
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Project “I Feel – Mental Hygiene and Emotional Literacy of Young People” – an example of intervention in the community

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Introduction

Since 2017, Zagreb City Office for Health and Civil Association “BoliMe” have been implementing a project on investing in youth mental health in secondary schools in the City of Zagreb. The entire project takes place in the school for two weeks and it is divided into three phases: 1. The implementation of the installation placed in the public space of the school; 2. An educational theater play "In My Head", which deals with the problem of anxiety and depression in young people; 3. A peer-education workshop.

Short description of practice change implemented

This project places mental health topics in an artistic context, which indirectly educates students about the importance of recognizing and managing with their own emotions. Because of this approach, students are more interested of involving in the project.

Aim and theory of change

The aim of the project is to promote the importance of investment in mental health, mental hygiene maintenance, to recognize emotions and get familiar with all forms of psychological first aid. Furthermore, the aim is to introduce high school students to the importance of mental health through dialogue and learning together with the support of educators, so that young people can more easily recognize their emotions and learn to deal with them.

Targeted population and stakeholders

The target population of the project are high school students in the City of Zagreb, both first and second grade students.

Timeline

The project started in the school year 2017-2018 and will be conducted in every secondary schools in the City of Zagreb during the next period.

Highlights (innovation, impact and outcomes)

The project model has made a huge step forward in the emotional literacy of young people due to the fact that mental disorders are still taboo.

Comments on sustainability

Project is focused on the importance, benefits, and long-term sustainability of the investment in programs aimed at developing social-emotional (SE) skills of young people. Upon completion of the project, each student gets an educational booklet, which, along with a text section dedicated to mental health care, also contains contacts from all places in the City of Zagreb where they can turn for help.

Comment on transferability

Based on the results of the project which shows high level of interest among schools and students and successful media campaign, the project will be expanded to other cities in the Republic of Croatia.

Conclusions (comprising key findings)

The project seeks to foster dialogue among young people on the importance of caring for their mental health and to raise the level of awareness of the importance of investing in mental health through regular maintenance of mental hygiene.