



“Preventing teachers’ burnout in primary schools”
2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Training: ‘How to talk to parents effectively about their children's educational needs and outcomes?’
- Cooperation training.

Materials developed as part of the project:
„Preventing teachers burnout in primary schools”



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Objective of the training

- Participants understand the attitudes that parents of students may have when approaching them for an interview and know how to select the format of the interview according to these attitudes.
- participants know how to plan and lead a meeting in order to achieve goals more effectively
- participants know how to use constructive communication: I-messages, paraphrasing, active listening, reflecting, etc. and build a climate of cooperation with parents

Target group for the training

- mainly teacher educators, but also subject teachers

Brief description of the training

During the training, participants will learn how to prepare for a meeting with a parent, and what to keep in mind when conducting a meeting. Teachers will also look at their emotions and the attitudes they may display during meetings. The subject of the training will also be to consider the perspective of Parents, and the needs and related attitudes they may present during meetings and effective strategies for dealing with them. There will also be a section on practising constructive communication through active listening, paraphrasing, reflecting, the 'I' message etc.

Training programme

- Our emotions and thoughts related to difficult conversations with Parents? How do they influence our attitudes and behaviour? - short exercise
- How should you prepare for a meeting with a Parent?
- What is worth bearing in mind during the meeting?
- How to build understanding and alliance with the Parent? Difficult attitudes of Parents - what could be the cause? – Exercise
- Strategies for dealing with difficult parents' attitudes
- Self-messages, paraphrasing, reflecting, active listening, summarising - effective tools in conversation and communication mistakes - exercise

Knowledge gained by trainees

- how to plan and conduct meetings in a cooperative spirit with parents
- what effective communication is,
- Self-messages and other constructive conversation techniques, including: paraphrasing, reflecting, active listening
- Useful strategies for dealing with parents
- What might be the causes of difficult attitudes of Parents towards Teachers

Skills that trainees will gain

- planning meetings with parents
- Conducting meetings in a spirit of understanding
- Using constructive communication techniques - active listening, paraphrasing, reflecting, 'I' message
- Adapting the course of the meeting and messages to the attitudes of the Parents

Training methods

- mini lecture
- brainstorming
- group and individual workshop exercises

TIPS FOR THE TRAINER

- Throughout the workshop, try to use as many real-life examples as possible, ask participants for them.
- Encourage discussion by asking, for example, what does the rest of the group think? Does anyone have a different opinion?
- Emphasise in the participants' statements those which lead to a cooperative relationship and do not divide the interlocutors.
- Instruction for Exercise 1 - everyone answers the questions on their own on a piece of paper and then those willing to do so share their conclusions and observations with everyone. The facilitator writes emotions, thoughts and behaviour on the board in 3 columns. Joint discussion and conclusions.
- Instruction for Exercise 2 - divide participants into 3 groups depending on whose interest you will represent at the meeting with the student's parent, e.g. the school, the class or the student. Discuss in groups how you might behave, what arguments to use, etc. Then share your observations, conclusions in the group - each group presents its own separately. Together, answer the questions: What similarities and differences do you see? How can your interests affect the way the parent perceives you and at the same time his/her attitude towards you? What lessons can you learn from this for your attitude in meetings with Parents?

- Instructions for Exercise 3 - Draw an 'iceberg' sticking out of the water on the board (model on the exercise slide). Above the surface of the water there is a smaller part of it and under the water a much larger part. At the top we write down 'difficult parent behaviour' and together with the participants we brainstorm specific behaviours of Parents that we consider 'difficult' e.g. shouting, accusing/blaming teachers for the situation, etc. Below the sheet of water we write down 'reasons for the Parent's behaviour', e.g. previous experience with other teachers, own experience as a student, attitude, condition of the day, physical or mental illness, personal problems, emotions, meeting basic needs, stress, temperament/personality traits, age, education, occupation, sense of worth, relationship with the child, etc. Try to write down as many examples as possible from the participants. Summarise by collecting conclusions and insights from the participants. How can this broadening of perspective influence our attitude towards the interview?

