

Good practices on building relationships with parents in preschools

Part 2. The methodologies - practical tools

Partnership in school education
2022-1-PL01-KA220-SCH-000087191

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Table of contents

Part 1. The Methodologies	4
The use of Positive Psychology practices at home in building relationships at kinder	4
Encourage open communication and connect with children daily	4
Practice gratitude	4
Celebrating strengths and achievements	5
Modelling positive behaviour	5
Engage in positive activities together	5
Fostering resilience	5
Create a positive home environment	5
The use of Contact with nature practices at home and at preschool settings in building relationships	6
The use of Mindfulness and Yoga practices at home or at school in building relationships with parents at kindergarten	10
Living in the "Here and Now": The Power of Mindfulness	10
Yoga	12
The use of Self-regulation practices at home in building relationships with parents at kindergarten	13
Using self-regulatory practices to build relationships with preschool parents	13
The importance of self-regulation	13
Cooperation based on self-regulation	13
Impact of self-regulation on children's development	14
2. Cooperative Storytelling	15
3. "Compliment Jar" or "Kindness Notes"	15
4. "Daily Rituals" or "Special Time"	15
5. "Active Listening Practice":	15
The use of NVC practices at home in building relationships with parents at kindergarten	16
Building relationships with parents using NVC	16
Applying NVC in conflict resolution	16
The impact of NVC on parental involvement	17
Educating parents about NVC	17
Benefits of NVC in the kindergarten	18
The "Four steps of NVC"	18
Active listening - reflecting emotions	18

Empathic dialogue'- talking about needs	18
Looking for a solution - creating joint proposals	19
The Mirror of emotions - reflecting emotions	19
The use of Cognitive Psychology practices at home in building relationships with parents at kindergarten	20
Active Listening	20
Use Positive Reinforcement	20
Encourage Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking	20
Foster Emotional Regulation	20
Model Behaviour You Want to See	21
Ask Open-Ended Questions	21
Create a Safe Learning Environment	21
Build Secure Attachment	21
Use Play to Build Cognitive Skills	22
Encourage a Growth Mindset	22
Part 2. The Methodologies for Schools and Families	23
The use of Positive Psychology in building relationships between school and family at kindergarten	23
The use of Mindfulness and Yoga in building relationships for school and family at kindergarten	25
The use of Contact with Nature in building relationships for school and family at kindergarten.	29
The use of self-regulation in building relationships in school and family in kindergarten	31
The use of Cognitive Psychology in building relationships in school and family in kindergarten	34
References	36

Part 1. The Methodologies

The use of Positive Psychology practices at home in building relationships at kinder

Positive Psychology plays a crucial role in building relationships at kindergarten, fostering a positive and nurturing environment that significantly affects children's well-being (Huebner et al., 2003). This approach focuses on enhancing the strengths and positive attributes of children rather than solely addressing problems or deficits (Shoshani and Aviv, 2012). In the context of kindergarten, Positive Psychology can be implemented through activities and practices that encourage kindness, gratitude, empathy and resilience among children. These positive interactions help in forming strong, healthy relationships with peers and teachers, creating a supportive community where children feel valued and connected (Lai et al., 2018).

While Positive Psychology is effectively used in kindergartens to promote well-being and build relationships, its principles can also be extended to the home environment, where parents play a vital role in their children's emotional and psychological development (Seligman, 2011). Below you can find several ways that parents can use to actively promote the well-being of their children:

Encourage open communication and connect with children daily

Parents can create a safe and open environment where children feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings. To listen actively and validate their emotions, which helps them feel understood and respected.

Practice gratitude

Parents can make it a family routine to share things they are grateful for each day. This practice helps children develop a positive outlook and appreciate the good things in their lives, fostering a sense of contentment and happiness. Families can reinforce this at home by sharing things they are grateful for during meals or before bedtime. At home, families can create a "Gratitude Jar" where everyone adds notes about things they appreciate regularly (Seligman, 2011).

Celebrating strengths and achievements

Recognizing and celebrating the child's strengths and accomplishments, no matter how small. Positive reinforcement boosts their self-esteem and encourages them to pursue their goals with confidence. Parents can support this by discussing emotions at home and encouraging children to consider others' perspectives. Regular conversations about feelings and encouraging children to talk about their day and how they felt can deepen their understanding of empathy.

Modelling positive behaviour

Children learn by observing their parents.

Demonstrating kindness, empathy, and optimism in daily interactions are important where children model their parent's behaviours, teaching them the importance of positive relationships and attitudes.

Engage in positive activities together

Quality time with the family together is crucial while engaging in activities that promote joy and connection, such as playing games, reading together or exploring nature.

Fostering resilience

Parents should encourage their child to face challenges with a positive mind-set. Teach those problem-solving skills and how to cope with setbacks, which ultimately enhances resilience. It helps children navigate difficulties and emerge stronger.

Create a positive home environment

Where positivity thrives. Decorations with uplifting images, maintaining a routine that includes time for relaxation and fun, and encouraging a culture of mutual respect and support within the family.

The use of Contact with nature practices at home and at preschool settings in building relationships

Being in contact with nature is a stress-reducing factor for children and adults (Bowler et al, 2010). Being in nature results in significant improvements in mood, both increasing positive emotions like happiness and joy and decreasing negative moods and depression (McMahan & Estes, 2015; Lee et al, 2017).

Therefore, just being outside, breathing and spending time together outdoors endorses a healthy way of building relationships. Research shows that people who are more connected to nature appear to be happier (Capaldi et al, 2015). Building relationships in nature is easier because nature itself makes us more positive to others, more relaxed and friendly. Based on that, it is vital to incorporate activities in nature regarding building relationships with parents. Moreover, spending time outside can be a great boost to mental health and overall mental well-being in both adults and children (Houlden et al., 2018). In a preschool setting, it is very important and quite simple to bring nature into its everyday life. Incorporating nature-based activities or enhancing a nature-friendly mentality as a whole school culture proves to be beneficial, especially in building relationships.



