but to guide them gradually so they know how to place themselves.

•Right hand on your left shoulder! And don't let your elbow get far away from your body ... as if you were giving a huge hug to someone.

•Now, your head turns and goes down towards your shoulder, right were you hand is. Take in air, smile. Now your head turns and goes down on the other side ... and again, we breath in air, and smile! And ... we melt down as if we were an ice-cream melting.

•But, of course, if we do it on one side, the other also wants to have its turn ... So, now, right hand on right shoulder! And don't let your elbow go away from yourself ... as if we were giving a huge hug to somebody.

•Now, our head turns towards the shoulder where our hand is placed. we take in air, we smile ... now our head goes to the other side ... and, again, we breath in air, and we smile! And we relax as if we were an ice-cream melting down.

•Now, a little more difficult!!!

•We lift our left knee, and we put our right hand right on top of it ... Watch that balance! And, what if we try on the other side? (Repeat 5-10 times).

•And, could we try it backwards? Let us see if we can touch our right foot with our left hand without falling down! And the other way around too! Be careful not to fall down, cause we might break our mirror!!! (Repeat 5-10 times).

•But ... with this heat ... we can again melt like an ice-cream ... Don't you see how mirror can also be lots of fun?

10.- Sounds of strength(Giving our emotions a beat ... Music, maestro!)

This last exercise will done standing up, and with enough space to move well. You don't need an empty space, since we are going to use some items of the furniture as percussion instruments. If we are in a classroom, we have to try to keep the beat, otherwise we might end up in a shouting box.

•Long ago a very wise person (also quite grown up) told me that when our heart speaks to us, it does it singing and that, the more I would sing, the bigger would my heart become. And, since I love a lot of people, I need a huge heart ... and, besides, singing is fun!

•Let the show begin!

•I love to attach a feeling to each letter ... for example, amusement (the guide sets the tone, and they have to repeat it). To make it more fun, we can play with different melodies.

•And when the heart feels joy, it likes to add a beat to our symphony (we repeat with different melodies, with the letter A, and we add little touches with our hand on the area of the breastbone. We can also add dancing ... the more fun it is, the better they will join the dynamics).

•And to make joy fill in every space, a last shout: AAAHHH!!!

Give them a moment to laugh, to calm down, to do whatever they need to do ... and the game can be prolonged as long as we want. But, since they are children, it is nice to work all the other vowels. They can also keep the beat by hitting on some object, or with their hands ... The important thing is to create a space for merriment and release ... a different and fun way to let go of all the burdens we carry inside us.

The meaning of the rest of the vowels:

- A: AMUSEMENT
- E: EMOTION
- I: INTEREST
- O: OPTIMISM
- U: UNION... FOR UNION MAKES US STRONG