- Instructions for Exercise 4 - Divide participants into pairs. One person takes on the role of the Parent - he/she can build on his/her example or one of the two given on the slide. The other person takes the role of the Teacher - listens actively to their interlocutor, trying to use active listening techniques. After a few minutes, people swap roles. At the end, participants share their impressions and conclusions. Joint discussion and answers to the questions: to what extent is it possible for them to use these techniques in conversation with parents? What can the use of these techniques bring differently to conversations with parents? How can the use of these techniques affect the building of cooperation with parents? Itp.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Conversations with parents are one of the basic tools in a teacher's educational work. Often they are not the easiest, as they touch on difficult topics. They are then accompanied by stress, increased tension and other unpleasant emotions on the part of both the teacher and the parent.

Therefore, it is advisable to prepare for them in such a way as to reduce anxiety while increasing our confidence and effectiveness.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



My attitude/attitude towards the interview - **exercise 1**

Imagine that you are about to have a conversation with a parent concerning, for example, the difficult behaviour of one of your pupils.

- 1) What emotions arise in you at the thought of this meeting?
- 2) What thoughts do you have in your mind?
- 3) How might they affect your attitude, behaviour?



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It is both sides of the conversation that bring ‘something’ to it - emotions, attitude, behaviour, etc.

Each of us is only influenced by our own emotions and attitude. It is very important to be aware of what emotions a parent or situation brings up in us and to look for strategies to deal with it.

Because the ultimate goal is to help the child - not to look for who is responsible or to blame for the situation and hold them accountable!



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Before meeting with parents:

- establish the purpose of the meeting - supportive, informative, intervention etc., what do you want to find out, inform or ask about?
- Where will it take place? (which room, the office of the specialist or the management; make sure it is not a corridor, on the run, and that you are not disturbed) - this will show respect towards the Parent and may result in a good atmosphere from the beginning.



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- Ask yourself, how long can it last? How much time do we have and all the other participants, as well as the Parent (ask him/her here at the beginning of the meeting)?
- How will you inform about the meeting? (e-mail via e-journal or telephone)



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- who do you want to invite to this meeting? (depending on the purpose of the meeting - if the discussion is more intimate, the fewer people the better; if it is an intervention and you expect strong emotions, it is good not to be alone during such a meeting)
- set an agenda (introduce everyone present, outline the time frame, state the purpose - what it is about, why you are meeting, discuss key issues, agree on tasks, summarise, plan the next meeting if necessary)



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- Prepare relevant materials - child's work, examples of behaviour from observation, information from other teachers and professionals, etc.
- assess the risks involved in the meeting (including what attitude/attitude this parent may come with, what your plan is for this depending on the attitude he/she presents, etc.).



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Above all, focus on building understanding and cooperation - create an agreement with the parent! Where the most important goal will be to support a child who, for whatever reason, is having difficulty functioning properly in the school setting and achieving achievements commensurate with his/her cognitive abilities.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Consider whose interests you are representing at this meeting? The school's, the class's, your own, the pupil's? - consider together with the participants what differences there will be in the attitude of the leader of such a meeting depending on whose interest he/she will represent 😊

Exercise 2 - divide into 3 groups depending on whose interest you will be representing at the meeting with the student's parent, e.g. the school, the class or the student.





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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



During the conversation with the Parent(s):

- make sure the atmosphere is friendly (sitting opposite each other, not 'behind' a desk, offer to drink something especially if we are also drinking tea 😊 etc.).
- don't talk about the pupil in front of him!
- be calm and self-controlled - don't get carried away by your emotions! Behave professionally 😊



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- explain the purpose and plan of the meeting, set a time frame - so that the conversation does not stop at the most important moment!
- let the Parent have his/her say - make him/her feel heard! This is one of the most important conditions for an agreement. Listen actively to what he/she has to say.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- Show an attitude of curiosity - an attitude of ‘not knowing’ (don't assume in advance that you know what he thinks or how he understands the situation; you may not know the details of the context of the situation e.g. family that may be relevant etc.). Show a genuine and sincere interest in his/her opinion.
- Start with positive information about the child (praise him/her to the parent, point out good behaviour, trait, attitude, etc.), e.g.

