



## **○ Pedagogical Conduct**

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## 7. Pedagogical Conduct

Up to now, we have discussed specific methods of dealing with (cyber)mobbing. But children’s and adolescents’ response to method is actually secondary. Their primary response is to the person offering the methods.

For any method to even have a chance of producing sustainable effect, there are certain inner attitudes required on the part of educators. In the following, we will discuss the posture that is necessary if your influence on children and adolescents is to strengthen their resilience and promote their development, and what overall pedagogical propositions you can offer adolescents so that they develop pro-socially, refrain from violent behavior, and can rise to the (media) challenges of life.

### 7.1 Posture as the Foundation of One’s Actions

Whether we succeed in having a positive influence on the pro-social development of children and adolescents depends decisively on our own demeanor. Our posture determines our actions and the outcomes of our actions.

#### 7.1.1 Orientation to Needs

Every behavioral act, including those of children and adolescents, serves to fulfill basic needs (cf. Grüner 2010a). Among these “most essential target values of emotional activity” (Grawe 2000, p. 383) are the needs for:

- **security** (existential safety, orientation, trust, justice, fairness, values, norms, rules)
- **interaction** (attachment, closeness, belonging, companionship, togetherness, help, support, solidarity)

- **control** (freedom, power, self-efficacy, autonomy, participation, influence, codetermination)
- **stimulation** (play, fun, learning, action, entertainment, enjoyment, vitality, pleasure, joy, avoidance of fear and pain)
- **recognition** (respect, appreciation, success, esteem, a high standing)

Just as every fingerprint is unique, nature and nurture produce a unique manifestation of these basic needs in every individual person. At the same time, the diversity of these needs inevitably leads to intraindividual conflicts (within a person) and inter-individual conflicts (between persons). Anyone working with children and adolescents should not only reflect on his/her own set of needs and their interplay with the needs of an interaction partner, but rather should empathetically sense the individual needs of the adolescents, suggest pro-social paths to fulfilling these needs, and address the children’s conflicting needs. Whether the issue is mobbing, media consumption, drugs, violence or extremism, is beside the point.



*The aim is to enable children and adolescents to fulfill their basic needs in a pro-social manner, and to understand and come to terms with conflicts that arise.*



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To satisfy these basic needs, adolescents spend time in places (including media locations) that adults have no access to and therefore no way of influencing the young people's behavior there. In these control-free areas, the temptation is great for young people to fulfill their needs in ways that are not necessarily pro-social:

**Security:** the one who is the aggressor cannot be the victim, and therefore feels secure.

**Interaction:** bullies make friends with one another and form a tight clique.

**Control:** violence is associated with the experience of self-efficacy. Perpetrators of violence exert power over others and influence the course of social events.

**Stimulation:** violence is enjoyable, "bad" is good and is also extremely stimulating due to raised adrenaline and (in dangerous situations) endorphin levels.

**Recognition:** aggressors are often considered "cool" and are admired by the peer group, and they feel respected. Violence is often associated with a sense of achievement and enhanced self-esteem.

If they are to resist these temptations, children and adolescents have to be mentally strong and robust, to be resilient. We can all contribute to this by ensuring that basic needs are satisfied appropriately, for we are the most effective environmental protection known to resilience research (Wustmann 2004).

### 7.1.2 The Courage to Lead

We often dwell on questions such as: Is it even permissible for us to exert influence on children? And if so, how strongly? Should we, as adults, tell children what they are allowed to do and what they are not? Can we adults take the lead? Doesn't that make us callous and authoritarian? Are love and guidance even compatible with one another? We often hear people say, "I know I should be more consistent, but I just can't bring myself to be more strict." In other words, "People are afraid of bearing authority because they don't want to be authoritarian" (Jesper Juul).

Some reasons for this fear may be:

- **Fear of abusing authority**  
 "The abuse of authority and forced obedience in Germany's past apparently still affects pedagogical thinking and schoolteaching to this day" (Reichenbach 2010, 2011). A person in a leading role bears a great deal of responsibility. To do justice to it, leadership has to be oriented to ethical guidelines and to be accompanied by willingness for constant reflection on itself and others.
- **Fear of losing children's affection**  
 Another aspect is the fear of losing children's affection and having them turn away. We don't want to be the "bad guys".
- **Fear of being overchallenged**  
 Saying no, standing one's ground, and carrying out conflicts with children is strenuous. Being tolerant and permissive, allowing children to get away with things, is less complicated, easier, and demands less effort.

### ■ Fear of jeopardizing one's good relationship to the children

A clear, consistent, and occasionally strict stance may not suit our own image of ourselves as being endearing, nice, and understanding. Consistence and recognition can, however, go hand in hand, if the distinction is made between a person and his or her behavior. We can criticize behavior – even do so emphatically –, but not the person as a whole (“You get on my nerves! You’re impossible!”) or their inner experience or thoughts (“What a stupid idea!”), their feelings (“That’s nothing to get mad about!”), or their needs (“Who could possibly think that’s fun!”). In addition, carrying on and scolding (in the sense of unreflected “letting off steam”), making reproaches, and demanding insight and reasonableness (“And? Now do you see why ...?”) are signs of lack of self-esteem on the part of the adult. Conversely, recognition must not be misconstrued as an excuse to avoid voicing criticism. We can demonstrate understanding for the inner life of children – for their thoughts, feelings, and needs – without condoning dissocial behavior. Understanding the reasons for a person’s behavior is not tantamount to excusing it.