Photo 1. <https://www.pexels.com/photo/teenagers-holding-hands-while-walking-on-wooden-bridge-in-forest-5036779/>

In the following part, you can get an idea of suggested activities in order to bring nature into your setting's curriculum of building relationships:

1. Children make handmade gifts for their parents using natural materials: The first step is to transform the setting's outdoor area so that it is inviting for children. By offering a rich play area full of loose parts children explore, find differentiated material, play with a treasure box and in the end, they can make a small gift for themselves or their parents.
2. "Parents in action": **This activity is the most straightforward way to connect parents with the setting concerning nature play. It comes as a suggestion to parents to come and play** with their child's group. Encouraging parents to simply transfer what they would do with their child whilst being at the park or organising a small walk around the setting is enough for the group to connect outdoors. Each activity lasts from 40' to about an hour (maximum 1,5 hours) and it is designed by the parents themselves in collaboration with the setting's pedagogues.

A very common idea between parents is gardening. They usually choose different kinds of small aromatic plants like thyme, basil etc and bring them along. They are sharing the way a plant grows and show the way to the children to plant their own spice.

Another idea that has happened several times throughout the years is a visit to the forest. Parents accompany the group on a pre-scheduled day and share their forest secrets with the children. We go for small walks, we spend time exploring different areas of the forest, we try to spot birds on tree branches and sometimes brave enough parents show children different climbing techniques.

3. Use the schoolyard or a park/forest for school events. As school events we describe the graduation party for the Kindergarten or a Christmas feast organised by the pedagogues or any other important feast and parents participate with their children and get to play together with them and other parents.

Each day a feast is taking place; pedagogues design it according to children's wishes and based on their preferences during the year. The setting's yard is transformed to support children's concept, i.e.: sea bay, forest site for fairies, cave, and place for little creatures or it is set as a theatre stage to support a play. In any case, this way of celebrating, includes parents to the setting's outdoor philosophy. They dress casually, they participate, they expect to get dirty, they enjoy playing just for the sake of it and they connect. They connect to each other, with their children, with the earth itself. It is a very fulfilling experience when nature does the job for all of us!

4. Inform parents about their child's everyday life at school by email (photos/ videos/ description) and especially of how much children enjoy outdoor activities and how they develop through nature: As we have discussed a lot in this document, communication is one of the basic tools as well as strategy to form relationships between a setting and a family. When communication is targeted to nature-based

activities its efficiency multiplies. Empirical statistics and internal documentation throughout the years has shown that when parents look at pictures or are listening to play stories happening outdoors they have a big smile on their face. Their muscles are more relaxed, and they tend to share more of their own childhood experiences. They allow themselves to become children again and sometimes they confess that they have never shared that experience (i.e. when I was your age I used to climb a tree exactly like that) with their children before because they are the ones who usually take the picture and tend to lose the moment, the here and now.

5. Create a nature-based community among parents-children-school by organising picnics, camping weekends, workshops about parenting/teaching, and nature workshops: Offering the community different chances to mingle in nature has proven an extremely fruitful experience. Different events are scheduled annually and families know the dates from the beginning of the year for each one. A suggestion is to start with events that are simple and easy for your setting to run and for pedagogues to support by participating in them. Usually, we start with a workshop held on weekends describing our nature pedagogy or our way of incorporating nature into the setting. We have an annual picnic for our whole school (2-12-year-olds) and the children's families. On that day families gather in a designated outdoor space (i.e.: beach, forest, park) and spend a day together without any other organised or guided activity. On top of that, the school's camping is a two-day trip at a camping site next to a beach. The same atmosphere of the picnic is extended, and it is the perfect chance to really meet up with other parents as well as with the pedagogues that choose to be there. Unstructured natural ways of communication bring people together and what nature offers in building relationships is revealing.

6. Explain to the parents the importance of nature in their children's lives (seminars/research/ talks/ mentioning it on the regular meeting between pedagogue and parents): Talking about children's accomplishments and growth in nature supports all the aspects of development that are already active indoors. When children play outdoors, all aspects of development are as if you are observing them through a magnifying glass. It is pure magic.

7. Ask parents to cooperate with the setting so that their child has all-weather clothing/outfit (raincoats/rain boots/gloves/hats etc.) explaining the importance of being in an open space every day despite the weather conditions (yard, park, forest).

8. Make different lists of things children should do outside before they get 2,3,4,5 and share it with parents in order to motivate them to play with their children outside. On a piece of paper collect things children naturally usually do when they are, for example, 2 years old: to go for a walk with my favourite puppet/ doll, sing my

favourite song outdoors, collect stones, read a story under a tree etc. Make it cute and print it for parents to be able to use it at home.

9. Make a booklet with all outdoor spaces in your town/ city/ village where children can safely play. Share it with families so that they participate in the making of it and make it a community tool for all parents to use.

10. Create an outdoor/forest-themed library from which families can borrow any book they like. We invite families to bring relevant books concerning nature, forests, animals etc. that they no longer use at home. We document each book, create a system for them to borrow and take care of the books as appropriate.



Photo 2. The own source.

The use of Mindfulness and Yoga practices at home or at school in building relationships with parents at kindergarten

We believe that mindfulness and yoga offer profound benefits that enhance the learning experience while promoting both mental and physical well-being. To ensure the success of our approach, the adults on our team practice all exercises first. This allows us to refine the techniques and gain a deeper understanding of the practices before introducing them to the children.

Mindfulness and yoga empower children and teachers to connect with their inner selves, starting at a young age. These practices encourage a slower, more deliberate pace of interaction, which enhances learning, concentration, and attention. Teachers play a pivotal role in guiding children to explore their thoughts, develop empathy, and improve their listening skills. This, in turn, fosters kind and thoughtful communication, both with themselves and others.