‘Kate comes prepared for lessons - she has the necessary books, notebooks and materials.’

‘Chris is a well-behaved boy - he always says Good Morning to me in the hallways.’



"Preventing teachers' burnout in primary schools"
2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- Appreciate the Parent, if only for coming, finding the time to meet; that you see how important your child's welfare is to them, etc.

'Thank you for finding the time to come to our meeting. I know that with three children you probably have a lot of responsibilities.'

- when talking about challenging behaviour, base it primarily on facts and not on interpretations of the child's behaviour, e.g.

'Johnny has 100 hours of absence this term'.

'Your son's attendance in maths has recently dropped to 45% - he is at risk of failing his grade in this subject'.





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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- name a specific behaviour and not a characteristic of the child
- ask what the parent's understanding of the behaviour might be?
What steps has he/she perhaps already taken to correct the situation?
- do not criticise the parents - listen to their arguments and underline that the child's difficulties have different causes. So that the Parents do not feel guilty and judged.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- refer to objective knowledge on the subject, e.g., such child's behaviour may indicate such difficulties - do not make a certain diagnosis straight away - refer to specialists in this respect
- use language that the parent understands - the parents of your pupils have different levels of education, come from different backgrounds, so we should adapt our language to them.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- try to find the reason for the child's behaviour, don't look for someone to blame or responsible for the situation!
- look for solutions together - ask for the parent's ideas on how to solve the situation and propose your own.
- agree on what each party can do concretely and when (all parties should declare what they can do, how they can get involved)



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- give specific indications, e.g. where the parent can get specialised help, specific addresses with telephone numbers, even the names of specialists if possible - this makes it easier to carry out 😊.
- fix a date for the next meeting to establish progress, share difficulties or successes.
- Stress that by working together you will be able to help your child more effectively.





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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



CONCLUSIONS - useful strategies for communicating with parents!



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- initiate a meeting with the Parents before the situation with the student escalates - by doing so, show interest in the student's issues - you will ensure a better position with the Parents at the start and may prevent the situation from developing;
- don't delay contact if you see a problem - such behaviour can cause unpleasant emotions to build up on both sides - react quickly!



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- inform Parents of difficult or worrying behaviour, but with reasonable frequency - sending information every day may overwhelm the Parent and discourage them from contacting you, with a negative attitude due to the frustration experienced.
- don't expect a quick change in the child's behaviour immediately after the conversation - this is a process that takes time and commitment 😊
- be wordly - keep your word and your tasks!





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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- send an occasional positive message to the Parent, praise a perceived change in the child's behaviour even if it is small - this will show your commitment and reinforce the Parent's actions 😊
nothing works as well as positive reinforcement 😊
- leave the legal consequences and other 'harsh guns' for last - if you start your actions by 'scaring' the consequences then you are building a wall rather than an agreement, as such a Parent will want to defend themselves in a natural defence mechanism.