**In short:** *we need not decide between loving concern and decisive leadership. The secret of good up-bringing and pedagogy is to do both, for “The core of pedagogical interaction is a well-adjusted balance between compassionate understanding and guidance” (Bauer 2010).*

### 7.1.3 Composure

A short thinking experiment: You are very interested in the social development of a certain teenager. Let’s call him Max. You want him to stop harassing other people on a daily basis, insulting them, and helping himself to their belongings. You are conducting a project on preventing violence and have an overall commitment to it beyond the project itself. Nevertheless, Max’s behavior does not change. How do you feel now? Disappointed, slighted, angry, frustrated, helpless, unsettled? You have self-doubts setting in, and feel that you have failed? These are unbearable feelings. So you try harder and step up your commitment. Still no change in Max’s behavior. Now you notice that you’re thinking about Max while you’re at home. You can’t get him out of your head, just can’t find the ‘off’ switch. A new emotion comes into play: fear. Fear of renewed disappointment. You try even harder – and a vicious circle starts up. You are getting into a gratification crisis, i.e. your efforts are not rewarded. You begin to get irritable and thin-skinned. More and more often, you lose patience or simply withdraw. It’s not much further to a burnout. For in reality, in the course of a long professional life you have encountered any number of Maxes whose behavior you wished to influence and who have disappointed your expectations. In all these cases, you are allowing your own happiness, satisfaction, self-esteem, and success to depend on other individuals.

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What does this attitude mean for Max? Now, he is no longer allowed to be a child/adolescent. Now, you need him. Now, he is supposed to satisfy your needs for attention, influence, confirmation, success, and recognition. Now, you are dependent on him, and not vice versa, as would correspond to a healthy generational border and a composed bearing on your part. Now, your happiness depends on his behavior. He senses the power he has over you. From his perspective, that makes you small, weak, and susceptible to manipulation. Now, he can take the lead and play the role of the tyrant (cf. Winterhoff 2009). At the same time, he is angry about it and behaves even more aggressively than he did before. Which leads us back to the above-mentioned vicious circle. The situation is aggravated by the fact that Max now feels he is under pressure. To make you happy, he has to change his behavior. Maybe he would even have liked to do so, but now his response becomes one of defiance.

How can such vicious circles be avoided? You can only maintain your inner independence (sovereign composure) if your own happiness, satisfaction, and self-esteem do not depend on altering other persons' behavior, but rather on your professionalism and on changes in your own behavior. Your happiness is not tangent on whether children and adolescents behave pro-socially. You ask yourself what you have done right, and what aspects of your attitude and behavior you could improve. Instead of exerting pressure, you make proposals and offer young people new options.

Avoiding perfectionism is an element of this inner composure. You are proud when you succeed in identifying a mistake of your own and can gradually manage to refrain from repeating it. Mistakes are a source of motivation to work on one's own behavior – patiently, one step at a time.

You no longer identify with others, but rather maintain a professional stance, and you own your inner independence. What signs are there of this inner independence? Composure, for example, is demonstrated when you no longer scold people. Since you don't take dissocial behavior personally, you don't feel slighted by it and have no need to "let off steam". Since you are not placing blame with others, you refrain from reproaches, accusations, and complaints. You don't rely on children's confirmation of you and therefore needn't exhort them to demonstrate insight and be reasonable.

This inner composure does not set in overnight. Sovereign demeanor is a life-long learning process that only succeeds when accompanied by continual reflection on oneself and others. Working on oneself also implies refraining from self-excuses. Examples would be: "That's the way I am"; "I'm just the impulsive type, temperamental and chaotic"; "That's too much work"; "They know what I mean"; "I don't want to lose my spontaneity"; "Hey, I'm not a robot"; "But I have to be authentic." Every new stance and every new form of behavior feels strange and inauthentic at first, requiring time to become a part of the self.

To maintain one's own sovereign composure and inner independence, it also helps to regard aggressive and disrespectful behavior of children and adolescents from a different perspective. *Breaking rules and being disrespectful are often interactive proposals serving as tests.* To check out your composure, your frustration tolerance, and your self-control, Max provokes you and tries to get you flustered. To test your steadfastness, he tries to get you off balance. To test your self-assurance, he tries to make you feel insecure. To test your leadership and assertiveness, he tries playing the boss. To find out whether dissocial behavior will get him your attention, he tries to stand out with aggressive behavior.

To find out whether he can rely on you or rather has to fear rejection, withdrawal of appreciation, violence or abuse of power (being denigrated, humiliated, ridiculed, scolded, shouted at, threatened, subjected to force, silenced, etc.), he tries to get you into a position of helplessness, powerlessness, and weakness. To find out whether you will insist on adherence to rules, he breaks the rules. If you pass all the tests, Max will form an attachment, will seek out your company and listen to what you say, meaning that – slowly but surely – he will adopt values and norms from you. If you don't pass the tests, that's no big problem. Max will continue making interactive proposals to test you, since he is also quite interested in your development.

One's own posture forms the foundation of preventive action and intervention. Children and adolescents sense whether or not you have the courage to lead, whether you identify with them, project your own expectations, hopes, and longings onto them and misuse them as substitute partners; and they respond accordingly.

Based on the developmentally relevant posture that has been discussed above, the question arises: What can we offer children and adolescents to promote the development of pro-social behavior?

## 7.2 Pedagogical Propositions

### 7.2.1 Explanations

If we expect children and adolescents to do something or not to do it, we have to explain the reasons. To explain does not mean to negotiate, and the young people need not agree with the explanation and adopt its rationale for themselves. By sharing practical life experience, we are making them an offer to understand something better and grasp it as a meaningful part of a whole.

When conveying values in the framework of violence prevention and therefore also in the context of (cyber)mobbing, the essential core is the first article of the constitution as the minimal standard on which our liberal, democratic social order in the sense of a strident and well-protected democratic system is based. Citizenship education does not only consist in offering liberties and the right to codetermination, but also in the demand that duties be fulfilled – to observe human rights, civil rights, and to respect human dignity (cf. Schmidt 2011; Marks 2010). The most important fundamental rights – in the context of social learning – are the right to emotional and physical Integrity, the right to property, and the right to free expression. Exclusion, slander, ridicule, injurious comments, insults, physical blows, and property damage are serious violations of law that must not be trivialized on the pretext that "they're only children."



**Advantage:** To explain something, no specific knowledge of methods is required.

**Disadvantage:** Only in the most unusual cases does an explanation trigger such a strong and emotionally gripping 'aha' effect that it results in an intrinsically motivated change of behavior, i.e. not based on pedagogical actions undertaken by adults. Most kids will simply shelve an explanation under "what adults carry on about", letting it in one ear and out the other.