By cultivating the ability to communicate with both heart and mind, this approach promotes inclusive and meaningful dialogue. Emphasizing these practices in early childhood is essential for nurturing higher levels of social and emotional intelligence. Mindfulness exercises can help children find peace and balance through breathing techniques, sensory awareness, body awareness, and even mindful eating.

Living in the "Here and Now": The Power of Mindfulness

The "here and now" is the only moment we truly have. While we can learn from the past, we cannot relive it, and though we may hope for the future, its outcomes remain uncertain. Mindfulness helps us navigate this reality, reducing stress and supporting our overall well-being.

In today's fast-paced society, where life seems to move at an exhausting speed and social interactions often lack depth, prioritizing well-being requires more than just physical fitness. True well-being also encompasses psychological, social, spiritual, and educational dimensions.

Embracing and experimenting with our emotions is a vital part of adapting to change and fostering personal development. Stress in our lives generally falls into four main categories:

- Difficult life events (e.g., death, divorce);
- External pressures (e.g., deadlines at work);
- Relationship challenges;
- Internal struggles (e.g., low self-esteem).

The first step in confronting and managing our emotions is responsibility—our inner strength that allows us to stay calm amid challenges. This strength is cultivated through mental training. Mindfulness teaches us to see the hidden advantage of "falling" or failing. Through self-awareness, we discover opportunities for inner growth and transformation, fostering deeper connections between "you and me" and "us and me." This is the human space where mutual understanding and shared experiences thrive. Learning to regulate our emotions becomes an essential strategy for coping with stress, enabling us to engage actively with our feelings rather than being overwhelmed by them.

The next key transition is mentalizing, which involves imagining our own mental state, understanding the mental states of others, and anticipating the potential consequences of our actions. This process requires deep self-reflection and inner listening to observe our thoughts without judgment. Mindfulness enhances this capacity, helping us better understand our behavior and build stronger, more empathetic relationships. By reducing criticism and judgment, mindfulness allows us to maintain meaningful connections with others and cultivate greater harmony within ourselves.

To practice mindfulness, we need to consider:

- Where is my attention?
- What am I thinking about when I am doing something else?
- Let's recognise and choose where I direct my attention.

Mindfulness helps us to understand that nothing is eternal and increases levels of serotonin and dopamine: the hormones of happiness and melatonin, useful for the sleep-wake cycle. It helps to accept any thought, including negative ones, giving you the competence to face it.

Suggested Practices for Mindful Engagement

- Approach school entry with lightness and mindfulness. Begin your day with a calm and intentional mindset.
- Take a few moments for deep, aware breathing. Clear your mind of intrusive or negative thoughts. Focus on the present moment—the journey itself. Observe the people around you, notice the landscape, and pay attention to passing cars. Smile genuinely, practice kindness, and remain open and attentive to others.
- Step out of "autopilot." Cultivate awareness of your actions in the here and now. Be fully present in your daily activities rather than rushing through them unconsciously.
- Reflect on your approach to scheduling. Consider the impact of meticulously programming your entire day or year. Instead, start slowly, give yourself space, and eliminate unnecessary tasks. Simplifying your routine can help reduce anxiety and foster a more intentional and peaceful state of mind.

Yoga

Mindfulness and yoga are deeply interconnected, sharing the common goal of fostering concentration and awareness in both adults and children. Yoga, like mindfulness, helps individuals stay connected to themselves and to nature. Together, these practices aim to harmonize the body and mind.

Regular mindfulness and yoga practice offers numerous benefits, including:

- Promoting relaxation.
- Calming intense emotions.
- Encouraging proper breathing techniques.
- Enhancing cooperation and fostering healthier relationships.
- Improving attention span and concentration.
- Increasing physical flexibility.
- Strengthening coordination skills.
- Balancing awareness with relaxation and leisure.
- Supporting psycho-physical development.
- Aiding stress management and self-regulation.
- Stimulating creativity.
- Deepening connections and building better relationships.

For children, yoga is not about imitating adults but about engaging in fun, healthy movements that promote their overall well-being.



Photo 3. Pexels-valeria-ushakova-3094230.

The use of Self-regulation practices at home in building relationships with parents at kindergarten

Using self-regulatory practices to build relationships with preschool parents

Modern kindergartens present teachers with the dual challenge of educating children while also supporting parents in their parenting journey. One approach gaining traction in pre-school education is the concept of self-regulation—the ability to consciously and effectively manage emotions, stress, and behaviour.

When embraced by both teachers and parents, self-regulation practices can serve as a powerful tool for fostering effective relationships within the pre-school environment. By modelling and encouraging self-regulation, educators and parents work together to create a supportive and nurturing atmosphere that benefits children's development and strengthens connections within the community.

The importance of self-regulation in the relationship with parents

Introducing self-regulation practices in kindergartens can play a pivotal role in helping teachers build strong and positive relationships with parents.

In the context of these relationships, self-regulation involves teachers managing their own emotions, communicating calmly and effectively, and remaining flexible and open to diverse perspectives. As Eisenberg (2017) emphasizes, teachers who can regulate their emotions are better equipped to handle challenging situations, fostering greater trust and understanding with parents.

Parents of pre-school children often face stress related to raising, educating, and helping their children adapt to new situations. Teachers can support parents by modelling effective strategies for stress management and guiding them in responding constructively to their children's behaviours. This collaborative approach, as noted by Rimm-Kaufman and Curby (2015), empowers parents to address emotional challenges with confidence, ultimately benefiting both the child and the broader kindergarten community.

Cooperation based on self-regulation

Teachers who consciously introduce self-regulatory techniques can also teach parents how to use these strategies at home. They can organise workshops for parents in which they present methods for dealing with their child's difficult emotions, e.g.

- breathing techniques,
- relaxation exercises,

- strategies for managing time and stress in everyday situations etc.