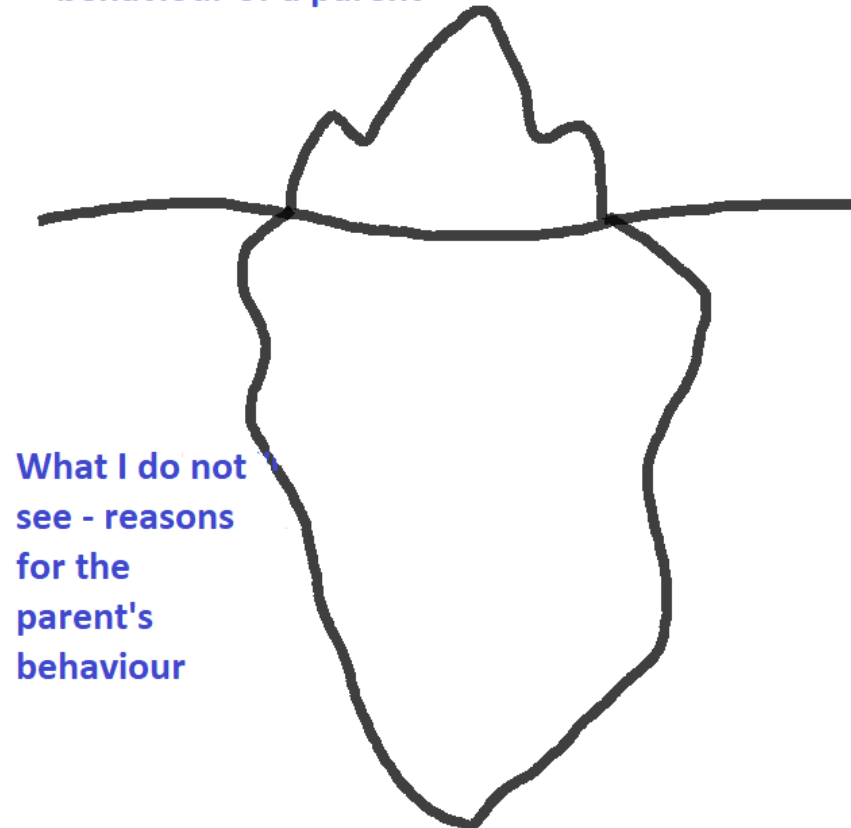


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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Exercise 3 - Who is this 'Parent' and what can influence their behaviour?

What I see - difficult
behaviour of a parent



What I do not
see - reasons
for the
parent's
behaviour



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Difficult attitudes of Parents:

- Parents may deny obvious facts and adopt a defensive attitude. It is not so much that they do not want to help their child, but rather that they are defensive about acknowledging and accepting the difficult information about their child's problems.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- If parents blame the teachers/school they are probably venting their frustration about their child's problems and their sense of helplessness. It brings them temporary relief to come to terms with a difficult situation.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- A parent who complains - the parent recognises a problem but the solution, in his/her mind, depends on someone else - try to establish tasks on both the school and the Parent's side to mobilise the Parent to act; emphasise the Parent's role in the informed upbringing of the child.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- Aggressive parent - most likely defending himself or the child. Try to give him/her space to vent his/her emotions and frustrations. Don't deny it - this will make things worse. Be composed and set boundaries in the conversation; don't meet with such a Parent alone; if he/she shouts, insults you - stand up, express strong objection to such behaviour and offer to meet at another time.



"Preventing teachers' burnout in primary schools"
2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Active listening - one of the tools for building a climate of understanding and cooperation.

Active listening is a process in effective communication. It enables you not only to gain information, but also to learn the interlocutor's point of view and gives you the chance to create a relationship based on mutual respect and trust.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Important aspects of active listening:

- maintaining eye contact
- turning towards the speaker
- gently encouraging the speaker to continue
- showing interest in what the speaker is saying (e.g. appropriate gestures and facial expressions)



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



- asking additional questions
- briefly repeating parts of the interlocutor's speech, i.e. paraphrasing (listening techniques)
- refraining from commenting, giving advice (sometimes unfeasible? 😊)
- expressing tolerance and patience
- not interrupting or distracting the interlocutor

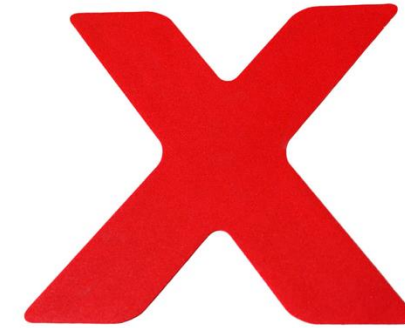


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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