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### 7.2.2 Conveying and Reinforcing Skills

In order to cultivate pro-social behavior, children and adolescents require skills and personal competence. Among the abilities that grant them the competence to act are non-violent self-assertion and communicative skills, such as

- the ability to express their inner experience,
- the ability to voice criticism in the form of a wish,
- how to criticize behavior rather than a person and his/her inner experience,
- how to describe behavioral acts precisely rather than using standard expressions such as “he gets on my nerves” or “he annoys me”,
- how to relate things from an experiential perspective, e.g. “When you make that face, I feel provoked” rather than “You are provoking me,”
- and – particularly important – the ability to praise, confirm, and acknowledge others for their behavior.

But adolescents also need to practice their personal skills, for example to develop courage and civil commitment, which involves learning to overcome their own fears and to take a stand and express their opinions in a community situation or in the public sphere. This applies as well to personal attributes, such as honesty, sincerity, reliability, and readiness to act.

Of particular significance is the development and reinforcement of the personal skill of *self-control* (self-determination, self-regulation, self-direction, self-care, mindfulness, control of impulses, self-restraint). This is the basis and prerequisite for all other skills and is therefore a core competency. It encompasses, among other things, the ability to accept delayed gratification, to tolerate frustration, and to relinquish some ideas or wishes. Some people may associate self-control with commands like “stand up straight!” But the core issue is, on the contrary, that children learn not to react immediately and automatically, instead developing an “inner observer” that allows for mindfulness and concentration. Training such competencies with young people also counteracts the effects of the advertising industry that tempts us to believe we can have anything and everything right away, and if we can’t afford it, we can get it on credit.

Scientific studies – beginning with Walter Mischel’s “marshmallow test” – have provided impressive proof that children who have a greater degree of self-control are more successful in school, can concentrate better, display more extensive social skills, and can handle stress more effectively than age peers who have less self-control. Later in life, they are healthier and more successful in their professional lives and their relationships. Self-control is an essential factor in resilience (Wustmann 2004) and has much greater influence than the intelligence quotient on academic success (cf. Bauer 2015; Duckworth 2011; Ernst 2010; Mischel et al. 1989; Mischel 2014; Moffitt 2011; Spitzer 2011). Malte Friese and Claude Messner from the Institute for Psychology at the University of Basel describe this as follows: “Simply stated, intelligence gives an indication of a person’s potential, while self-control allows for an assessment of how well a person uses that potential to achieve success” (quoted in Jacobs 2013).

Fun and diversion are good and important things, to be counted among the basic needs of human beings. When the issue is learning self-control, however, it is permissible to frustrate children on occasion, taking them to their limits and expecting them to deal with it – rather than expecting ourselves to change the tack every ten minutes. To avoid underchallenging or overchallenging children, training in self-control has to be oriented to their level of achievement – ‘picking them up’ where they are, not where we would like them to be. Their developmental age is decisive, not their biological age.

Training has to be planned in such a way that children experience success. This strengthens their expectation of self-efficacy and their self-esteem. Looking forward to future successes promotes their willingness to make an effort and motivates them to goal-oriented changes in behavior. Training is most effective when it is ritualized and the desired behavior thus becomes habitual.



**Advantage:** *Training and rituals facilitate and promote pro-social behavior by establishing and reinforcing neuronal networks (automatic responses and habits).*

**Disadvantages:** *To apply what has been learned, children and adolescents have to apply it in practice. They need to be willing to adjust their own behavior. This readiness is not always given. Another disadvantage: To maintain the positive effects of training, constant practice and repetition are necessary.*

### 7.2.3 Providing Attention and Recognition

Receiving attention and recognition are among the most important fundamental human needs (cf. Grawe 2000; Grüner 2010). We can promote children’s readiness to develop pro-social behavior and motivate them to change their habits by offering to fulfill these needs. The goal is to establish a reliable – that is, predictable – culture of acknowledgement that provides motivation for pro-social behavior by activating the brain’s reward system: its anticipation of the pleasure of receiving attention and recognition. This includes the anticipation of reliable and ongoing feedback as a response to positive changes in behavior. Dopamin being produced and circulated through the brain promotes motivation, concentration, and willingness to achieve. It focuses a person’s brain, wakes him up, and makes him feel euphoric (in anticipation). Some forms of attention and recognition are: handshakes, approval, applause, oral or written praise (referring to the behavior, not to the person), symbolic means of acknowledgement (smileys, etc.), waivers on homework, special activities, privileges, prizes, certificates, additional entries in school reports, etc. When the anticipated recognition is experienced, the brain’s reward system is active and produces opioids that induce relaxed and happy feelings. Anticipation of more such feelings again activates the system of expectation, which in turn produces dopamine and leads to renewed willingness to achieve. A more thorough description of recognition culture and its neurobiological foundations can be found in Bauer 2008 und Grüner / Hilt / Tilp 2015a.



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Because we ourselves were often shortchanged when we were younger, even today still don't receive enough recognition, and because it is hard to bear that some adolescents cannot be intrinsically motivated: we often have hurdles to overcome on the path to a professional culture of recognition: "What I'm asking of the children is just normal, it can be taken for granted, I just expect it"; "Silence is praise enough"; "Life is not a bowl of cherries"; "Everyone has to do his duty"; "I don't get any praise either, just for doing my job"; "I didn't get anything handed to me in life, either"; "Then they'll only do it to get a reward – that destroys intrinsic motivation"; "You shouldn't spoil children"; "I haven't got any time for that". When inner resistance along these lines rears its head, praise is likely to be mingled with irritation and morph into scolding: "Nice to see that you're finally doing what I've been telling you all along!" If you as an educator do not take the time to provide positive reinforcement by granting attention and recognition to children and adolescents, then they have no other choice but to attract attention to themselves by behaving badly and eliciting negative feedback. This brings us to the

**Attention and Recognition Traps:**

- A discontinuation of dissocial behavior is not an occasion for praise ("If you stop doing ... , then later you'll be allowed to ... !"), because a reward would merely motivate adolescents to more of the same dissocial behavior.
- Dissocial behavior must not be allowed to pay off. Let's go back to the example of Max. What does Max need to do in order to quickly reap attention and esteem from as many people as possible? He has to create a disturbance. Then he will get attention. Someone will take heed of him, and he will feel important. For him, it's a simple equation, and it works: the more often everyone pays attention to him, the higher his status in the peer group will rise. The more disrespectful he manages to be, the more he'll be admired by the clique. For this reason, we work with the concept of the 'time out' – just like referees in all the team sports in the world that strive for fairness.