In this way, parents can better support their children in learning how to self-regulate, which in turn improves the family and preschool atmosphere (Bailey et al., 2019).

An example of the practical application of self-regulation in teachers' relationships with parents can be systematic, conscious communication. Rather than reacting impulsively to difficult situations, such as parental dissatisfaction with a child's progress assessment or classroom organisation - a teacher can use tools such as:

- active listening
- responding empathetically
- adjusting the tone of speech.

The ability to remain calm and open in conversation helps to defuse tension and build trusting relationships (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).



Photo 4. Pexels-valeria-ushakova-3094236.

Impact of self-regulation on children's development

Teacher-parent relationships have a direct impact on the child who observes adult interactions. Children who learn self-regulation in kindergarten benefit from observing patterns of adult behaviour, which helps them to develop their own emotion management skills. Teachers who use self-regulatory practices in their communication with parents also model for children how to deal with difficult situations, which is particularly important at the preschool age when children are intensely learning social norms (Moffitt et al., 2011).

In turn, parents who learn self-regulation techniques are more likely to create a supportive home environment in which the child can feel safe and develop emotionally. Research shows that children whose parents use self-regulation in daily interactions perform better academically and have better social skills (Thompson, 2020).

The activities which could help foster communication, trust, emotional understanding, and positive bonding:

1. "Feelings Sharing Time" (emotional Check-In): Set aside a regular time during the day (e.g., after preschool or before bedtime) for you and your children to discuss their feelings. Ask questions like, "What made you happy today?" or "Did anything make you upset?" This simple exercise helps children express their emotions and allows parents to be attentive and supportive in building a trusting relationship.
2. Cooperative Storytelling: Engage in storytelling where you both take turns contributing to the story. The parent might start with a sentence, and the child adds the next part. This activity promotes creativity, active listening, and collaboration, helping to strengthen the emotional connection between parent and child while building communication skills.
3. "Compliment Jar" or "Kindness Notes": Create a "Compliment Jar" or a place where you and child can leave positive notes about each other. For example, parents might write down or draw something they love about their child, and the child can do the same for their parent. This fosters positive reinforcement and helps children feel appreciated, nurturing a strong emotional bond.
4. "Daily Rituals" or "Special Time": Establish a consistent ritual or special time each day for bonding, such as a morning routine (e.g., giving a hug and saying something encouraging before leaving for school) or a bedtime ritual (e.g., reading a favourite story together). This creates a predictable and secure environment that helps strengthen the parent-child relationship.
5. "Active Listening Practice": Try to give full attention to what the child is saying without interrupting. After the child speaks, you can reflect back by saying, "So, you're feeling sad because your toy broke. That must be tough." This exercise helps children feel heard and valued, improving communication skills and fostering empathy.

These activities create opportunities for parents to be present, engaged, and supportive, which is essential for building trust and a positive relationship with their child during the early years.

The use of NVC practices at home in building relationships with parents at kindergarten

Nonviolent Communication (NVC), or Nonviolent Communication, is an approach to communication developed by Marshall Rosenberg that focuses on empathy, understanding needs and building relationships based on respect and cooperation. NVC has applications in many areas of life, including education, where it can be particularly useful in relationships between teachers and parents in kindergartens. Using NVC in these relationships allows for trust building, conflict resolution and joint decision-making regarding child development.

Building relationships with parents using NVC

In building relationships with parents, listening and understanding their perspective is key, which is the basis of NVC. Teachers can better understand parents' needs and respond to their concerns more effectively. Instead of focusing on judging or criticising, teachers learn to formulate statements in a way that expresses empathy and respect for parents' feelings (Rosenberg, 2015).

An example of the application of NVC in a teacher's daily work might be when a parent reports dissatisfaction about **a child's adaptation difficulties**. Instead of defending or justifying the establishment, the teacher could apply NVC by listening to the parent with full concentration, trying to understand the parent's emotions and needs.

The teacher could then express their understanding, for example: *"I understand that you are worried about your child's adaptation. I can see that it is important for you that he or she feels safe in the kindergarten"*.

Then, based on the NVC model, the teacher can propose a joint search for solutions by formulating the proposal in the form of a request: *"Could we think together about what could help the child adapt better?"*. This way of communication, based on NVC, creates a space for cooperation, avoids confrontation and builds trust.

Applying NVC in conflict resolution

One of the biggest challenges teachers face in their relationship with parents is conflicts over parenting or child development. NVC can be useful in these situations because it allows the needs of both parties to be expressed in a non-judgmental and empathetic way. Research indicates that the use of NVC in education leads to reduced tensions and increased cooperation between parents and teachers (Hart & Hodson, 2004).

During conflicts, such as differences in approaches to discipline or communication with the child, NVC helps teachers to express their position without imposing their own views. For example, if a parent believes that his or her child should be punished for misbehaviour, the teacher can use NVC to clarify his or her approach to parenting by saying: *"I hear that you*

care about your child learning responsibility. In our kindergarten, we try to teach children responsibility through positive behavioural reinforcement because we believe that children learn better when they feel understood and supported.”

The impact of NVC on parental involvement

NVC, with its empathetic approach, can help increase parental involvement in the life of the preschool. As research shows, parents who feel understood and valued are more likely to cooperate with teachers and participate more actively in their children's education (Bailey et al., 2019). Through NVC, teachers can build more open and engaged relationships with parents, which has a direct impact on child development.

One practical way to use NVC to increase parental involvement is to hold regular meetings where teachers and parents can discuss their child's progress together and express their concerns and needs. NVC, as a method of communication, helps to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding that fosters a stronger bond between the preschool and the family.

Educating parents about NVC

In kindergartens that use NVC, teachers can also communicate the method to parents to support them in building a relationship with their children. Parent workshops on NVC can be extremely valuable in teaching parents how to communicate empathically, which promotes the development of trust, understanding and closeness in family relationships. Teaching parents how to express their feelings and needs in a constructive way can improve the atmosphere in the home, as well as a better understanding of the child's needs (Rosenberg, 2003).



