

## OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

### Self-Regulation

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Human beings express themselves. They do so on emotional, physical and mental levels. These expressions are part of self-regulation in terms which have little to do with selfcontrolism. Self-regulation has the effect of allowing oneself to keep staying in contact with oneself, ones perceptions and feelings. It allows therefore one to sense others and achieve resonance (Gerlinger, 2005, p.38).

For a child to take care of herself means first of all to express herself. Children can do it right from the beginning of their life: it is a component of their autonomy. Every child needs relationships and a secure bond with reliable people who accept the child just “as is.” These are people who can understand and support, and who have faith, trust and a solid optimism.

For analytical purposes three levels of expression can be uncovered (Thielen, 2009). In reality they are strongly interwoven. A child uses all of them.

Physical: I am tired, not tired, hungry or full, cold and shivering or sweating. I am in pain, stressed or all fired up. I express my own sexual feelings and wishes. I need body contact or want to be alone. I want to move, run, climb or take a rest. I can enjoy my bowel movement, can control it or cannot control it yet.

Emotional: I am in good mood or in a

bad mood, angry or happy, scared or frightened and I can distinguish my emotions more and more. I feel love and hate, envy and jealousy. I feel disgust, but most of the time no disgust. I feel shame, but at first no shame, I feel defiant, etc.

Mental: I have interests and can follow them up. I am curious, learn to understand, speak and increasingly I can give my emotions a name. I want to grow and be big. I am looking for stimuli and knowledge and people who can help me finding them. I say what I want and what not, I make clear what I want to be able to learn and to do next.

Every expression is meaningful in the context of the current situation of the child, the child’s personality, the family background and society. In a way you can say that expressions are just right all the time. Every expression therefore is to be taken seriously but not as a general reason for licence.

Such an understanding of self-regulation implies that in school there needs to be a lot of room for the affirmation of emotions, thoughts and the demands of children. Children’s “proper motions” should be respected and affectively mirrored and never put to shame, as already articulated in the concepts of A.S. Neill and W. Reich at the beginning of the 20th century (Marlock,

2009, p. 23).

At Freie Schule Frankfurt we allow for this room. We accept the children's expressions as they come without trying to change them. We rather try to understand them. Children should not need to suppress them. They should be able to be in touch with themselves so as to express their emotions, thoughts and demands unhampered. They should learn to designate what they like and what troubles them. In a world of personal images, infiltration with more and more artificial consumer needs, self-design, devoutness about perfection in life and then depression because of not being able to accomplish such perfection, we should practise getting ground under the feet by sensing body contact. Autonomy comes with it (Marlock 2015). A pedagogy based on such a view relies on a benevolent school atmosphere free of repression and fear and on adults who are happy to be partners for reflection with the children.

Humans cannot at all times do whatever comes to their mind at every given moment. Freedom is not licence. This applies to adults and children equally. But we don't mean moralistic or other normative imperatives. We rather mean the simple fact that interests of different people are not always the same and need to be negotiated. In other words: Children need people vis à vis their development. This includes: Get to know the demands of others, negotiate rules, dispute, discussion, explain one-self, be able to stand through conflict, empathize or also refuse, being confronted or also confront others.

In our conception we say: "To have freedom to negotiate things is most notably meaningful for children and adults

in our school. Negotiation processes are constitutive in the atmosphere of our place." (FSF, 2004, p. 32) It basically relies on the ability to communicate symmetrically. What follows from there remains open, everyone can learn from it. That makes life vivid.

## References

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