Children's whose behavior is dissocial briefly lose their right to participate actively in whatever is going on. The opposite reaction – directing one's immediate attention to those who are behaving dissocially – would be counterproductive: it would enhance their status among some of the others, while those children who behave pro-socially would receive no attention at all during the whole episode. No one who behaves dissocially should be rewarded with extra attention.

An example from everyday school life: after a break, two children come back into the classroom in an upset and each of them claims that the other one insulted him. If you turn your attention to them right away, it will have several disadvantages:

- You are breaching the fundamental tenet, "do not work while emotions are at high pitch". When adrenaline is flowing, the body is set for fight or flight, and the brain does not work properly. The conflict therefore threatens to escalate.
- The students who want to get on with learning are annoyed because the lesson is interrupted and they aren't given any attention or regard. During the incident, they are simply ignored.
- The students who don't want to learn are glad that the lesson is interrupted and now know what they need to do in the future to enjoy some attention and a break from lessons.
- You yourself are in a stress situation because you want to get on with the lesson, and this increases the probability that you will react in an unprofessional manner.
- If you take the two children aside and talk to them now, you will be granting them your presence, time, and attention, while giving them a negative response. In doing so, you are rewarding them for their aggressive behavior and motivating them to behave aggressively in the future as well.

- If you ask the two children why they did this or what they were thinking, they may experience it as an offensive, reproachful, or even as being blamed. At the same time, this is an invitation for them attempt to justify themselves or make excuses (“It wasn’t on purpose”; “I was just making a joke”; “He was asking for it”; “The others do the same thing”; “Why always me?”).
- If you then lose your patience and scold them, this in turn brings several disadvantages:
  - ◆ By losing your self-control and demonstrating a low level of frustration tolerance, you damage your own image as a role model.
  - ◆ You misuse the two children as a sounding board for your own annoyance.
  - ◆ You lose your inner equilibrium and your composure. With that, you demonstrate weakness and give the children power over you.
  - ◆ By losing your temper, you grant them an intense kind of closeness to you in the form of even more negative attention.

In such a case, it is to the advantage of all the participants if you give each of the two children a place and enough time (out) to calm down – together with the promise to make a note of what’s bothering them and the suggestion to clarify it later. This could also be an offer to work through the conflict in the class council or a mediation session.



**Advantage:** Anticipation of approval and recognition is a strong source of motivation. It can make children eager to behave pro-socially because they look forward to the attention and recognition they will receive.

**Disadvantage:** Anticipation of attention and recognition is an extrinsic source of motivation. If the behavioral reward disappears, i.e. if pro-social behavior is no longer reliably rewarded by attention and recognition, then the motivation to behave pro-socially loses its momentum.

#### 7.2.4 Making Interactive Proposals

If children and adolescents encounter adults who satisfy their basic needs for security, attention, self-efficacy, stimulation, and recognition, then they are less susceptible to satisfying these needs through dissocial behavior: instead, they feel attached to these adults and they emulate them.

Experiencing adults who take the lead, who expect something of children and adolescents and trust them to manage it, who show concern about their worries, troubles, and conflicts, and make feasible suggestions towards pro-social development: all this encourages kids and teens to form attachments to such adults and to internalize their values, norms, and rules.

Children and adolescents who experience adults as having self-control, giving an example of non-violent behavior and credibility, will orient themselves towards these adults and will behave in an exemplary way themselves.

Offering interactive relationships to children and adolescents raises their levels of the attachment hormone oxytocin (cf. Bauer 2008). This ‘feel good’ hormone allows them to build trust, and it inhibits aggressivity.



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At the same time, the preventive effect of positive attachments is limited by everyday life: relationships that promote attachment require investing time, which is not always sufficiently in large groups or when the adult role is passed on to a new colleague. Pro-social behavior based on affection for an adult is also extrinsically motivated. If the attachment person disappears, so does the protective effect. This makes building new attachments more difficult for children and adolescents with attachment disorders, who demonstrate either ambivalent behavior, oscillating between exaggerated closeness and aggressive rejection, or avoidant behavior that feigns attachment and in fact coldly ignores any interactive effort on the part of the interested adult. In cases where adolescents find themselves caught in a conflict of loyalties – because they feel affection for their peers, parents, or educators, but these persons live by differing rules, values, and norms, or cultivate differing styles of upbringing – they are faced with a dilemma and forced to make a decision. Frequently, the loyalty to the family and the peer group is stronger than the attachment to the professional person.



**Advantage:** A secure attachment to adults who cultivate an authoritative style in upbringing is, in terms of environment, the strongest protective factor known to resilience research.

**Obstacles:** Large groups, frequent shifts from one caregiver to another, attachment disorders, and loyalty conflicts make it more difficult to build secure attachments.

### 7.2.5 Working with Retrospective Sanctions

This section addresses retrospective sanctions that are enacted because dissocial behavior has taken place. In Chapter 7.2.7, we will discuss prospective sanctions that motivate persons to help others and not harm them in the future.