Photo 5. Pexels-Yan Krukau 8613319

Benefits of NVC in the kindergarten

There are many benefits to using NVC in building relationships between teachers and parents in the kindergarten. Firstly, it fosters trust and understanding, which allows for more effective collaboration for the benefit of the child. Secondly, through NVC, teachers and parents can avoid escalating conflicts, which translates into a more harmonious environment both in the kindergarten and at home. Thirdly, NVC practices contribute to greater parental involvement in the educational process, which in turn supports children's emotional and social development.

Here are five practical Nonviolent Communication (NVC) exercises that parents and caregivers can use in their daily interactions with children to support the development of empathy, understanding and effective communication.

The “Four steps of NVC” - Talking about feelings

Purpose: help express feelings in an understanding and constructive way.

Description: The child (or parent) can choose a situation in which they felt a strong emotion, e.g. anger or sadness, and apply the four steps of NVC:

Observation: “When I see that you are not cleaning your room...”

Feelings: “I feel anxious/concerned...”

Needs: “Because I have a need to tidy my home...”

Request: “Can I ask you to clean your room?”

Benefit: This exercise helps the child (and adult) to understand how to express their emotions in a way that does not accuse the other person, while building empathy and understanding.

Active listening - reflecting emotions

Purpose: To develop the ability to actively listen and reflect emotions.

Description: When a child shares his/her feelings or experiences, the parent reflects what the child is feeling, e.g. “I hear that you are sad because you failed to finish an assignment at school.” The child can then confirm whether what the parent has said is true.

Benefit: This exercise develops empathy, helps the child to feel listened to and understood, and improves the ability to express emotions.

Empathic dialogue’ - talking about needs

Objective: To learn to express one's needs in a way that does not blame the other party.

Description: When a conflict arises, e.g. a child does not want to share a toy, the parent uses the question, “What needs do you have when you don't want to share?”

The child learns to talk about his/her needs, e.g. *"I would like to have a toy just for myself."*
The parent can respond, *I understand that you want to play alone, and I have a need for us to share."*

Benefit: This exercise helps to understand one's own needs and to seek solutions that meet the needs of both parties, without accusation.

Looking for a solution - creating joint proposals

Objective: To develop cooperative problem-solving skills.

Description: After talking about feelings and needs, parent and child together come up with possible solutions to the situation. For example, if the child wants to watch a cartoon but has not yet done the task, the parent can ask: *"What would you suggest to do both? Why don't we take a break after the task and then watch the movie?"*

Benefit: This exercise reinforces cooperation and creativity, teaching the child to look for solutions that meet the needs of both parties.

The Mirror of emotions - reflecting emotions

Objective: To develop the ability to recognise and express emotions and to strengthen empathy.

Description: Parent and child sit opposite each other. The child chooses an emotion he/she wants to express (e.g. anger, joy, sadness) and shows it with gestures, facial expressions or words. The parent then tries to replicate that emotion as closely as possible by 'taking it in', e.g. by showing a similar body posture, facial expression or by expressing words that match the emotion.

Benefit: This exercise helps the child to understand how different emotions can look on the outside and how they can be expressed in a way that others can understand. In addition, it develops empathy skills as the child can see that his or her emotions are seen and understood by the parent.

Each of these exercises helps parents and children put the principles of Nonviolent Communication into practice, building understanding, empathy and the ability to resolve conflicts in a respectful and constructive way. *Photo 5. Pexels-Yan Krukau 8613313*



The use of Cognitive Psychology practices at home in building relationships with parents at kindergarten

Practical tips for parents on building relationships with their children, from a cognitive psychology perspective:

Active Listening

What it is: Active listening means giving your child your full attention when they are speaking. Avoid distractions like phones or TV.

Why it matters: Children feel valued and understood when parents listen attentively. This helps develop their self-esteem and encourages open communication.

How to apply: Make eye contact, nod, and ask clarifying questions such as, “*How did that make you feel?*” to show that you are genuinely interested in what your child is saying.

Use Positive Reinforcement

What it is: Reinforcing positive behaviours with praise or rewards to encourage your child’s growth.

Why it matters: Cognitive psychology shows that children are more likely to repeat behaviours that are rewarded. Focusing on their efforts rather than just results helps build a growth mindset.

How to apply: Instead of saying, “*You are so smart*” say, “*I’m proud of how hard you worked on this*”. Praise the process and effort, not just the outcome.

Encourage Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

What it is: Allowing children to think through problems and come up with solutions independently, rather than always giving them answers.

Why it matters: Problem-solving builds cognitive flexibility and resilience. It helps children develop analytical skills and fosters independence.

How to apply: The next time your child faces a challenge, ask them, “*What do you think would be a good solution?*” or “*What could we do differently next time?*”

Foster Emotional Regulation

What it is: Teaching your child how to manage their emotions in a healthy way, especially during stressful situations.

Why it matters: Cognitive psychology shows that emotional regulation is crucial for effective problem-solving and cognitive development.

How to apply: When your child is upset, acknowledge their emotions first: *"I see that you're feeling angry."* Then guide them through calming techniques such as deep breathing, or help them identify their emotions and what triggered them.

Model Behaviour You Want to See

What it is: Children learn by observing their parents. By modelling positive behaviour, you teach your child how to act in similar situations.

Why it matters: According to social learning theory, children imitate the behaviour they observe, especially from parents.

How to apply: If you want your child to be kind, respectful, or patient, exhibit these behaviours consistently. For instance, show how you handle conflicts calmly or how you manage frustration constructively.

Ask Open-Ended Questions

What it is: Asking questions that encourage more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer.

Why it matters: Open-ended questions stimulate cognitive development by encouraging children to express their thoughts and engage in deeper thinking.

