

FIT FOR LIFE

Social Skills Training
for
Adolescents

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Introduction

The training FIT FOR LIFE aims at developing social and preprofessional competence through developing and fostering social abilities and cognitive capabilities. The training aims at giving the adolescents a wider repertoire and a deeper understanding of options to act and react in various situations, and to sensitise them towards themselves and others. Hence, at the same time, the training is a preventive intervention against behaviour problems as in aggression, social insecurity and anxiety.

Goals of the FIT FOR LIFE training

- Ability to focus and pay attention, perseverance
- Motivation to learn and to achieve
- Self-perception and perception of others
- Stable self-image and realistic self-appraisal
- Self-control and self-regulation
- Careful and sensible treatment of one's own body
- Recognition and expression of emotions
- Empathy, being able to take on the perspectives of others
- Communication
- Cooperation
- Decision making and planning (jobs and career, life, future)
- Accepting praise and criticism
- Overcoming failure
- Rational (non-violent) behaviour in conflict situations

Theoretical basis of the FIT FOR LIFE training

The training is based on the theoretical basis of and latest research on social competence and the theoretical basis of cognitive-behavioural trainings.

Design of the FIT FOR LIFE training

The training aims to be different than the usual classes at school. Some of the young people participating in the training may have gone through some negative experiences during their schooling; hence the training tries to provide an assessment-free environment and to make the training programme an enjoyable learning experience.

The programme is designed to be appealing and attractive as well as stimulating, varied, individualised and as non-discriminating and assessment-free as possible.

The trainer tries to achieve this by suitably arousing the participants' curiosity when the training programme is announced, continues by ensuring that the rooms are uncomplicated but well-appointed, by using interesting and aesthetic material, paying individual attention to and respect to all participants, taking care to ensure that no interruptions occur during training sessions; all this contributes to creating a good working atmosphere.

Modules

The training contains 13 modules:

- o Motivation
- o Health
- o Self Confidence
- o Body Language
- o Communication
- o Hobbies
- o Conflict Solving Training 1 and 2
- o Planning of one's own Life

- o Job and Future
- o Emotions
- o Empathy
- o Praise and Criticism

Module Design

Each module consists of a short introduction, a description of session aims, three propositions for training (including a description of methods and techniques as well as materials), questions to support reflection and transfer of the training, and a variety of work sheets. The training can be individually adjusted to meet the requirements of the group.

Active participation

The adolescents are asked to actively bring in ideas and additions for modules and to speak about the topics and conflicts which are of interest to them and are relevant to their environment and their personal situation.

Work Techniques

The techniques of the training are: discussion and brainstorming, (structured) role play, behavioural exercises, behavioural (group) rules, self observation, self control, training rituals, warming up, relaxation, and specific feedback (video feedback). These techniques will be introduced to the participants and exercised during the course of the training.

Certification

At the end of the training the participants receive a certificate, which lists the focus and the emphasis of the training and certifies the successful completion of a training circle. This certificate can be added by the adolescents to applications for jobs or further education, as most employers have started, in addition to marks at school, to shift their attention to skills in the area of social competence.

Time-frame and Group Size

Each module will need at least one training session of 90 minutes, which includes a fifteen-minute break, but a few of the topics should be discussed and worked at in a few consecutive sessions. This also depends on the issues the participants are particularly interested in or bring in themselves. Hence, a full training circle lasts about 15-20 sessions. It has also been proven to be successful to combine a few modules on a week-end with a group trip away from home or to have a focused FIT FOR LIFE study day with a number of modules.

Each group working on the FIT FOR LIFE training should consist out of not more than eight to nine participants. Ideally there should be a trainer and a co-trainer, who work as a team. The co-trainer could be a teacher, school social worker or someone else interested in the implementation of the training.

Information about FIT FOR LIFE

The training FIT FOR LIFE includes a manual to „train the trainers“. The information contained in this could be used to inform parents, teachers and others interested in the programme of the theoretical basis, the aims and goals and the contents of the training.

References:

- Jugert, G., Rehder, A., Notz, P., Petermann, F. (2004). *Soziale Kompetenz für Jugendliche. Grundlagen, Training und Fortbildung*. Weinheim: Juventa, 3rd ed.
- Jugert, G., Rehder, A., Notz, P., Petermann, F. (2005). *Fit for Life. Module und Arbeitsblätter zum Training sozialer Kompetenz für Jugendliche*. Weinheim: Juventa, 3rd. corr. ed.