Violence and other forms of dissocial behavior must never be ignored. To protect the community, it is imperative that violations of the rights and values of others within a social community be sanctioned and that restitution be made to restore balance. What effect do retrospective sanctions have? In answering this question, the outcomes of research on sanctions provide important insights (cf. Backmann 2003; Kury / Scherr 2013; Lamnek 2007; Wetz 1998). *The greatest and most important effect of a retrospective sanction is that it elucidates norms for the rest of the community.* Violence is very seductive and contagious, as it provides many advantages to the aggressor. Violence can be used to satisfy the most essential basic needs (cf. Grawe 2000; Grüner 2010):

- justice and security: With violence, one can take revenge for slights and violence one has experienced (victim-offender reversal). At the same time, one crosses over onto the 'safe' side – for an offender cannot be a victim.
- belonging and attention: A person who applies force is regarded as "cool", and adults direct their attention to the aggressor.
- self-efficacy and control: Violent acts are associated with feelings of influence and power.
- stimulation: Violence is "phat" and feels like fun. It releases an intense feeling of vitality and is experienced as a 'kick'.
- desire for esteem and status: With violence, one can procure 'respect'. Violence is associated with feelings of greatness, strength, and enhanced status. One can make a name for oneself, be admired, and reap esteem. Violence also serves as a protection against one's own feelings of inferiority or shame (cf. Marks 2010).

Or to express it in the words of two students (Glattacker / Engel / Grüner / Hilt / Käßler 2002, p. 208):

*“Students are violent because it makes them feel stronger. Maybe they get beaten and abused at home. In their hearts, they hate everybody, and over against their parents they feel small, and they don’t want to feel small, so they feel strong when they have the feeling that they are threatening and oppressing others.”*

*“If you want to be cool in the clique, you have to have beaten somebody up.”*

If dissocial behavior is sanctioned, those who adhere to norms and values experience that as justice being done. Everyone can see that norm-violating behavior doesn’t pay off and that those who gained an advantage from it have to pay the price. This motivates the others to continue conforming to norms. If there are no sanctions enacted, the others feel “taken for a ride”; they are frustrated, angry, and they wonder whether they as well might prefer to profit from the advantages of dissocial behavior.

*A retrospective sanction can also lead to changes in the aggressor’s behavior.* But for that to succeed, eight prerequisites must be fulfilled:

- The reaction must be prompt to violations of boundaries, values, or rules that are clearly proven or were observed by an educationally responsible adult. Otherwise, the response to the behavior will no longer be associated with to the behavior itself, and ‘memory gaps’ may lead to a situation in which the response is considered unjust.
- There has to be a reaction to any and every violation of boundaries, values, or rules.
  - ◆ If irregular exceptions are made, children and adolescents will be motivated to violate rules as a way of finding out how often exceptions will be made.

- While the reaction to behavior one has witnessed personally (calling it out, making a note) has to follow immediately, any sanction going beyond an immediate ‘time out’ should be announced at a later time (“Sleep on it first”). This allows for emotions to cool down, helps avoid over-hasty, unprofessional moves, and gives both sides time for reflection. In (cyber)mobbing constellations, sanctions should only be enacted after successful work on the informal framework of values and norms. In such cases, this step has high priority and must be initiated quickly (see also Chapter 4).
- A sanction has greater effect if announced by a person with whom the offender has a good relationship. Since this person is important to the student, the sanction also has more significance.
- A sanction has to relate to the way the student’s needs are structured, or in other words, it has to hurt. It needs to weigh heavier than the many advantages of violent behavior (see above). Therefore, a simply apology does not fulfill this criterion.
- When sanctions are enacted, it is to important to stand your ground. Giving in and ignoring the consequences – out of fear of losing students’ affection, out of compassion, or due to feeling guilty oneself – makes you appear weak and manipulable from the students’ point of view. When a sanction is completed, or later, gestures of reconciliation can be made to set a positive mode of interaction (a spiral of reciprocal giving) in motion. The gesture could be: helping to put the last of the chairs up on the desks, giving a student first preference to respond to a question during class, or offering a one-on-one talk.



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- Any sanction has to be associated with responsibility. No one likes to feel guilty. No one likes to bear the responsibility for dissocial behavior, since that would imply accepting the sanction and the call for making restitution. Therefore, the aggressor blames the adult for the sanction: “Just because of him/her, now I have to ...”.

If you let the blame rest on yourself, that has two disadvantages. Firstly, the aggressor will feel innocent and present him/herself as a victim (“Why always me. It’s just because they’re after me ...”). His behavior becomes even more dissocial than it was before, because he is enraged over being, from his point of view, “persecuted”.

Secondly, if you always let the blame fall back on yourself, you will feel guiltier with each sanction you enact. This latent guilt weakens you and makes you manipulable. Maybe you will turn a blind eye to one incident or another, be more understanding than is appropriate, or allow an offender to get off with a display of insight and an apology. For this reason, we always couple sanctions with the question, “How could you have prevented ... from happening?”, or “How could you prevent ... from happening in the future?” With that, we return the burden of blame, which was being unloaded upon us, back to the student and make it unmistakably clear who is responsible for the sanction.

Before someone – after a time out – is again allowed to participate actively in the community, we ask, “Are you ready to behave respectfully now?” In this way, we emphasize that a lack of respect was the reason for the sanction and that the student bears the responsibility for it.

- A sanction has to involve the community, firstly because the norm-confirming effect would otherwise fall short, and secondly because “...every act of violence, even if committed secretly, is a public issue, since it disregards the foundations of communal life together. The response to such incidents is insufficient if it omits the public dimension. In our opinion, every attempt to minimize or deny the significance of violent incidents for the community constitutes a renewed violation of the common good. Anyone who simply deals with a violent child behind closed doors is disregarding the community’s right to visible protective measures and also the child’s right to restore order in his disturbed relationship to the community” (Omer/von Schlippe 2010, p. 252).

A sanction is ultimately an offer that we make. Our satisfaction with it does not depend on the more or less successful behavioral adjustment of the aggressor, but rather on the professionalism of our own actions. We therefore ask ourselves how many of the criteria listed above we have been able to fulfill, and what we can do better the next time. Otherwise, we can again stumble into the burn-out trap (see segment above on composure).

In the context of mobbing intervention as described in Chapter 4, we do not take recourse to retrospective sanctions – for the following reason: mobbing is a systemic problem, meaning that the entire group (rather than certain individuals) bears responsibility for it and has to be involved in resolving it. After mobbing intervention has taken place, retrospective sanctions can be enacted if individual students again violate human rights.



**Advantage:** Retrospective sanctions are indispensable because, over and above their effect of reinforcing norms, they have a primary preventive influence on the community.