How to apply: Instead of asking, *"Did you have fun at school today?"* try asking,

"What was the most interesting thing you did today?" This promotes conversation and helps children articulate their experiences.

Create a Safe Learning Environment

What it is: Provide a supportive, non-judgmental space for your child to explore, make mistakes, and learn from them.

Why it matters: A secure and positive environment helps build confidence, which is essential for cognitive growth and risk-taking in learning.

How to apply: Allow your child to try new things without fear of failure. Encourage them by saying, *"It's okay to make mistakes; that's how we learn."*

Build Secure Attachment

What it is: Secure attachment is formed when children feel safe, loved, and valued in their relationship with their parents.

Why it matters: A secure attachment helps children develop trust, emotional stability, and the confidence to explore the world, all of which are important for cognitive development.

How to apply: Be consistently responsive to your child's needs. Offer comfort when they are upset, and be present during key moments, whether it's a small accomplishment or a challenging situation.

Use Play to Build Cognitive Skills

What it is: Play is not only a fun activity but also a critical part of cognitive development, as it encourages creativity, problem-solving, and social skills.

Why it matters: Play is a natural way for children to experiment with ideas and problem-solving. It enhances memory, attention, and executive function.

How to apply: Engage in activities that stimulate cognitive skills such as puzzles, board games, or imaginative play. Encourage your child to come up with new rules or storylines to stretch their creative thinking.

Encourage a Growth Mindset

What it is: A growth mindset is the belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work.

Why it matters: According to cognitive psychology, children with a growth mindset are more likely to embrace challenges and persist through difficulties, which enhances cognitive development.

How to apply: Encourage your child to view mistakes as opportunities to learn. Use language like, "You haven't figured it out yet, but keep trying!" instead of focusing on natural talent.

These tips, rooted in cognitive psychology, are designed to help parents build strong, healthy relationships with their children while supporting their cognitive and emotional development.

Applying these strategies can lead to a more supportive and nurturing environment that fosters growth in all areas of a child's life.

Part 2. The Methodologies for Schools and Families

The use of Positive Psychology in building relationships between school and family at kindergarten

Positive Psychology focuses on enhancing individual strengths and fostering positive interactions, which is crucial for the well-being of children. In early childhood education settings, Positive Psychology can significantly enhance relationships between educators, parents, and children. Parental involvement is a cornerstone of effective early childhood education. It enhances children's learning experiences and fosters a collaborative environment between families and educational institutions. The intersection of the child's right to education and family identity underscores the importance of engaging parents in the educational process (Sadownik, 2023). Research highlights the significance of parental engagement in supporting children's academic and social outcomes. For instance, Epstein (2010) emphasises that school-family-community partnerships play a crucial role in nurturing the children we share, promoting better educational outcomes and fostering a sense of belonging. Additionally, studies by Dearing et al. (2006) and Devjak & Bercnik (2009) show that increased family involvement leads to improved child-teacher relationships and positive feelings about school, particularly for low-income families. Some of the practices that can be established is the participation of parents in school events for either storytelling or collaborative projects. In addition, building a supportive community involves collaboration between schools, families, and the broader community. Schools can organise community events that bring families together such as cultural festivals and collaborative projects to foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Here are several strategies and activities educators can implement to promote parental involvement in early education:

- Inviting parents to join field trips provides an opportunity for them to engage with their children and the educational activities directly.
- Parents can be encouraged to donate supplies, which helps them feel invested in the classroom environment.
- Parents can share their hobbies, professions, or cultural traditions during a special class
- Parents can assist teachers with daily tasks and special projects

- Giving presentations as part of cultural exchange with parents to share their cultural heritage
- Volunteering for special projects where parents can contribute their skills and time to various classroom and school-wide projects (Ansari et al., 2016).



Photo 6. Pexels- the-park-g04014b993_1920

The use of Mindfulness and Yoga in building relationships for school and family at kindergarten

Key elements of mindfulness in daily life include attention to breath, mindful eating, emotional awareness, physical activities, and singing. These activities create a supportive "habitat" for mindfulness, contributing to a comprehensive education that nurtures our inner world and promotes emotional hygiene. By integrating these practices, we ensure a well-rounded approach to children's emotional and social development.

Stimulating place to become mindfulness as a natural practice. It teaches us to get how thoughts, looking at them and coming off them. It has positive effects on students' well-being social life and academic skills.

Three great results of mindfulness usual practice:

1. Greater wellbeing,
2. Better social skills,
3. Better academic skills.

Mindfulness

The most important instruments are:

1. **Meditation:** it pays attention in what is happening inside of us. Activities: looking to emotions and breath self – regulation. It is a bridge between own interior world with the exterior me.
2. **Body:** it is and anchor to come back to the present moment of being. Body to feel our senses: sight, smell, ear, taste, touch for “here and now” awareness.
3. **Mindful eating:** food as a celebration. It invites us to stop, smell and imagine the process of materials transformation, from raw to dishes and pay attention to colours, ingredients and flavour. It gives the opportunity to appreciate food, thanksgiving to have on a table.
4. **Song:** balance element. It gives general wellbeing. It is frequency linked with our traditions and story. It develops both left and right brain area: language, emotions, memory, and oxytocin: love’s hormone. It means sharing, community and joy.
5. **Nature.**
6. **Self – biography telling.**

CIRCLE TIME: A Mindfulness Practice

Circle Time is not merely an educational methodology; it is an inclusive and interactive approach that fosters the sharing of information, emotions, and the development of communication and social skills. This practice encourages mutual learning through active listening in a judgment-free environment, making it beneficial for all participants, including children with special educational needs.

The teacher acts as a mediator, participating actively in setting the purpose of the session or organizing tasks. Task selection may be carried out through a public vote, with children raising their hands to decide. Together, the group establishes shared rules, and children sign their names (if they are able to write) as a commitment to the process.