The most common communication mistakes:

- interjecting into the speaker's speech
- continuous commenting
- suddenly moving on to another subject
- showing boredom or indifference to the subject of the speaker
- lack of concentration
- judging the other person



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Active listening techniques:

- paraphrasing
- clarification
- open questions
- reflecting feelings
- nodding and other encouragement to continue speaking
- sharing own feelings



“Preventing teachers’ burnout in primary schools”
2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



PARAPHRASE

Paraphrasing, i.e. repeating in your own words what the speaker has said. You change the form, but say exactly what you heard. You do not include comments or interpretations of what you heard.

If I understand you correctly, then...

So you are of the opinion that....

It follows from what you say that...

If I have understood your intention correctly, then...

If I have understood correctly that...

If I have understood your statement correctly, then....



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



The main task of paraphrasing is to check that you have understood the intentions of the person you are talking to.

Paraphrasing helps you to sort out the topics you are discussing and move on to the next points in the conversation. And above all, you show the other party that you are listening carefully to them and trying to understand what they have to say.

Remember: paraphrasing someone's statement does not mean you agree with it! It is only an indication that we have understood what our interlocutor had to say.



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CLARIFICATION

Clarification, or making something clear and transparent, understandable. It's a request for clarification, for elaboration when we can't understand a statement. To elaborate on a thought, with concrete examples, to focus on the most important thing. It is useful when a conversation has too many threads and you want to focus on one.



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Please tell me exactly what you mean by the subject....

Please give me an example on...

Let's now focus on...

I know this is all important to you, but let's now try to focus on the topic....



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



OPEN QUESTIONS

Asking an open-ended question allows someone the freedom to elaborate on what they have said, it is a space to speak more broadly about a topic. It allows the questioner to fully present their position. Open-ended questions encourage further conversation, express interest and concern.

How do you understand the situation?

What else worries you about your child's behaviour?

When do you still feel that... ?



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REFLECTING FEELINGS

Reflecting feelings is deceptively simple, as you are tasked with making the interviewee aware of their own feelings. The name itself suggests that it is about mirroring, as if in a mirror, what they are saying and feeling and the way they are behaving.

Reflecting - we tell someone what we think they are experiencing.

But it's not about mindlessly repeating words, it's about understanding what the other person is feeling and showing it. It's about a kind of matching, tuning in.



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I see that this issue annoys you very much.

I have the impression that you are happy with

I can see that you are very upset about this...

I can see that you are very upset about this issue...



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‘I’ messages can also be helpful.

When... (description of behaviour), I feel... (accompanying feeling),
because... (description of situation). I would like to... (needs).

*When you raise your voice like this and shout at me, I do not feel comfortable and safe and
therefore I would like to end this meeting. Let's meet at another time.*



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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Tabela z podsumowaniem – pomoc w ćwiczeniu nr 4

paraphrase	clarification	open question	reflecting
If I understand you correctly, then...	Please tell me exactly what you mean by the subject....	How do you understand the situation?	I see that this issue annoys you very much.
So you are of the opinion that....	Please give me an example on...	What else worries you about your child's behaviour?	I have the impression that you are happy with
From what you say, it follows that...	Let's now focus on...	When do you still feel that...?	I can see that you are very upset about this...
If I have understood your intention correctly, then...	I know this is all important to you, but let's now try to focus on the topic....		I can see that you are very upset about this issue...
If I have understood correctly that...			
If I have understood your statement correctly, then....			





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2023-1-PL01-KA210-SCH-000152158



Exercise 4 - In pairs, practise active listening techniques. One person is the Parent and the other is the Teacher.

Examples of situations:

Parent says: You are picking on my child. You don't like my child and you make my child cry.

Parent complains about the way the lesson is taught, the demands on the subject are too high. The parent has been asked before to work systematically with the child at home. Explains that he/she is doing this or lack of time. Tries to force a better grade from the teacher.



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