**Disadvantage:** Since it is seldom the case that all the conditions necessary for behavioral adjustment are fulfilled, a retrospective sanction rarely leads to a correction of the offender's behavior. And even if it does, the behavioral change is not intrinsically motivated, but rather only extrinsically – based on fear of further sanctions and usually maintained only as long as the student feels closely observed and is convinced that further misbehavior will again be sanctioned.

All in all, it would be better if we needed to enact as few sanctions as possible. How is it possible to prevent the violations of rules, values, and norms that make retrospective sanctions necessary?

### 7.2.6 Demonstrating Presence

What does a person normally do before breaking a rule? He or she looks around to see if anyone is watching, checks whether his behavior will be observed and monitored. The more certain he is that his actions will be noticed, the more likely he is to refrain from going on with them. When we're driving, if we know where the radar trap is, we're going to slow down there – at least enough to avoid losing our driver's license, because that's a sanction that really hurts. Children and adolescents don't behave any better than adults do. They act exactly the same way: this means that we can prevent violations of values, norms, and rules by demonstrating presence. The more convinced a child is that his rule violation will be noticed and sanctioned, the less likely the violation is to occur.



**Advantage:** The frequency of sanctions can be significantly reduced through increased presence of adults.

**Obstacle:** We can't demonstrate the necessary presence everywhere and all the time. On mobile phones, along the way to school or a youth center, in some areas of the campus, hallways, rest rooms, showers, and locker rooms, we normally have no control; children and adolescents tend to take full advantage of that.

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### 7.2.7 Promoting Compassion with Prospective Sanctions

*All the offerings proposed up to this point have the disadvantage that the pro-social behavior they wish to induce is not intrinsically motivated.* It relies instead on external influence – including that of adults. At the same time, the vanishingly small number of children who can be moved by good explanations towards intrinsically motivated social behavior is negligible.

With prospective sanctions, we make young people an offer towards behavioral change that, by contrast to the behavioral adjustment described in the previous section (through retrospective sanctions), is intrinsically motivated and is sustainable. The retrospective sanction remains necessary, as a response to violation of rights or rules, and the prospective sanction is also necessary to prevent future violations. A prospective sanction promotes compassion – the intrinsic motivation to behave pro-socially and help others – and essentially consists of a carefully conducted confrontation with the consequences of behavior, coupled with the application of techniques for reversal of perspective and dissolution of justification strategies. In addition to these techniques being integrated into normal everyday pedagogy and education, they are also an important element in specific methods such as social training (cf. Grüner / Hilt / Tilp 2015a), mediation (cf. Grüner 2015, Grüner / Hilt / Tilp 2015b), reparation (cf. Grüner 2008) and mobbing intervention (see Chapter 4 and Grüner / Hilt 2011).

At the age of three to five years, children develop the ability to put themselves in another person's position and reflect on the thoughts, feelings, needs, and intentions of the other. They develop hypotheses about the inner experience of other persons. This inner assumption of perspective is therefore called "Theory of Mind" or ToM (cf. Bischof 1999, Bischof-Köhler 2011, Förstl 2012). External assumption of perspective, by comparison, is already possible in the first year of life, and is designated as 'model learning', by imitation or observation.

ToM enables children not only to reflect on others, but also on themselves. With the help of ToM, children can develop a stable image of self and project it into the future. They develop a permanent gender identity. ToM also enables foresight in thinking and acting, facilitating delayed gratification of needs, tolerance for frustration, and self-regulation (see also Chapter 7.2.2). The capacity for ToM can be utilized both pro-socially and dissocially. Without it, betrayal, deception, lying, slander, pretense, spreading rumors, and acting anonymously are not thinkable – and neither is (cyber)mobbing.

ToM is not to be confused with empathy. Empathy is a multidimensional construct. Simply understanding what another person is experiencing – cognitive empathy – corresponds to a partial area of ToM. The emotional reaction to the inner experience of another – inward sharing of, relating to, and sympathizing with another's feelings – also results from the ability to adopt another's perspective, but affective or emotional empathy extends beyond ToM itself.

The distinction between cognitive and emotional empathy is of decisive significance not only towards prevention in general, but also specifically in the context of mobbing prevention and intervention. If cognitive empathy is trained exclusively, i.e. if the emphasis is merely on comprehension of what another is experiencing, this enables students who are willing to use violence to be even more effective in 'casing' their victims and harassing them. In other words, restricting oneself to "exclusive promotion of cognitive skills (e.g. adoption of perspective) can under certain circumstances lead to clever application of socially manipulative behavior in the group environment, meaning that the intervention itself does not relieve the problem but rather, on the contrary, results in an increase in instances of bullying" (Scheithauer, Hayer / Bull 2007, p. 149).

Mobbing is referred to in English-speaking areas as bullying. Children and adolescents who are prepared to use force are not lacking in cognitive empathy. They rather understand very well what others experience inwardly. What they lack is emotional empathy and the compassion that emerges from it, for "Offenders who have learned to use aggressive means to attain a position of social power and to maintain it have a good antenna for vulnerability and socially weak positions" (Schäfer / Korn 2004, pp. 20).

Prevention projects that emphasize training in cognitive empathy enable students to harass their victims even more effectively.

Emotional empathy is, however, not to be confused with emotional contagion. Emotional contagion is an inherited instinct that can be explained by the workings of mirror neurons (cf. Bauer 2006, Rizzolatti / Sinigaglia 2008). It is an automatic process of affective resonance through which we identify with a counterpart and adopt his feelings, making them our own, whereas the ability to adopt another's perspective, developed between the ages of one and three years, allows us to simultaneously perceive our own feelings and someone else's, to reflect on them and distance ourselves from them.

Emotional contagion has two negative side effects. Firstly, persons working in helping professions are endangered by burnout if they allow themselves, in an unreflected process, to be caught up in the feelings of another, identifying and suffering with that person. Secondly, we may also assume a defensive attitude in order to avoid emotional contagion. Sometimes, another person's suffering comes home to us in such an unpleasant way that we react with antipathy or we hesitate to establish a relationship with the child or adolescent and work towards attachment. In children and adolescents who behave violently, resistance against emotional contagion can trigger extremely aggressive reactions. Since one is striving to avoid emotional involvement and therefore puts up defenses (defense against shame), the young person feels provoked and gets completely unhinged. This can be likened to hitting someone who is already down.