Through Circle Time, children look forward to these structured moments of connection. They are encouraged to speak spontaneously, listen attentively, and respect each other's turn to talk—practicing presence in the "here and now."

To make Circle Time effective, it is important to establish a consistent routine. Start with short sessions, gradually increasing their length over time. Use simple language or visual aids to accommodate diverse learning styles and ensure all children can participate. This structured yet flexible approach supports inclusion, nurtures social skills, and builds a sense of community in the classroom.

Yoga

As we pointed out several times, yoga and mindfulness are strictly linked. The “red line” is short stories that involve both emotional and physical ways.

1. Gaming elements for creative thought and educative grew.
2. Activities in a playing atmosphere and in a comfortable place: open air or gym;
3. 50 minutes about with a defined program:
 - Opening ritual.
 - Group or individual activities.
 - Yoga's positions stories with asana.
 - Relaxing and meditation moments.
 - Closing ritual.

Yoga for children includes:

- Warming up exercises;
- Asana easy sequences;
- Yoga's positions.

Children enjoy imitating animals, plants and surrounding elements positions, following teacher's example. This is funny and no competitive activity. The teacher organizes mindfulness and relaxing moments with quiet music and nature's sounds.

Mindfulness Activities for Children: Practicing in Teams or Pairs

These activities can be practiced at school in teams or pairs, starting with warm-up exercises to set the tone for engagement and focus.

- Yoga Asanas for Children (Ages 3–6): Movements are always gentle, slow, and guided by the teacher in a safe environment. These exercises are designed as playful games

and can be integrated into storytelling sessions, where children become the protagonists, bringing the stories to life through movement.

- Relaxing Music Listening: Calm, soothing music helps children relax, focus, and unwind during the session.
- Dance: Free or guided dance encourages physical expression, creativity, and joy, while promoting body awareness and coordination.
- Storytelling: Narratives centered on themes like friendship, mutual respect, and caring for nature foster empathy and understanding while engaging children's imaginations.
- Handcrafting and Painting: Creative activities such as crafting and painting provide moments for self-expression and relaxation, helping children connect with their emotions and surroundings.

These practices support emotional, social, and physical development, creating a nurturing and inclusive environment for young learners.



Photo 7. Pexel, Allan Mas 5623720

The Lonely Tree Story

"In a meadow, there is a lonely tree. He watched the other tree and he would be among them. Good morning! The sun says. The tree does not answer. He is sad and he feels lonely.

- Let lay down and put your hands on your belly.
- Breathe in and fill your lungs, then exhale.
- Later a butterfly just poses on the bunch of trees. Here is the butterfly's position.

The tree does not answer and the butterfly flies away. A frog arrives jumping on.

- Please, stand up, fold your knees and pose your hands on your chest.
- Jump three times and stay on balance.

The tree does not answer, and the frog goes away. Now a cow is arriving. Try to imitate its position. "Good morning!" The cow says. The tree does not answer and the cow, after eating some grass, goes away. In a while, a cat and a dog arrive (the position of the cat and the dog). They greet the tree, but it does not answer. He is lonely and sad, so both the cat and the dog go away. The night arrives with the moon (moon position). "Good evening!" The moon says, but the tree does not still answer. The night passes over and the sun rises. Afterward, a mum, a dad and their son arrive.

- Baby position.

The child says "Hi tree". He hugs it. "How lucky you are! You are never lonely! I looked you by my window yesterday! Many animals came to meet you. Today I wanted to meet you too. Can I climb to your bunch?"

The tree smiled. It understood that following looking for what it could not have; it did not noticed how many friends are there with it.

- We finish with the happy tree position.

Let smile... Now the tree is happy!

The use of Contact with Nature in building relationships for school and family at kindergarten

Parents are an integral part of the daily life of any preschool setting. To foster a strong connection, it is essential to implement strategies and practical activities that strengthen the relationship between parents and the preschool environment.

When parents are treated as active participants in the preschool community, fully involved in its atmosphere and pedagogy, the rewards are substantial. By engaging them meaningfully, you create a foundation of trust and collaboration.

- Communicate Openly: Talk with parents, present your approach, share pictures, and invite them to participate in activities.
- Encourage Observation: Let parents see what happens when children play outdoors or engage in learning experiences.
- Build Trust: The more you explain, the more trust you build, which enhances cooperation.
- Embrace Their Perspectives: Take the time to get to know parents and use their viewpoints as a starting point for creating a shared mindset and partnership.

Integrating nature into these practices strengthens relationships, making interactions simpler, more joyful, and deeply meaningful. Nature becomes a unifying element that fosters harmony between parents, children, and the preschool setting.



Photo 8,9. The own source

The use of self-regulation in building relationships in school and family in kindergarten

Self-regulation, or the ability to recognise, control and manage one's own emotions, thoughts and behaviour plays a key role in children's development, as well as in building relationships in the preschool environment and within the family. It is a skill that develops gradually, with the support of adults - teachers, carers and parents. In the preschool context, self-regulation practices influence both teacher-child relationships and interactions with parents, contributing to a supportive nurturing environment.

Benefits of self-regulatory practices

The use of self-regulatory practices in preschools has a number of benefits. Firstly, it supports the emotional and social development of children, who learn how to cope with difficult emotions and how to build healthy relationships with their peers. Secondly, it improves the quality of the relationship between teachers and parents, which has a direct impact on the child's functioning in kindergarten. Thirdly, it promotes more balanced and harmonious relationships within the family, which fosters better development of children in the home environment (Shanker, 2016).

Children who observe adults using self-regulation are more likely to adopt the same strategies in their interactions. This makes them better able to cope with emotional challenges, which has a positive impact on their adaptation to the pre-school environment and later school life. Research shows that children with better self-regulatory skills achieve higher academic results, are more independent and cooperate better in-group.

A key aim of NVC is to build mutual understanding, empathy and respect, both with children and with parents. NVC in the context of the preschool and working with parents is based on four basic elements:

- observation
- feelings
- needs
- requests.

