

Unspoken Words/Le Parole Non Dette Italy



Type of intervention



Classroom setting

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:



Primary prevention

Children (6-11 Years) | Male & Female | Classroom | Italian



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Children (6-11 Years) | Male & Female | Classroom | Italian

Target population

Children aged 9 -11 years.

Delivery organisation

In Italy, where the programme originated, it is run by schools using public funding and funding from Parenting Associations. In Switzerland the APSI Foundation is in charge of all aspects of implementation.

Mode and context of delivery

A primary school-based prevention programme to teach children child sexual abuse prevention skills. Developed in Italy, it has also been delivered in Switzerland. It has been adapted and delivered in 4 other European countries: England, Slovakia, Spain and the Netherlands. In England it is known as the Hedgehog Programme. It is accompanied by a Parents' Guide and a Teachers' Guide.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Teachers trained to deliver the programme.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

Five weekly sessions of play-based group work, which last for two to three hours each.

Description of intervention

The programme aims to teach children how to avoid dangers and risks, how to recognise risky situations by relying on sexual and emotional awareness and above all who to turn to guarantee their safety.

The objectives of the programme are:

- To build children's confidence in asking questions and seeking information.
- To enhance children's knowledge and understanding about their bodies.
- To equip children with the tools necessary to enable them to understand when a situation is potentially risky and what actions to take to protect themselves.
- To help children develop critical awareness and confidence so they feel able to trust appropriate adults and approach them for help.

The programme comprises five sessions for children, all of which are delivered in schools using a space other than the classroom. They are facilitated by two teachers. The programme is play-based and involves games and activities. It involves the whole child – mind, body, and feelings. Every lesson has a specific structure of activities;

- Welcome activities, dances, activities with music (10-15 minutes).
- Structured activities such as team games, role play, poster creation (45 -60 minutes).
- The thinking process, discussion in small groups, circle time (20-30 minutes).
- Body relaxation, such as exercises and activities with music (10-15 minutes).

A Life Skills based approach is used, which emphasises the importance of developing adaptive behaviour in order to deal with life's challenges. A Confidence Box is present throughout the course in which children can put questions for teachers to answer.

The programme also provides information to parents, carers and teaching staff to enable them to support children's learning. Pre- and post- programme meetings are arranged with parents and carers of each child providing an opportunity for them to understand the programme goals, strategies and principles. The subject of communication in families is dealt with. Parents are helped to recognise verbal and non-verbal cues which suggest a child is in need of help, using an active listening approach. Parents' and teachers' guides has been published and a family guide.

Evaluation

The programme has been evaluated through a case/control study based on a pre-course/post course questionnaire. It is effective in achieving its stated objectives. See ISPCAN website www.ispcan.org for a presentation about the programme and its evaluation by Dr. Pellai at the Denver Thinking Space 2013. For more general evaluations of the effectiveness of child sexual abuse prevention programmes see references below.

References

[Cochrane Database Syst Rev](#). 2007 Jul 18;(3):CD004380.

School-based education programmes for the prevention of child sexual abuse. [Zwi KJ](#), [Woolfenden SR](#), [Wheeler DM](#), [O'brien TA](#), [Tait P](#), [Williams KW](#).

Hendry E. (2013) Working with men and boys - a child protection strategy. ISPCAN. Appendix includes full description of this programme which has been used as basis for this template. See website www.ispcan.org

Pellai, A. (2008) Sexual Abuse: prevention is possible? The How and Why of Child Sexual Abuse primary prevention. Sexologies. European Journal of Sexology and Sexual Health. 17/S1:33.

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