Nevertheless, it remains true that emotional contagion is a prerequisite for emotional empathy, which in turn is a prerequisite for compassion. Emotional empathy becomes compassion when it gives rise to the wish, the readiness, and the motivation to behave caringly towards another – i.e. not to harm them, but to help them. *Compassion is not an emotion, but rather an intrinsic motivation to behave pro-socially and help others* (cf. Singer / Bolz 2013).

If we succeed in pointing out to children and adolescents the consequences of their dissocial behavior so clearly, tangibly, and palpably that they not only grasp them cognitively, but are also emotionally moved and feel shocked, concerned, shaken, and upset, so that they feel deep remorse and become reflective, then emotional empathy can develop into compassion. The consequences of the behavior have to get 'under their skin' and not simply be grasped on a cognitive level.

*'Shaking up' young persons in a perceptive and appreciative way is an important element in effective and sustainable pedagogy.* Children and adolescents need adults who offer them ongoing training in compassion. They need adults who have the courage and the professional knowledge of methods required to help them take stock of the consequences of their actions, who make proposals on adopting other perspectives, and who break down their justification strategies.

It is essential for educators to reach a thorough comprehension of these interrelated connections, particularly because the core task of 'shaking up' a person's presuppositions (see Chapter 4) must never take the form of embarrassment, shaming, or oppressive pedagogy. But without any 'shaking up', efforts at prevention and mobbing intervention often remain a 'flash in the pan' and produce no sustainable effect.



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The more often we induce children and adolescents to take stock of the consequences of their behavior, the more considerate their behavior will become. The more often they have to answer questions about the consequences of their actions for others, the more responsibly they will act. The more often they reflect, before taking action, on the effect it could have upon others, the more circumspect they will become.

*If we hesitate to spell out the consequences of their dissocial behavior to children and adolescents, we are impeding their pro-social development.* It is also a way of trivializing and belittling them. If we protect children and adolescents from being shaken up when necessary, we are denying them the possibility to develop the strongest, intrinsically compelling factor that inhibits the use of violence – namely, compassion.

In addition to confrontation with the consequences of action, there are other techniques that can be applied to promote emotional empathy, e.g. asking young people what they assume the consequences might be, or having them describe situations, feelings, and needs that they have experienced and that can be translated to the person who is damaged – this can involve role play and role reversal. Detailed description of these techniques can be found in Grüner / Hilt / Tilp 2015a, Grüner 2015, Grüner/Hilt / Tilp 2015b, Grüner 2008 and in the third phase of Systemic Mobbing Intervention (see Chapter 4 and Grüner / Hilt 2011).

The question, "How would you feel if someone ... ?", is counterproductive in working towards emotional empathy for the following reasons:

- Those asked this question will concentrate on their own experience instead of the experience of the other person.
- Unless they have already experienced the exact same situation once before, which is unlikely, they can honestly reply with "No idea!" and successfully parry your question.

- They can give answers such as, "That wouldn't bother me!" or "I'm not that oversensitive!" – portraying the victim as a sissy.
- They can come back with "No one would dare do that to me!" – assuming a position of strength and humiliating the person who was targeted.
- They may feel attacked and accused, and respond with justifications: "It wasn't on purpose"; "I was just making a joke"; "He was asking for it"; "The others do the same thing"; "Why always me?"
- They take your question as a demand that they demonstrate insight and then try to second-guess you by imagining what you might like to hear or what is supposed to be a socially acceptable answer – but with no inner resonance (the insight trap).

Behavioral change will only result from a confrontation with the consequences of one's actions if the confrontation triggers emotional concern and upheaval. But no one enjoys feeling the pain he or she has inflicted upon someone else. To protect themselves from feeling shaken-up or concerned, and to deflect the need for compassion with the other, individuals condone their own behavior and block off any compassion that might arise by making self-serving excuses and attempts at mollification. That is to say, they rectify their behavior: "It was all in fun"; "It wasn't intentional"; "That's no big thing"; "It's his fault, he started it"; "I got mad, that's all"; "My hand just slipped"; "I can't help it, I have ADHD"; "Everyone else does it, too"; "That's normal for us"; "I was just making sure I get respect"; "Why always me?" *Justifications make it impossible to develop compassion.*

Such justification strategies, refusals of empathy, and blockage of compassion can only be dissipated through repeated intervention with questions/statements such as: "What consequences did the joke have for ... ?"; "What were the unintentional consequences of your behavior?"; "Your feeling provoked does not give you the right to use force"; "You lost your self-control, and what were the consequences?"; "It may be normal for you, but not for us."

Here, we respect human rights. Anyone who does harm to another has to make restitution"; "The issue is not that someone has something against you, or whether we like you or not. The only issue is the consequences of your actions." A detailed discussion of this is given in Grüner 2008.

Since the question "Why did you do that?" or "What were you thinking?" can be taken as an attack, a reproach, an assignment of guilt, or a demand for submissive insight, and can also serve as an invitation to make justifications that then have to be taken apart, it is better to refrain from the question "why".

*Asking why will only evoke justifications.* In everyday classroom situations, a student's answer to the question, "Why did you disturb the lesson?" is highly likely to be one or more of the following attempts at

rectification: "No idea"; "I didn't do anything"; "He started it"; "I just asked him a question"; "I just wanted to give him the eraser"; "He provoked me"; "Everybody else disturbs the class as well"; "I was bored." It would be a very rare exception for a student to admit that the behavior (like any form of behavior) was aimed at fulfilling a basic need (see Chapter 7.1.1) by saying something like: "I wanted you to give me more attention"; "I wanted to feel important, influential, and significant"; "I want the others to think I'm cool, I want to gain higher status"; "I think it's funny when you go off like a rocket. I wanted to get you up and going"; "I didn't feel like working. I caused a disturbance so that you would have to interrupt your teaching and this tiring lesson would be cancelled." Either the student is not conscious of these deeper reasons, or he/she cannot articulate them.