Here is how these principles can be applied to the daily interactions between teachers, parents and children in the kindergarten:

1. Providing Clear and Transparent Information

Informing parents about their child's development in a clear, fact-based way allows them to avoid judging and accusing, and to focus on objective observations. Instead of saying: *"Your*

child is always late”, it is better to say: “I have noticed that your child enters the room after class has started.”

Exercise: An example could be a regular meeting in which the teacher shares his/her observations about the child with the parents. After expressing the observations, the teacher can move on to expressing her feelings, e.g. *“I feel concerned because I notice that the child has difficulty integrating into the group”*.

The teacher then outlines the needs, such as the child's need to feel safe in the group, and finally asks the parents to cooperate, e.g. *“Can we together find a way to help the child feel more comfortable?”*

2. Modelling Positive Practices

Teachers and parents should model behaviour based on respect, empathy and openness. In conflict situations, instead of saying: *“Stop doing that, it's inappropriate!”*, the teacher can apply NVC: *“I notice you are throwing toys. I see that you are upset. Would you like to talk about what happened?”*

Exercise: The teacher and parents can regularly practise *Active listening*. When a child has difficulty expressing his/her feelings, the teacher can help by repeating what the child might be feeling (*“I can see that you are sad because the toy broke”*). The child feels listened to and teachers and parents model an empathetic attitude.



Photo 10. Pexels, ps8pta

3. Setting Boundaries and Clarity of Rules

Setting boundaries is extremely important, but this should be done in a way that does not create guilt or use punishment. Instead of saying: *"You mustn't say that because it's not appropriate"*, the teacher can use the NVC approach: *"I noticed that you are using loud words towards a colleague. I have a need for us all to feel safe when we talk. What can you do to solve this problem?"*

Exercise: In the kindergarten, teachers can introduce a regular *Solution Seeking* exercise. Rather than being punished for undesirable behaviour, the children are asked to work together with the teachers to find solutions that are satisfactory for everyone. For example: *"How can we get along so that everyone has their turn to play?"*.

4. Offering Emotional and Practical Support

NVC emphasises the importance of giving support and creating a space where parents and children can express their feelings without judgement. When parents feel stressed or overwhelmed, the teacher should show empathy: 'I understand that you feel stressed because you cannot pick up your child on time. How can I help you in this situation?'

Exercise: Create a space for conversation, e.g. in the form of *Joint Support Meetings* (e.g. monthly), where parents and teachers share their concerns, questions or successes. This exercise builds a bond based on trust and empathy, where parents feel that their needs and concerns are understood and respected.

5. Celebration of Children's Achievements

Instead of judging a child's achievements in a way that compares them with others, it is helpful to focus on the child's individual successes and express respect for their progress. Instead of saying: *"I am proud of you because you are the best in the class"*, the teacher can say: *"I noticed that you managed to draw a beautiful picture today. I am glad that you showed patience and commitment."*

Additional Aspects of NVC in Parent-Teacher Relationships:

- Courage to share difficult information: Instead of avoiding difficult topics, such as learning difficulties, it is helpful to raise them with empathy and respect.
 - *"I've noticed that your child has difficulty integrating into a group. Could we work together to find a way to help him/her?"*
- Consistency: It is important that both parents and teachers are consistent in their actions and communication. If something has been agreed upon, it should be adhered to, which builds trust and a sense of stability in the child.

In summary, NVC in building relationships between teachers, parents and children is based on respect, empathy, clarity in communication and cooperation. Through this method, it is possible to create an environment in which both child and parents feel safe, understood and supported.

The use of Cognitive Psychology in building relationships in school and family in kindergarten

Cognitive psychology is the branch of psychology that focuses on understanding mental processes such as perception, memory, thinking, problem-solving, language, and decision-making. It seeks to explore how people acquire, process, store, and retrieve information, and how these processes influence behaviour. Cognitive psychologists examine how individuals interpret and make sense of the world around them, and how mental structures and mechanisms, like attention and memory, shape our experiences and actions. Research in cognitive psychology often involves experiments, brain imaging, and computational models to better understand the internal processes that drive cognition. The field has led to practical applications in areas such as education, artificial intelligence, and therapy, improving learning strategies, cognitive rehabilitation, and human-computer interaction.

Here are three examples of cognitive psychology exercises that parents and preschool teachers can use in their daily work with children at preschool and home:

1. The Memory Matching Game exercise

Objective: To reinforce working memory and concentration.

Description: Prepare a set of cards with pictures on them (e.g. animals, fruit, objects). The cards are placed face down. The child takes turns turning over two cards, trying to remember their position. The aim is to find pairs.

Benefit: This exercise develops visual memory, concentration and the ability to remember details, which is essential for learning.

2. The When, where, what? exercise (Developing spatial and logical thinking)

Objective: To develop logical thinking skills and understanding of spatial relationships.

Description: In this game, the parent or teacher presents the child with questions about everyday situations: *When do you put your shoes in the cupboard?, Where did you leave your*

toy?, *What do you do after lunch?*”. The child has to answer by logically connecting the relevant elements of the situation.

Benefit: This exercise promotes the ability to organise information in a spatial and temporal context and develops the ability to plan and understand the sequence of events.

3. Word puzzles (Developing linguistic and analytical skills)

Objective: To develop analytical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Description: The parent or teacher asks the child simple word puzzles, e.g. „*What is it: it has four legs but does not walk?*” (answer: a table) or „*I am in every book, but I have no body. Who am I?*” (answer: a letter).

Benefit: The puzzles stimulate analytical thinking, help develop problem-solving skills and search for logical connections between concepts.

Each exercise engages different cognitive aspects such as memory, logical thinking, spatial and language comprehension, which supports the development of the pre-school child.



Photo 11. Pexels, Yan Krukau: 8613059

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