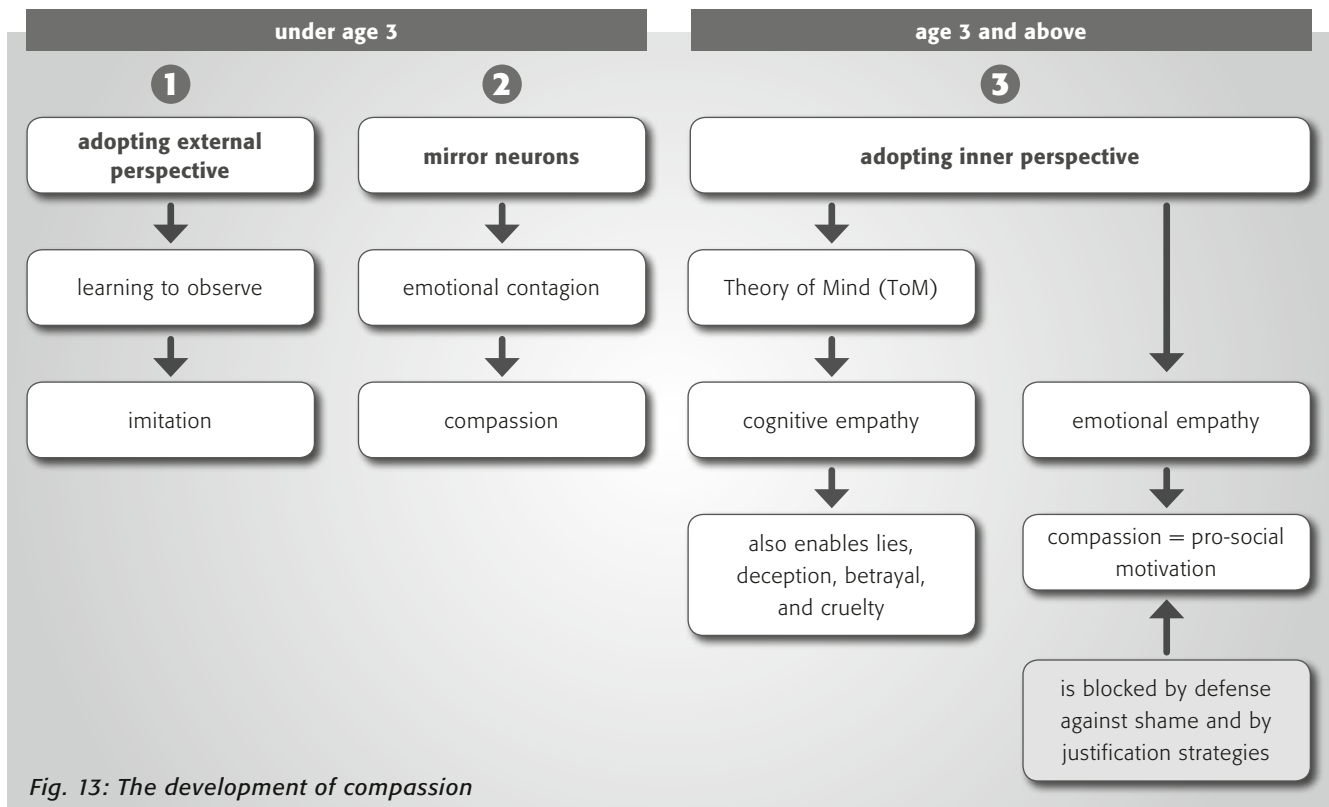


Fig. 13: The development of compassion




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Retrospective and prospective sanctions are not mutually exclusive. They complement one another. After being confronted with the consequences of an offense (prospectively – so that no further harm will be done), the person responsible has to make restitution for it (retrospectively – because harm has been done).

The most important means of promoting compassion is a careful confrontation with the consequences of an action, accompanied by techniques for adopting the perspective of another person and for dismantling justification strategies.

 **Advantage:** *Compassion, as an intrinsic motivation for pro-social behavior and helping others, exerts the strongest effect towards inhibiting violence and therefore preventing it.*

**Obstacles:** *Permissive styles of upbringing and pedagogy, which are very widespread, impede the development of compassion due to the fact that they withhold from children and adolescents the essential experience of feeling 'shaken up'. What is more, young persons' inner defenses against feeling shame and their strategies for justification may already be so entrenched that being 'shaken up' in a pedagogical context may not suffice to enable them to develop compassion.*


### 7.2.8 Making Suitable Structures and Resources Available

For children and adolescents, pro-social personality formation is only possible in an environment that provides suitable structures and available resources in terms of time, space, and personnel.

Prevention is successful when all the parties involved regard it as a collective effort. Its effect will only be sustainable if a mutual posture among the educators sets the tone for everyday pedagogical activity, and if pro-social skills are not only conveyed in the context of explicit prevention projects, but also practiced in everyday learning encounters. *Prevention is an organizational task that depends on team development.*

Effective and sustainable prevention requires professional conflict management and an array of instruments applicable on various levels that build upon, supplement, and complement one another (see Chapter 5). Having each of the involved professionals attend a continuing education event of their choice and then 'follow the recipe they have learned' will not turn the trick. Qualification measures need to be coordinated, decided upon and attended by teams who can then assume complementary, coordinated roles. *Prevention should be a multi-leveled program embedded in a corresponding structure of conflict management* (team development is also discussed in detail in Chapter 5.4.3).

The quality and sustainability of prevention depends not only on the quality of the training and certifications achieved by the participating educators, but also on their readiness to engage in ongoing quality management through video supervision and evaluation. This calls for openness, mutual trust, and reciprocal acknowledgement – which in turn are facets of the team development that is indispensable.

 **Advantage:** *Appropriate structures and resources facilitate professional pedagogical work.*

**Obstacles:** *If individual colleagues insist on their "pedagogical autonomy", only feeling obliged to fulfill their educational mandate by conveying academic content, and if educational styles and goals vary greatly among faculty members, it will be difficult to create viable structures.*

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